THE MOBILE THOUGHT OBJECTION AND ITS ANAXAGOREAN ORIGINS. A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION ON THE PROBLEM OF TIME IN NIETZSCHE*

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Abstract: This paper consists of a study of the mobile thought objection (MTO), an objection presented by Nietzsche against the Eleatic tradition, which provided the most original epistemological grounding for his adherence to a temporal realism. The MTO was not Nietzsche's invention, as it had been previously employed by the opponents of Kant's theory of the ideality of time. However, although Nietzsche was familiar with this modern origin, he argues that MTO was conceived by the pluralists of antiquity, in particular Anaxagoras. Given that, I aim to demonstrate that this assertion lacks historical support and can only be sustained on classicist premises.
Keywords: Nietzsche, Anaxagoras, Time, Becoming, Thinking, Nous.

Resumo: Este artigo consiste em um estudo da objeção do pensamento móvel (OPM), uma objeção apresentada por Nietzsche contra a tradição eleata, que forneceu o sustentáculo epistêmico mais originário para sua adesão a um realismo temporal. A OPM não foi uma invenção de Nietzsche, tendo sido empregada previamente por adversários da teoria de Kant da idealidade do tempo. Entretanto, embora Nietzsche estivesse familiarizado com essa origem moderna, ele alega que a OPM foi concebida pelos pluralistas da antiguidade, em especial Anaxágoras. Diante disso, meu objetivo é demonstrar que essa afirmação carece de respaldo histórico e só pode ser sustentada com base em pressupostos classicistas.
Palavras-chave: Nietzsche, Anaxágoras, Tempo, Vir-a-ser, Pensamento, Nous.

Introduction

Despite the fact that Nietzsche has never elaborated a formal exposition of his thoughts on time, at least by rigorous academic standards[2], the subject gained recognition as philosophically significant in the mid-20th

* This text is a modified version of the conference presented at the seminar *Nietzsche on Early Greek Philosophy,* organized by Carlotta Santini and Paulo Lima.
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[2] Nietzsche appears to have a preference for an esoteric presentation of his thoughts on time and becoming, as evidenced in this passage from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: 'the best parables should speak about time and becoming' (ZA, On the Blessed Isles, KSA 4. 110).

century. Since then, numerous monographs, edited volumes, scholarly articles, and academic events have focused on the subject.

Within this field of research, two major trends emerge: one of a practical nature, concerned with Nietzsche's examination on man's relation to time[3], and the other of a theoretical disposition, concerning Nietzschean inquiries into the nature of time. This article aligns with the latter, with an emphasis on the problem of the reality of time[4]. In this regard, studies have shown that while Nietzsche seems to adopt an idealist conception of time similar to Kant's, he nonetheless asserts the existence of a real time that exceeds subjective and/or perspectival time[5]. Despite a range of nuances involved, such as efforts to challenge the objective-subjective dichotomy[6], this position prevails among scholars, albeit with some dissent[7]. However, little has been said about the epistemological grounding that Nietzsche resorts to in order to justify his temporal realism. Robin Small, one of the few scholars who has turned his attention to the topic, suggests that Nietzsche found in experiences of perceptual alterations (such as dreams, insomnia, drug-induced states and near-death experiences), and the resulting temporal anomalies, a means of unveiling real time[8].

[3] In this regard, one should acknowledge a pioneering role to Heidegger. While noting that Nietzsche did not undertake a deeper investigation of the subject and accepted the prevailing Aristotelian view of time as the flow of moments (HEIDEGGER, 1996, p. 310-311; 2002, p. 100 and 104), Heidegger, on the other hand, considers Nietzsche as pivotal in paving the way for understanding lived time, pre-theoretical and pre-logical (HEIDEGGER, 1977, p. 498; 1996, p. 318-319, and 357). Despite the biased nature of this interpretation, which reflects the language and interests peculiar to Heideggerianism (See HAAR, 1998, p. 151-177), its phenomenological, anthropocentric, and antinaturalistic tone resonates in other studies. Hatab, for instance, argues that "Nietzsche's purpose is not to ask 'what is time?' as well, but to determine what the value of time is, our response and attitude toward time" (HATAB, 1976, p. 263). Koecke goes in the same direction by minimizing Nietzsche's theoretical application of the concept of time in favor of a trivialized usage, which enables an epochal and kairotic understanding of time, "anticipating Heidegger" (KOECKE, 1994, p. 4-8). It is important to highlight that there are works whose emphasis on the practical approaches does not necessarily coincide with a rejection of the possibility of theoretical inquiry. For example, see LUPO, 2018, p. 16.

[4] Other relevant theoretical discussions are dedicated to Nietzsche's relationship with classical problems in the philosophy of time, such as the origin of time (See SMALL, 2001, p. 21-39) and the structure/representation of time (See DAUER, 1975, p. 81-97).

[5] See STAMBAUGH, 1959, p. 57. DALNOK, 1998, p. 55-56. RICHARDSON, 2005, p. 208-215 / 225-226. SMALL, 2010, p. 34-35 and 90. PODRUG, 2017, p. 287-293. This position can be found in studies that do not directly address the theme. See MOLES, 1990, p. 223-237. FRANCK, 1998, 330-335.

[6] See STAMBAUGH, 1959, p. 78-79.

[7] The claim of some scholars is that as Nietzsche becomes more critical towards the concept of the thing-in-itself in his late philosophy, it becomes unviable to envision something like time-in-itself. Cf. HILL, 2008, p. 75-85. COHEN, 2008, p. 303-307.

[8] See SMALL, 2010, p. 36-39 and 90.

In the book *Nietzsche e a ontologia do vir-a-ser* (2015), nonetheless, I argue that the situation is more complex and requires a genetic approach. For Nietzsche's commitment to a realistic thesis concerning time and becoming should be understood as part of an epistemic turn. If, until 1872, Nietzsche was leaned more towards a temporal idealism, as seen in *The Birth of Tragedy* (BT)[9], shortly afterwards, in 1873, namely in the unpublished manuscript *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (PTAG), he embraced a temporal realism that endured throughout his intellectual path. The reason for this shift lies in the appreciation aroused by the psychologist's thesis that infers the reality of time from the recognition of the dynamic character of representations[10]. In PTAG, Nietzsche strategically employs this argument against the most renowned adversaries of temporal realism – the Eleatics and their modern counterpart, Kant –, labeling it the mobile thought objection (MTO). Thus, although a more sensualist inclination prevails throughout the 1880s, attributing higher epistemic value to the sensory organs in the unfolding of reality[11] – and it is within this context, that phenomena of perceptual alterations play a key role –, it was through the MTO that Nietzsche arrives at his realism of time and becoming[12]. Indeed, it was through this means that, in 1881, he endowed the thesis with ontological significance[13].

With that said, this article aims to delve deeper into the MTO by exploring its origins, an aspect thus far overlooked by scholars. It is essential to clarify from the start that Nietzsche was not the originator of this objection or its argument – something Nietzsche himself readily concedes. Nonetheless, contrary to what one might expect, he does not attribute its generation to the opponents of the Kantian theory of the ideality of time, who disseminate the MTO within modern philosophical debates. Instead, Nietzsche maintains that

[9] See BT 18, KSA 1. 118.

[10] See NASSER, 2015, p. 43-45. To the best of my knowledge, William Matiolli is the only researcher who supports a position similar to mine. See MATIOLLI, 2011, p. 234. Still on the relationship between the MTO and Nietzschean temporal realism, see MATIOLLI, 2017, p. 84-91.

[11] This change in Nietzsche seems to have been brought about by the conviction that the internal world is more prone to error than the external world. See *Posthumous Fragment* (PF) 7[9], KSA 12. 294. NASSER, 2015, p. 95.

[12] Small devotes a short section of his book to the MTO when discussing Nietzsche's defense of the reality of becoming in PTAG. However, when dealing with the "clues" that help Nietzsche unveil real time, he does not give centrality to this objection. This would reflect Small's proposal that Nietzsche separates becoming (fact) and time (interpretation). See SMALL, 2010, p. 20-22 and 34. I attempt to emphasize that Nietzsche, following Spir, operates with a relativist thesis when discussing real time/becoming, meaning that this separation would only be appropriate in the context of discussing subjective time or the very peculiar concept of time mobilized in the demonstration of the doctrine of the eternal return of the same. See NASSER, 2015, p. 70-71.

[13] See PF 11[330], KSA 9. 569-570. NASSER, 2015, p. 205.

the MTO was conceived by the ancient pluralists, particularly Anaxagoras. With this assertion in mind, this paper will examine its academic validity in light of Anaxagorean fragments and specialized studies in ancient philosophy. My objective is to demonstrate that Nietzsche's claim lacks historical grounding and can only be sustained based on classicist premises.

The article is structured into five parts. In the first part, I will examine how Nietzsche presents the MTO in the context of his dispute with Eleaticism. From the second part onward, the focus will shift more directly on the origins of the MTO, highlighting its development among critics of the Kantian theory of the ideality of time and Nietzsche's engagement with this context through Afrikan Spir. The third part will analyze Nietzsche's unexpected attribution of the MTO's creation to the ancient pluralists, particularly Anaxagoras, demonstrating the contentious nature of this claim when confronted with Anaxagorean fragments and the prevailing scholarly interpretations concerning the relationship between Anaxagoras and Eleaticism. Finally, in the last two parts, I will present two hypotheses that could elucidate the motivations behind Nietzsche's assertion. The fourth part proposes that one possible explanation arises from Nietzsche's reflections on the problem of the origin of motion, leading to the claim that the Anaxagorean *Nous* must possess self-movement, a result that, at least in part, underpins the premise of the MTO. In the fifth part, I will argue that this initial hypothesis is insufficient as the premise of the MTO, when considered more thoroughly, namely, as rational thought constituted by concepts in motion, could only be attained by Nietzsche through an anachronistic interpretation of the Anaxagorean *Nous*, whose foundation lies in the classicist thesis that the most important modern theoretical paradigms were originally formulated by the early Greek philosophers.

1. The dispute with Eleaticism and the presentation of the MTO

In early 1873, Nietzsche was committed to the production of a new intellectual venture: PTAG. Although this text is sometimes regarded as a simplified version of the 1872 course *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers* (PPP), tailored to appeal to the tastes of the Wagners[14], it nonetheless holds significant value for understanding Nietzsche's philosophical project. This significance is largely

[14] See D'IORIO, 1994, p. 30. Nietzsche presents this new text on the Greeks in Bayreuth, on April 7, 1873, to Richard and Cosima Wagner, as well as to Erwin Rohde. See Letter to Carl von Gersdorff, April 5, 1873, KSB 4. 139.

due to the fact that this book captures the beginning of Nietzsche's dispute with Eleaticism, a theme that would reverberate throughout his entire philosophical path.

In this book, after concluding his presentation, in Chapters 9, 10, and 12 on Parmenides and Zeno, depicted as representatives of a rupture with the preceding tradition due to their engagement with a purely logical view – which results in the monism of being and the characterization of becoming as an illogical phenomenon – Nietzsche confronts the Eleatics with three objections, particularly Parmenides. The first objection is presented in a less developed form in Chapter 11, where Nietzsche critiques Parmenides' assumption that if being can be thought, then it must exist. This reasoning would be flawed because, firstly, what is thought is not necessarily equivalent to what exists – here Nietzsche relies on the distinction made by Aristotle in the *Posterior Analytics* between essence (*ti esti*) and existence (*ei esti*)[15] – and, secondly, because Parmenides is basing himself on the presumption that thought would be a privileged organ of knowledge of things in themselves – and here Nietzsche draws on Kant's critical philosophy (although the Eleatics are not so far from Kant, as we will see later)[16]. The two other objections are more thoroughly developed in Chapter 13. The first is the MTO, and the second is the origin of appearance objection[17].

> In the first place: if thinking of reason in concepts is real [*Wenn das Denken der Vernunft in Begriffen real ist*], then the many and motion must partake of reality also, for reasoned thinking is mobile, consisting, then, of a movement that goes from one concept to another concept, and, therefore, within of a plurality of realities [*denn das vernünftige Denken ist bewegt, und zwar ist dies eine Bewegung von Begriff zu Begriff, also innerhalb einer Mehrheit von Realitäten*]. Against this, no objection can be made; it is quite impossible to designate thinking as a rigid persistence, as an eternally unmoved thinking-in-and-on-itself on the part of a unity (PTAG 13, KSA 1. 850)[18].

[15] See PTAG 11, KSA 1. 845. See also: ARISTOTLE, 1995, p. 152-153. Although Nietzsche does not mention the Sophist school, this critique is, in fact, very similar to the one employed by Gorgias in his polemic against Eleaticism. See Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos VII* in: DIELS/KRANZ, 1960, p. 279-283.

[16] See PTAG 11, KSA 1. 846-847. See also PPP 11, KGW II, 4. 294-295.

[17] It is Nietzsche himself who employs these terms. See PTAG 13, KSA 1. 852.

[18] I use the translations of Nietzsche's works listed in the bibliography. In those cases where I deviate from the translations listed in the bibliography, I offer Nietzsche's original German version in square brackets. In cases where bibliographic references in English are absent, translations are done by me.

> If only illusion [*Trug*] and semblance emanate from the senses, and if in truth there is only the real identity of being and thinking, what then are the senses themselves? Evidently a part of semblance, since they do not coincide with thinking, and since their product, the sensuous world, does not coincide with being [*Sein*]. But if the senses are semblance, to whom do they dissemble? How, being unreal, can they deceive? Nonbeing cannot even practice deceit. Therefore, the whence? [*Woher?*] of illusion and semblance remains an enigma, in fact a contradiction (PTAG 13, KSA 1. 850-851).

The second objection is based on the following argument, which can be summarized in two key points: i) if the senses themselves are appearance, they cannot be regarded as the origin of appearance, and ii) if appearance is pervaded by the non-being, it cannot be the real origin of anything, for the non-being is not. The purpose here is solely to refuse the Parmenidean thesis of appearance and, ultimately, to unveil the contradictory nature of the separation between the corporeal and spiritual realms.

Concerning the first objection, the MTO's argument aims to dismantle the identification between being and thought found in Parmenides' *Poem*. For if thinking were identical to being, then thinking would be nothing more than an immobile intuition of being. However, if thought possesses a mobile character and is real, it suggests that thought is embedded in the movement that precedes it and that it must also be real. Had Parmenides been more honest about his own experience of thought, this would be the outcome. This is why Nietzsche characterizes his argument against the Eleatic philosopher as *ad hominem*.

Thus, the MTO provides more promising results than the first objection, as it has both a negative aspect (insofar as its intention is to confront the Eleatic identity between being and thought) and a positive one (as once its plausibility is confirmed, it becomes a precious means for demonstrating the reality of becoming and time).

2. The modern origin of the MTO

I now intend to concentrate on the MTO. The first point I would like to highlight is that this objection, and its argument, was not a Nietzschean invention. This objection had already been employed previously, albeit not against Parmenides but within the debates surrounding Kant's theory of the ideality of time. Shortly after Kant presented the mature version of his

idealistic theory of time in the 1770 *Dissertation*, figures such as Lambert, Mendelssohn and Schultz used this very objection to challenge his theory[19]. Let us consider Lambert's case as an example.

> All changes are bound to time and are inconceivable without time. If changes are real, then time is real, whatever it may be. If time is unreal, then no change can be real. I think, though, that even an idealist must grant at least that changes exist and occur in his representations, for example, their beginning and their ending. Thus time cannot be regarded as something unreal (Letter from Johann Heinrich Lambert to Kant, October 13, 1770)[20].

We can assert that Nietzsche was familiar with this debate and the argument through his acquaintance with Afrikan Spir's *Thought and Reality* (1873)[21]. In this work, Spir carries on the confrontation with the Kantian theory of the ideality of time, presenting the MTO's argument as formulated by Kant's opponents[22]. However, Spir does more than just reproducing the argument. He also promotes improvements, and it is this refined version that will be incorporated by Nietzsche in Chapter 15 of PTAG.

After presenting the first version of the MTO argument in Chapter 13 (the version I previously introduced), Nietzsche recognized that it still contained flaws. And these flaws are explicitly revealed by Kant's response to the opponents of the theory of the ideality of time, such as Lambert. In Chapter 15 of PTAG, Nietzsche references a note from the section "On Time", present in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in which Kant assures that the observation of the movement of representations does not necessarily entail the finding that change and time have an objective reality – time has reality but only a subjective one.

> I can, to be sure, say: my representations succeed one another; but that only means we are conscious of them as in a temporal sequence, i.e., according to the

[19] On this dispute regarding the ideality of time, see VAIHINGER, 1921, p. 399-410. MOHR, 1998, p. 118-120.

[20] I use here the translation by Arnulf Zweig, from Kant's correspondence (1999).

[21] It was in the winter of 1872 that Nietzsche first came into contact with Spir, when he came across the 1869 work, *Forschung nach der Gewissheit in der Erkenntnis der Wirklichkeit*. The contact with Spir's magnum opus, *Denken und Wirklichkeit*, took place in February 1873, when Nietzsche borrowed the first volume of the recently published work out of the library at the University of Basel. For more detailed information on Nietzsche's discovery of Spir, see CLAPARÈDE-SPIR, 1930, p. 245. SCHLECHTA/ANDERS, 1962, p. 119. DICKOPP, 1970, p. 51. FAZIO, 1986/89, p. 244. D´IORIO, 1993, p. 257-258. REUTER, 2003, p. 246-247.

[22] See SPIR, 1873, p. 263-264.

> form of inner sense. Time is not on that account something in itself, nor any determination objectively adhering to things (KANT, 1974, p. 857) [23].

Although Nietzsche acknowledges that Kant exposes a vulnerability in the MTO, he understands that the argument of the objection can still be saved. With this in mind, he turns, still in Chapter 15, to Spir, who, in opposition to Kant's response, distinguishes the being represented from representation and, thus, the representation of successions and the succession of representations. With this adjustment, Nietzsche assumes that it would be possible to neutralize Kant's replica while maintaining the plausibility of the MTO.

> Now in the first place it is clear that I can know nothing of succession as such if I do not hold its successive stages simultaneously in my consciousness. The representation of succession, in other words, is not in itself successive; consequently it is completely different from the succession of our representations [*Vorstellungen*]. In the second place, Kant's assumption implies such self-evident absurdities that one can only wonder how he could have left them out of account. According to this assumption, Caesar and Socrates are not really dead; they are just as alive as they were two thousand years ago and only appear to be dead to an arrangement of my 'inner sense' [*inneren Sinnes*]. Men as yet unborn are already alive, and if they have not yet appeared on the scene this too is the fault of the arrangement of this 'inner sense'. The main question is this: how can the beginning and the end of conscious life itself, together with all its inner and outer senses [*inneren und äußeren Sinnen*], exist only in the interpretation of the inner sense? The actual fact is that one absolutely cannot deny the reality of change. If you throw it out the window it will slip back in through the keyhole. One can say 'it merely seems to me that states [*Zustände*] and representations change' – yet even this semblance itself is something objectively given, and within it, succession indubitably has objective reality; something actually follows upon something else. – Besides, it is necessary to note that the entire critique of reason can have its foundation and justification only in the presupposition that our representations appear to us as they really are. For if they appeared to us as other than they really are, one could not make any valid assertions about them, hence produce no epistemology and no 'transcendental' examination of objective validity. Nonetheless, it is beyond

[23] See also PTAG 15, KSA 1. 857. It is possible that Nietzsche incorporated this quote from Spir. See SPIR, 1873, p. 264. Regarding Kant's translation to English, I use the translation by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood for *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (1998).

> doubt that our representations themselves appear to us as successive (PTAG 15, KSA 1. 857-858)[24].

Without engaging into the discussion of the effectiveness of Nietzsche's adaption of the MTO alongside Spir, and, indeed, without venturing into the more complex debate regarding the overall validity of the argument, I limit myself to simply draw attention to the fact that Nietzsche was well acquainted with the use of this objection in the context of debates on Kant's theory of the ideality of time. At first glance, it may seem surprising that Nietzsche benefited from this modern debate to confront Eleaticism. However, considering that Kant's theory was sometimes viewed as a modern development of Eleaticism – as Spir posits and later exemplified by Reichenbach[25] – it becomes understandable why Nietzsche would perceive objections against Kant's theory as criticisms of Eleaticism. Thus, that is not what causes perplexity. Rather, it is Nietzsche ascribing the genesis of this objection to the ancient pluralists, Anaxagoras in particular, as we will see further on.

3. The Anaxagorean origin of the MTO

Nietzsche explicitly connects the MTO to the ancient pluralists in at least five instances. The first ones are found in the lecture on Leucippus and Democritus, offered in the PPP course. Additional references are located in Chapter 14 of PTAG and in the PF of 1872-73.

> The point of departure for Democritus and Leucippus are the propositions of the Eleatics. Democritus proceeds only from the reality of motion, because, to be precise, thought is motion. This is in fact the point of attack: there exists a motion, since I think and thought has reality. But if motion exists, then empty space must also exist, unless 'not-being is as real as being' or not being (οὐδὲν) is in no way less then being (δὲν). With absolute filled space, motion is impossible (PPP 15, KGW II, 4. 331)[26].

[24] See also SPIR, 1873, p. 264.

[25] See SPIR, 1873, p. 263. REICHENBACH, 1971, p. 13-15. It is worth mentioning that Nietzsche hints at the proximity between Kant and Eleaticism on other occasions. See PPP, KGW II, 4. 213-214. *Untimely Meditations. Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* 4, KSA 1. 446.

[26] In this passage, it is intriguing to observe Nietzsche enclosing the phrase referring to the MTO in quotation marks, as if it were a direct citation. The complexity of the situation deepens in the subsequent sentence, where he indeed provides a quotation, purportedly from Democritus' Fragment 156. However,

> The reality of motion – perhaps along with its deduction from the reality of thought – is the point of departure common to Empedocles and Anaxagoras (PPP 15, KGW II, 4. 334).
>
> Democrit. Simplification of the hypotheses as far as possible. 1) There is motion, therefore empty space, therefore non-being. Thinking is a movement (PF 23[39], KSA 7. 556).
>
> With such a conception we have already taken a step into the field of Anaxagoras' teaching. He raises both objections in all their full force against Parmenides, that of the mobile thought [*bewegten Denken*] as well as that of the where from? [*Woher?*] the semblances (PTAG 14, KSA 1. 852).
>
> And motion is truth and not semblance, as Anaxagoras proves in spite of Parmenides by the indubitable succession of our representations [*unserer Vorstellungen*] in thinking. So we have in the most direct way the insight into the truth of the movement and the succession, insofar as we think and have representations [*Wir haben also auf die unmittelbarste Weise die Einsicht in die Wahrheit der Bewegung und der Succession, darin, daß wir denken und Vorstellungen haben*] (PTAG 14, KSA 1. 853).

These passages clearly indicate that Nietzsche regarded the MTO as originating with the ancient pluralists, particularly with Anaxagoras. For even if Nietzsche is not assertive regarding this matter, if we take his work dedicated to the *diadokhai* of the pre-Platonic philosophers, in which Anaxagoras precedes Empedocles and Democritus, in this order[27], it can be assumed that Anaxagoras was the original proponent of this objection.

Herein lies the problem I would like to address. For there is no evidence that Anaxagoras explicitly elaborated such an objection against the Eleatics, neither in his surviving fragments nor in the accounts of the doxographers – and this also applies to other pluralists[28].

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it is important to clarify that this is neither an authentic citation from Democritus nor does it correspond to Fragment 156.

[27] See PPP 13, KGW II, 4. 302, 314-315; 329-330. *Die Diadokhai der vorplatonischen Philosophen*, KGW II, 4. 620-626.

[28] Although the atomists have been regarded, at least to some extent, as opponents of the Eleatics since Aristotle (See MOREL, 1996, p. 45-48), there is no evidence to suggest that Democritus benefited from the MTO, as Nietzsche implies. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that Democritus possessed a

Among ancient philosophy scholars, an influential tendency holds that Anaxagoras should not be considered an opponent of Eleaticism[29]. It is widely accepted that Anaxagoras's theory aligns with Parmenidean teachings by positing immutable minimal entities (the *chremata*) that preexist the original mixture and by adhering to the Eleatic view of the illogical nature of change (understood as becoming and perishing) through the premise that "everything is in everything".

This interpretation of Anaxagoras as an intellectual disciple of Parmenides is reinforced by readings of the Eleatic as a predicative monist. Patricia Curd, who advocates this view, argues that Parmenides, before being a numerical monist (i.e., a proponent of the existence of a single thing), was primarily interested in asserting that the thing that is, is the one with a single predicate, meaning he did not intend to claim that there is only one thing. And according to this interpretation, pluralists like Anaxagoras and Empedocles could be considered as genuine followers of Parmenides, as the opposition between pluralism and monism only arises if Parmenides is regarded as a numerical monist. If Parmenides is understood as a predicative monist, aiming to ensure that each entity is a unity immune to change, then there is no inherent conflict with the pluralists. From this perspective, it is far more plausible that Anaxagoras and Empedocles considered the second part of Parmenides' *Poem* as a blueprint for a coherent cosmological theory. The failure to recognize this intellectual debt can be ascribed to contingent factors, notably the fact that the neo-Eleatics emerged victorious in the dispute with the pluralists over Parmenides' legacy, as proposed by Graham, following Curd's earlier analysis[30].

Other scholars are less inclined to adopt this interpretative stance, arguing instead that Anaxagoras implicitly critiques Eleaticism. This view is notably held by Furley, Sisko, and Palmer. Focusing on the Anaxagorean fragments B3, B5, B6, B8, B10, and B17, these scholars raise three key issues: (i) The notion that "everything is in everything" is incompatible with Anaxagoras' understanding of the minimal elements as pure substances, akin to Parmenidean being (Palmer, Sisko)[31]; (ii) It is quite plausible to consider Anaxagoras as a rival of Zeno, attempting to overcome the Paradox of Large and Small by disregarding the idea that entities of extreme size – whether large

dynamic understanding of thought, which may have facilitated Nietzsche's interpretation. See Theophrastus, *On the Senses* 49-83 in: DIELS/KRANZ, 1960, p. 110 and 120.

[29] See GUTHRIE, 1965, p. 281. PALMER, 2009, p. 225.

[30] See CURD, 1998, p. 127-154. GRAHAM, 1999, p. 159-180.

[31] See PALMER, 2009, p. 242. SISKO, 2010, p. 436.

or small – lose magnitude (Palmer)[32]; (iii) Anaxagoras does not give mere assent to the characterization of change as contradictory, as Parmenides did. Rather, he proposes an alternative model of change that involves spatial rearrangements within the plenum, eliminating the need for non-being or void to conceive change (Furley, Sisko)[33].

Having outlined this general overview, I believe we can identify two dominant interpretive tendencies regarding the relationship between Anaxagoras and Eleaticism within the field of specialized studies: one that considers Anaxagoras an unrestricted follower of Eleaticism and another that considers the Athenian philosopher a follower who was reluctant to accept different aspects of the Eleatic's doctrines. In this regard, Nietzsche clearly aligns with the latter interpretive trend.

It is worth noting that Nietzsche does not portray Anaxagoras as an uncompromising adversary of Eleaticism. He acknowledged that Anaxagoras incorporated certain aspects of Eleatic teachings. In both PPP and PTAG, Nietzsche emphasizes that Anaxagoras adheres to the Eleatic denial of non-being and the rejection of becoming and perishing. Nietzsche also acknowledges that Anaxagoras sought to adapt his theory of elements to Eleatic requirements by treating them as substances resistant to change[34]. Indeed, it is this version of Anaxagoras, complicit to Eleaticism, that attempts to elaborate an Eleatic natural philosophy, which, in Nietzsche's view, ends up victimized by impasses and contradictions that, as suggested in Chapter 14 de PTAG, could be confronted even by an Eleatic. For in multiplying and de-idealizing the Parmenidean being, Anaxagoras failed to recognize that what is unconditioned (substance) cannot be subject to motion and causal relations[35]. Conversely, Nietzsche suggests that Anaxagoras is not merely a faithful follower of the Eleatics, as we already know.

However, there is a significant distinction between Nietzsche's view of Anaxagoras and the second trend. For scholars within this tradition do not point to the existence of anything even remotely resembling what Nietzsche designates as the MTO, which Anaxagoras would have elaborated against the Eleatics. In fact, it is important to note that scholars generally agree that while Anaxagoras accepts the Eleatic critique of becoming, his naturalistic inclinations prevents him from doubting the reality of change (properly understood as contraction and separation). In other words, since change was

[32] See PALMER, 2009, p. 243-251.
[33] See FURLEY, 1976, p. 1-10. SISKO, 2010, p. 437.
[34] See PPP 13, KGW II, 4. 309. PTAG 14, KSA 1. 852.
[35] See PTAG 14, KSA 1. 854-856.

considered certain by Anaxagoras, demonstrating the reality of change and/or time, which is MTO's goal, was likely not a concern for him[36].

It is certainly worth examining whether a similar scenario can be found within the academic milieu of 19th-century studies on ancient philosophy, particularly in the sources Nietzsche consulted for PPP and PTAG, such as Heinze, Krische, Schorn, Zeller, and Ueberweg[37]. Could these sources offer a perspective distinct from those closer to us chronologically, as previously mentioned? Unfortunately, he situation within this context remains largely unchanged. For instance, in the first part of Ueberweg's book, the pluralists are depicted as adherents of the Eleatic theory of the immutability of substance, despite their recognition of multiple substances and their reformulation of the concept of becoming[38]. Similarly, Zeller, who is perhaps the primary source for the lecture on Anaxagoras in PPP[39], maintains that Anaxagoras was significantly influenced by Parmenides. According to Zeller, Anaxagoras adopted Parmenides' principle of the impossibility of becoming and perishing as the foundational basis for his own system[40].

Considering this, Nietzsche's ascription of the MTO to Anaxagoras emerges as an intriguing position. Thus, the central issue is understanding what motivates Nietzsche to attribute the creation of this objection to Anaxagoras.

4. First working hypothesis: the heterodox interpretation of the *Nous*

My first working hypothesis is that Nietzsche's assertion is rooted in a heterodox interpretation of the Anaxagorean concept of *Nous* as the cause of the movement and separation of mixture, as presented in fragments B12 and B13. To begin this discussion, I share the two fragments of Anaxagoras just mentioned.

[36] See SCHOFIELD, 1980, p. 82. SISKO, 2010, p. 435.

[37] See ARENAS-DOLZ, 2010, p. 495-496. GUARDE-PAZ, 2012, p. 365-369, 371-375. PF 74[58], KGW I, 5. 163. PPP 6 and 17, KGW II, 4. 238 and 351. I have selected sources that Nietzsche consulted during the composition of these texts, focusing on those dedicated to ancient philosophy or specifically addressing Anaxagoras.

[38] See UEBERWEG, 1867, p. 64.

[39] This work served as a significant source for the lecture dedicated to Anaxagoras. However, this does not imply that Nietzsche unequivocally endorses Zeller's interpretation of Anaxagoras or unconditionally adopts Zeller's history of philosophy. See PPP 13, KGW II, 4. 307. Letter to Erwin Rohde, June 11, 1872, KSB 4. 10.

[40] See ZELLER, 1869, p. 832-833.

B12

He has written the following about Nous: 'The other things have a share of everything, but Nous is unlimited and self-ruling and has been mixed with no thing, but is alone itself by itself. For if it were not by itself, but had been mixed with anything else, then it would partake of all things, if it had been mixed with anything (for there is a share of everything in everything just as I have said before); and the things mixed together with it would thwart it, so that it would control none of the things in the way that it in fact does, being alone by itself. For it is the finest of all things and the purest, and indeed it maintains all discernment about everything and has the greatest strength. And Nous has control over all things that have soul, both the larger and the smaller. And Nous controlled the whole revolution, so that it started to revolve in the beginning. First it began to revolve from a small region, but it is revolving yet more, and it will revolve still more. And Nous knew them all: the things that are being mixed together, the things that are being separated off, and the things that are being dissociated. And whatever sorts of things were going to be, and whatever sorts were and now are not, and as many as are now and whatever sorts will be, all these Nous set in order. And Nous also ordered this revolution, in which the things being separated off now revolve, the stars and the sun and the moon and the air and the aether. This revolution caused them to separate off. The dense is being separated off from the rare, and the warm from the cold, and the bright from the dark, and the dry from the moist. But there are many shares of many things; nothing is completely separated off or dissociated one from the other except Nous. All Nous is alike, both the greater and the smaller. Nothing else is like anything else, but each one is and was most manifestly those things of which there are the most in it.

B13

Alexander says that Aristotle did not mention Anaxagoras, even though Anaxagoras set Nous among the first principles; perhaps, Alexander says, because Anaxagoras makes no use of it in coming-to-be. But it is clear that he does use it, because he says that coming-to-be is nothing other than separation, that separation comes to be on account of motion, and that Nous is the cause of motion. For Anaxagoras says this: 'When Nous began to move [things], there was separation off from the multitude that was being moved, and whatever Nous moved, all this was dissociated; and as things were being moved and dissociated, the revolution made them dissociate much more. (ANAXAGORAS, 2017, p. 23 and 25).

In both PPP, specifically in the lecture on Anaxagoras, and in PTAG, Chapter 15, Nietzsche engages, albeit indirectly, with the Anaxagorean fragments concerning the rotational motion that brings order to the primordial mixture (chaos). This motion initiates the separation of qualities within the mixture, from the most general to the most particular. Nietzsche reproduces this content on both occasions. Yet he introduces an additional observation not explicitly stated in the fragments: that the *Nous* itself is characterized by movement, and it is this inherent motion that enables it to induce further movement (Nietzsche also claims in Chapter 16 of PTAG that the *Nous* not only moves but also divides itself, though I do not intend to elaborate on this theme here).

> This νοῦς he thought of, because it is, eternal: it's the sole thing that has motion in itself, and hence it's to be used for the movement of the eternal, rigid chaos of things. Everything else is moved; νοῦς moves itself (PPP 13, KGW II, 4. 307).

> In any case, he now had a substance which moves itself and other things as well, whose motion does not come from outside and does not depend on anything else; while [*während*] it then seemed almost a matter of indifference how this self-caused motion was to be thought, which resembled, to a certain extent, to the back and forth movement of very tiny delicate round droplets of mercury (PTAG 15, KSA 1. 859).

These passages are particularly puzzling as the notion of movement as an intrinsic attribute of *Nous* is not apparent in fragments B12 and B13 or elsewhere. Ancient testimonies also offer little clarification and, in fact, suggest otherwise. Aristotle, for example, implies that the Anaxagorean concept of *Nous* does not encompass movement or change[41]. This view is somehow reinforced by Plato's critique of Anaxagoras' *Nous* in the *Phaedo*[42]. Moreover, contemporary scholars tend to support this interpretation. Palmer, for

[41] See ARISTOTLE, 1995, p. 429 and 646. In the passage mentioned, Aristotle identifies in Anaxagoras a confirmation of his own thesis regarding the necessity of positing that the initial movement must be caused by an unmoved mover. See ARISTOTLE, 1995, p. 432.

[42] See PLATO, 1997, p. 84-85. As will be pointed out subsequently, Plato depicts the Anaxagorean *Nous* as merely a mechanical force, akin to the views of other Pre-Socratic natural philosophers. This portrayal contrasts with Plato's own explanation, which associates *Nous* with the soul, suggesting that the orderly movement in nature should be seen as a reflection of the soul's self-motion. From the Platonic perspective, therefore, the Anaxagorean *Nous* lacks the attributes of soul and self-motion. See CAMPBELL, 2021, p. 530-531.

instance, characterizes *Nous* as uniform and homogeneous, lacking change, thus making it the closest approximation to the Eleatic concept of Being within Anaxagoras' system[43]. To the best of my knowledge, among scholars, only Anna Marmodoro's work on Anaxagoras' metaphysics presents something akin to Nietzsche's assertion, though her stance is less emphatic[44]. This prompts the question of how Nietzsche arrived at such a distinctive interpretation.

The answer seems to lie in the claim that anyone who thoroughly examines the problem of the origin of motion will inevitably reach this conclusion, as discussed in Chapter 15 of PTAG. The argument is that what is not in motion cannot induce motion, thus the original motion must have been generated by something that is self-moving. Consequently, if *Nous* is posited as the cause of the initial motion, it must, first and foremost, move itself. Nietzsche does not regard this conclusion as self-evident and acknowledges the significant problems associated with this approach – it is no surprise, then, that he designates the question of the origin of motion as the most challenging of all questions related to the phenomenon of motion. Firstly, this inquiry conflicts with the scientific mentality, which typically relies on mechanical explanations of motion. Furthermore, the question of the origin of motion might undermine the view of *Nous* as an unconditioned entity, given that our understanding of motion is inherently relational. Yet Nietzsche suggests that Anaxagoras runs this risk because he still operates with obscure concepts, in this case, the concept of *Nous*. Although Anaxagoras, like Empedocles and Democritus, takes a significant step towards a naturalistic worldview, Nietzsche sees him as standing further from this goal due to his reliance on the concept of *Nous*, a speculative excess that would be abandoned by his successors[45]. Yet it is precisely for this reason that Anaxagoras feels authorized in employing a form of causality that diverges from scientific reasoning – the *causa sui*[46].

[43] See PALMER, 2009, p. 252-253.
[44] See MARMODORO, 2017, p. 139-140.
[45] See PF 23[30], KSA 7. 551. Despite Nietzsche's view that Empedocles triumphed over Anaxagorean thought by discovering all the fundamental concepts of atomism and, consequently, the natural sciences up to modern times, he also believes that Empedocles, like Anaxagoras, resorts to incomprehensible forces in his doctrine of *philia* and *neikos*, thus failing to achieve a strictly naturalistic worldview. Among the Pre-Platonic thinkers, Nietzsche argues that only Democritus took this decisive step. See PPP 14, KGW II, 4. 327-328. In this sense, it is revealing that Nietzsche, in a note from the 1860s, revises Aristotle's famous assertion in the *Metaphysics* by proposing that Democritus, rather than Anaxagoras, should be considered the first sober thinker among the inebriates. See PF 58[14], KGW I, 4. 460.
[46] See PTAG 15, KSA 1. 858-860.

This clarification provides a crucial justification for Nietzsche's choice of Anaxagoras as the creator of the MTO – assuming we agree to translate *Nous* in Anaxagoras as *thought*, a point I shall revisit shortly. That is, considering that Anaxagoras believed *Nous* to be the origin of motion, this implies that he raised the question of the origin of motion, which supposes that the first element in the series of movements is self-moving. Thus, motion is an intrinsic characteristic of *Nous* (or thought). The mere recognition of this outcome (which appears as a premise of the objection's argument) exposes the incompatibility between the Eleatic *Nous*, immobile, and the Anaxagorean *Nous*, in motion. A passage from PPP further supports this assertion.

> According to the Eleatics, it was the νοῦς, specifically the senses (αἰσθήσεις), that produces deception by plurality (πολλὰ) and becoming; it's, according to Anaxagoras, the νοῦς itself that moves the rigid plurality (πολλὰ) and calls forth Life. All motion in the world is thought of as a result of organic, spirited life. He may argue against the Eleatics that they, too, retain the liveliness of the νοῦς, which does not dissolve in rigid, unmoved, dead oneness. What now lives and subsequently exists, though, must have lived and have been into all eternities. With this the process of world movement [*Weltbewegung*] is explained. So actually, Anaxagoras really has the Eleatic teachings in his background (PPP 13, KGW II, 4. 309-10).

Before proceeding to my second working hypothesis, it is important to address an issue concerning the portrayal of the MTO as the outcome of a self-observational exercise. This may raise a potential complication because the *Nous* under discussion so far is the cosmic *Nous*, associated with the cosmogonic process of ordering chaos. In other words, to accept the claim that Anaxagoras was the creator of the objection, one would need to postulate a certain identification between the psychological and the cosmic *Nous* – an assumption that is highly debatable among scholars of Anaxagoras. Nevertheless, this is precisely what Nietzsche suggests. In fact, he not only claims that there is a continuity between the two, but also argues that, from a methodological perspective, Anaxagoras maintained that psychological experience precedes and serves as a vehicle for the cosmic *Nous*.

> The consideration [*Betrachtung*] of this undoubtedly certain succession and mobility now pushes Anaxagoras to assume a remarkable hypothesis. Clearly the representations [*Vorstellungen*] moved of themselves; they were not pushed nor did they have any moving cause outside them. Hence there is something, he said

> to himself, that carries in itself the origin and beginning of motion. But then he notes, in the second place, that this representation not only moves itself, but it moves something quite different. It moves the body. Thus, he discovers, through the most direct experience, an effect of representations on extended matter [*ausgedehnte Materie*], which may be recognized by the motion of the latter. This seems to him to be a fact; only secondarily does he feel challenged to explain the fact. Enough, he now has a regulative scheme for motion in the world which he now thinks of either as a movement of the true isolated beings [*Wesenheiten*] through what represents [*durch das Vorstellende*], the *Nous*, or else as motion through by means of something already moved (PTAG 15, KSA 1. 858).

Nietzsche suggests that, in the order of discoveries, the experience of the psychological *Nous* precedes the cosmic *Nous*. It is through the experience of successive representations that Anaxagoras is said to have arrived at the cosmic *Nous*, which is self-moving and initiates the original motion. Nietzsche implies here that Anaxagoras' metaphysical development involved a form of analogical reasoning, starting from the more familiar psychological *Nous* to achieve an understanding of the less familiar cosmic *Nous*. If this is so, we have one more piece to the puzzle. For it becomes clear that Nietzsche is arguing for the non-existence of a qualitative difference between cosmic and psychological *Nous*. It is worth noting that this interpretation is compatible with both ancient testimonies and specialized studies and does not seem unusual. For example, it resonates with Aristotle's observations in *On the Soul*, where he notes that Anaxagoras did not establish a clear distinction between the soul (*psyche*) and *Nous*[47]. Following the Aristotelian testimony, Zeller – an important source for Nietzsche's reflections on Anaxagoras, as previously mentioned – asserts that, for Anaxagoras, the soul is essentially the *Nous* present in individual entities[48]. Although a comprehensive analysis of this topic is beyond the scope of this discussion, it is crucial to note that if the cosmic and the psychological *Nous* are identical, then the attributes of the former would also apply to the latter. In other words, the psychological *Nous* would also be inherently mobile, which supports Nietzsche's thesis that Anaxagoras was the originator of the MTO.

[47] See ARISTOTLE, 1995, p. 644.
[48] See ZELLER, 1869, p. 823-824. See also PINTO, 2017, 22.

5. Second working hypothesis: the anachronistic interpretation of the *Nous*

We have seen that when examining fragments B12 and B13, Nietzsche indicates the need to suppose that *Nous* possesses an internal movement, which is consistent with the argument, or, at the very least, with the premise of the argument underlying the MTO. However, characterizing the Anaxagorean *Nous* as a dimension composed of representations and concepts in motion requires further clarification. At this point, I return in a more careful manner to an issue previously raised about the problem of understanding *Nous* as thought. As I will argue in this section, this characterization is based on a prior commitment to an intellectualized interpretation of *Nous* and, ultimately, on an anachronistic perspective, as it interprets the concept of *Nous* through modern theoretical lenses. This constitutes my second working hypothesis.

In this matter, it is important to recognize that the identification of the Anaxagorean *Nous* as an intellectual force is far from evident. This remains a contentious topic, as indicated by the existence of two major established interpretations. The first, which we might call the *mechanistic interpretation*, views Anaxagorean *Nous* as a blind force that merely fulfills a cosmological role by initiating the separation of the original mixture. The second, which we could describe as the *teleological interpretation*, suggests that Anaxagoras's *Nous* possessed some form of cognitive power. Nietzsche's position within this debate is not straightforward, as he appears to engage with both interpretations, sometimes simultaneously.

Nietzsche's teleological interpretation of Anaxagorean *Nous* can be traced back to his works on tragedy, especially BT, and its preparatory writings, *The Origin and End of Tragedy* (1870) and *Socrates and Greek Tragedy* (1871).

> Euripides as a poet is therefore above all the echo of his conscious insights; and it is precisely this which gives him such a memorable place in the history of Greek art. Looking back on his critical and creative production he must often have felt as though he were bringing to life the opening of Anaxagoras' writings for a drama (*Ihm muss im Hinblick auf sein kritisch-productives Schaffen oft zu Muthe gewesen sein als sollte er den Anfang der Schrift des Anaxagoras für das Drama lebendig machen*), whose first words are: 'In the beginning all things were mixed together; then came understanding and created order'. And if Anaxagoras with his Nous appeared among the philosophers like the first sober man among a crowd of mere drunks, then Euripides too might have used a similar image to understand his relation to the other tragic poets. As long as the sole ordering and governing

> principle of all things, the Nous, was excluded from artistic creation, then everything remained mixed together in a chaotic primal soup; this is the judgement Euripides had to make, as the first 'sober man' he had to condemn the 'drunken' poets in this way (BT 12, KSA 1. 87)[49].

In these writings on tragedy, Nietzsche presents Anaxagoras as the philosophical counterpart to Euripides, the poet who marks the advent of aesthetic Socratism. Just as Euripides had introduced a *deus ex machina* in the prologue and conclusion of his plays, Anaxagoras employed *Nous* as the organizing principle of primordial chaos within natural philosophy. Like Euripides, Anaxagoras is viewed as a representative of Socratism, a phenomenon that transcends the historical figure of Socrates and is characterized by the predominance of logical impulses in culture[50]. This association between Anaxagoras and the Socratic inclination towards cultural rationalization is reinforced by Nietzsche's choice to translate *Nous* as *Verstand* (understanding), suggesting that it functions as an intellectual force that organizes the original chaos. Evidently, one can assume that the Socratic Anaxagoras Nietzsche bring forth in BT reflects the influence of Schopenhauer on this work, as Schopenhauer considered Anaxagoras his greatest philosophical opponent for prioritizing *Nous* (or *Intelligenz*, Schopenhauer's term for *Nous*) over Will as the fundamental principle.[51] However, this interpretation of *Nous* also appears in contexts where Schopenhauer's influence is maybe less pronounced, such as in Nietzsche's discussion of Heraclitus in PPP.

> We may clarify this intuition – which oversees the reign of immanent justice (δίκη) and intelligence (γνώμη) over all things, war (πόλεμος) as its own territory, and once again, the whole as play – only in the capacity of the artist, the creative artist who further is identical with his work. In contrast, Anaxagoras wants something entirely different: he construes the order of the world as a determinant will with intentions, conceived after the fashion of human beings. On account of this teleological insight, Aristotle calls him the first sober [*nüchternen*]. The capacity, which everyone knows, namely, the conscious will

[49] See also *Ursprung und Ziel der Tragoedie*, KGW III 5/1. 184. *Sokrates und die griechische Tragoedie*, KSA 1. 625.

[50] As a matter of fact, Anaxagoras holds a significant position in the genesis of Socratism, as Nietzsche regards him both as the teacher of Euripides and as a major influence on Socrates. See PTAG 19, KSA 1. 869-70. *Einführung in das Studium der platonischen Dialoge*, KGW II, 4. 169. PPP 13, KGW II, 4. 303. *Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur <I und II>,* KGW II, 5. 120.

[51] See SCHOPENHAUER, 1986, p. 349.

> [*bewußt zu wollen*], was placed in the heart of things here; this νοῦς is more precisely the will in the popular sense of the word, the willing after goals (PPP 10, KGW II, 4. 279-280).

In this context, Anaxagoras is portrayed as a teleological thinker who addresses a force opposing matter, analogous to human conscious will. The Anaxagorean *Nous* is invoked to counter the Heraclitean aesthetic worldview, which lacks purpose and is symbolized by the image of a cosmic child who unintentionally creates and destroys.

However, in Nietzsche's lectures on Anaxagoras from the same course, there are attempts to minimize the teleological aspects of *Nous*. This orientation is also evident in some chapters of PTAG, particularly Chapter 19. I share an excerpt from PTAG below as an example.

> At this point we might well ask what notion possessed the Nous to impel a random material particle, chosen from that enormous number of points and to revolve it in whirling dance and why it had not occurred [*einfiel*] to it earlier. To this, Anaxagoras would respond: it possesses the privilege of arbitrariness [*Willkür*]; it may start at random, depending only on itself, whereas all other things are determined by something outside themselves. Nous has no duty and hence no purpose or goal which it would be forced to pursue. If it once initiated that motion and set itself a purpose, it was only – though the answer is difficult, Heraclitus might add – a game [*wenn er einmal mit jener Bewegung anfing und sich einen Zweck setzte, so war dies doch nur – die Antwort ist schwer, Heraklit würde ergänzen – ein Spiel*]. This seems to me to have been the final solution, the ultimate answer, that ever hovered on the lips of the Greeks. The Anaxagorean mind (*Geist*) is a creative artist. It is, in fact, the most tremendous mechanical and architectural genius, creating with the simplest means the most impressive forms and orbits, creating a movable architectonic, as it were, but ever from the irrational free random choosing that lies in the artist's depths (…) To the later philosophers of antiquity, the way in which Anaxagoras used his Nous to explain the world seemed strange, in fact hardly forgivable. It seemed to them as though he had found a magnificent tool but hadn't understood it right, and they sought to make up for what the finder had missed. In other words, they failed to recognize the meaning of Anaxagoras' renunciation, inspired by the purest spirit of natural scientific method [*naturwissenschaftlicher Methode*], which always and above all else asks the question of how something is (causa efficiens) rather than why something is (causa finalis). Anaxagoras introduced the Nous solely to answer the specific question: 'What causes movement, and what causes regular

> movements?' (…) In order to escape such difficulties, always created by teleology, Anaxagoras always had to emphasize most strongly and with the greatest conviction that mind was arbitrary [*der Geist willkürlich sei*]. All its acts, including that of primal motion, are acts of 'free will', while the entire rest of the world was strictly determined – mechanically determined, in fact – according to that initial moment [*nach jenem Urmoment, sich bilde*]. But absolute free will can only be imagined as purposeless, roughly like a child's game or an artist's creative play-impulse (PTAG 19, KSA 1. 868-72)[52].

In the aforementioned passage, Nietzsche associates himself with the interpretations of Anaxagorean *Nous* offered by Plato and Aristotle[53], arguing that Anaxagoras was not truly a teleologist because he attempted to discuss *Nous* in a naturalistic manner. In other words, this principle, which initiates motion and thus organizes the primal chaos, should not be examined solely through analogies to intellect, understanding, reason, or consciousness. Such an approach would fall back into the mythical thinking that Anaxagoras aimed to overcome. Rather than being a wise spirit that miraculously intervenes in matter, *Nous* is described here as a type of matter that initiates circular motion, leading to the ordering of the primal chaos and producing outcomes that may appear goal-directed without actually being so[54]. Ultimately, this scenario reflects Anaxagoras's attempt to describe the ordering movement without questioning the underlying reason, resulting in a mechanical perspective similar to the Kant-Laplace theory that excludes final causes and prioritizes mechanical explanations[55]. However, Nietzsche acknowledges that Anaxagoras does not entirely avoid reasoning by analogy. In addressing the origin of motion, Anaxagoras was led to consider *Nous* as an act of will. Yet, as noted in Chapter 19 of PTAG, this will is depicted as devoid of goals, irrational, and akin to the game of a child. In summary, Nietzsche de-intellectualizes

[52] See also PPP 13, KGW II, 4. 302-13

[53] See PLATO, 1997, p. 84-85. ARISTOTLE, 1991, p. 1558.

[54] In line with this interpretation, Nietzsche characterizes Anaxagoras' *Nous* as an *atheos ex machina* in a note from 1875. PF 6[46], KSA 8. 114. In the same notebook, Nietzsche describes the Anaxagorean worldview as irrationalist. PF 6[50], KSA 8. 119.

[55] In both the lectures on Democritus from the 1872 course and Chapter 17 of PTAG, dedicated to Anaxagoras, Nietzsche utilizes passages from Kant's preface to *Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels* (1755), albeit with minor alterations, and presents them in a single quotation. See KANT, 1902, 225-226 and 229. PTAG, KSA 1. 866-867. PPP 15, KGW II, 4. 334-335. In his studies of the Pre-Platonics, Nietzsche adopts the Kant-Laplace theory as the most accurate representation of scientific thought. In addition to Anaxagoras, he identifies other Pre-Platonic philosophers as precursors to this theory. See SCHLECHTA/ANDERS, 1962, p. 70. D'IORIO, 1994, p. 12 and 27.

Anaxagoras's central concept, aligning it with both the Heraclitean aesthetic worldview and Schopenhauer's metaphysics of Will[56].

But why does Nietzsche interpret *Nous* through the lens of two seemingly conflicting perspectives? Could this reflect mere indecision or, worse, a contradiction? Such an explanation seems overly simplistic. It is more plausible that Nietzsche is adopting a compatibilist approach similar to that of Zeller, who argues that *Nous* encompasses both teleological and mechanistic interpretations. Nietzsche appears to follow Zeller's lead, particularly in PPP, where he describes *Nous* as a composite of representations and desires, or of life and knowledge[57].

Now, and this is a more crucial question for our discussion, how does Nietzsche understand the intellectual dimension of *Nous*? In a revealing passage from PPP, Nietzsche clarifies that the semantic richness of the Greek term *Nous* cannot be fully captured by terms like *Intellekt*, *Verstand*, or *Vernunft*[58]. This reluctance to use a single translation may stem from the earlier observation that *Nous* possesses both intellectual and non-intellectual qualities. Nevertheless, this does not prevent Nietzsche from utilizing these translations (primarily *Verstand*, *Geist*, and *Intellekt*) or from isolating the intellectual aspects of *Nous*. One such prominent intellectual aspect that Nietzsche attributes to *Nous* is its intentionality, rooted in an anthropomorphic notion of conscious will, which deliberates and anticipates the order of events. This is particularly evident when Nietzsche leans toward a teleological reading of *Nous*, as in BT and in his lecture on Heraclitus in PPP. However, for Nietzsche, the intellectual aspect of the *Nous* is not exhausted by this sense. On this point, it is crucial to refer to Chapter 15 of PTAG, where *Nous* is also considered as *Denken*.

[56] Nietzsche's intention to develop a Schopenhauerian reading of Anaxagoras is evident. In PTAG, when addressing the non-teleological nature of the Anaxagorean *Nous*, Nietzsche refers to the chapter "On Teleology" in the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation,* where Schopenhauer continues his critique of physico-theological prejudices. These prejudices tend to view conformity to ends through the lens of the intellectual, intentional will, which is strictly regulatory, and overlook the true basis of conformity to ends: the unity of the will. See PTAG 19, KSA 1. 872. SCHOPENHAUER, 1986, p. 423-442.

[57] According to Zeller, in addition to the theistic interpretations, it should be considered that Anaxagoras viewed the *Nous*, or spirit (*Geist*), in a naturalistic manner. Zeller argues that Anaxagoras' doctrine of spirit marks the beginning of a new phase in Greek thought, while still remaining connected to the realism of the early philosophers. See ZELLER, 1869, p. 809-814.

[58] See PPP 13, KGW II, 4. 305.

> The Nous, in any event, was also such a substance existent in itself, and was characterized by him as an extremely delicate sensitive material with the specific property of thinking (PTAG 15, KSA 1. 859).

We encounter the introduction of a new element here, as thinking cannot be equated with intention or immediate knowledge of the totality. However, this provides only a somewhat vague explanation. Further clarification can be achieved by revisiting the presentation of MTO, which revolves around rational thinking.

Although Nietzsche does not explicitly classify the Anaxagorean *Nous* as rational thought in PTAG, this can be inferred from the thesis that Anaxagoras was the originator of the MTO. If, as we have seen, the presentation of the objection's argument begins with an examination of rational thought characterized by concepts in motion, and if Anaxagoras is identified as the originator of this objection and its argument, then it follows that the *Nous*, as conceived by Anaxagoras, must be understood as involving rational thought. Of course, in the MTO, the focus is on the psychological dimension of *Nous*. However, as previously discussed, Nietzsche's reliance on the equivalence between the *psyche* and *Nous* – or between psychological and cosmic *Nous* – implies that principles applicable to one should also extend to the other.

If the interpretation I propose is plausible, it introduces a new discrepancy within the prevailing scholarly consensus regarding the nature of *Nous*, not only in Anaxagoras but also among the Greeks in general. In this regard, it is pertinent to reference the seminal series of articles by Kurt Von Fritz on the evolution of *Nous* in ancient thought. Von Fritz established that, in general terms, *Nous* in Greek thought evolved from its Homeric origins, incorporating both a form of strategic planning and an intuitive knowledge that surpasses appearances. He also emphasized that this capacity lacks a rational dimension, meaning it is not inferential or syllogistic. According to his analysis, the rational aspect only emerges with Parmenides, who employs rational demonstration to support, rather than replace, the more fundamental and primordial intuitive knowledge. This sense of strategic planning and/or intuitive knowledge beyond mere appearances is also evident in Anaxagoras's *Nous*, although these attributes are projected onto a cosmic scale.[59].

We can assert that Nietzsche's characterization of the Anaxagorean *Nous* as an intentional force aligns with Von Fritz's findings. However, the

[59] See FRITZ, 1945, 223-242; 1964, p. 87-102.

depiction of the *Nous* as a force of rational thought cannot be reconciled with this view, nor with cognitivist interpretations of the Anaxagorean *Nous* in general[60]. Thus, we are left with the question of why Nietzsche characterizes the Anaxagorean *Nous* as rational thought when we find no justification for such an assertion in Anaxagoras himself.

One obvious reason is that, at least in PTAG, Nietzsche had to place Anaxagoras's *Nous* on the same theoretical level as the Kantian intellect, given the strategy of presenting the MTO between Chapters 13 and 15 of PTAG. It is important to remember that the MTO is presented dialectically in these chapters. After introducing the first version of the objection's argument, which was allegedly conceived by Anaxagoras, Nietzsche turns to Kant's passage, representing the Eleatic defense, and finally uses Spir, who offers the rejoinder that saves the objection from its opponents. For this progression to succeed, there must be a minimal correspondence between Anaxagoras's *Nous* and Kantian intellect. This can help us understand why the *Nous* cannot be associated at this moment with intention, and even less with a special cognitive capacity. As we well know, Kant rejects any kind of compromise with this kind of understanding of intellectual capabilities. The issue here does not lie in the intentional nature of the Anaxagorean *Nous*. In Kant's view, the mind is composed of faculties, and these faculties have intentions as their correlates – each faculty is guided by a purpose[61]. The problem arises when the mind is considered to possess divine and special cognitive faculties, what would come to be referred to as intellectual intuition. Kant completely distances himself from any theory that attributes these qualities to the intellect[62]. In summary, if Anaxagoras was indeed the originator of the objection, his conception of the *Nous* must be at least somewhat akin to the Kantian intellect, which essentially comprises a combination of different faculties producing representations, whether intuitive, like the faculty of sensibility, or discursive, like the faculties of understanding and reason, which handle concepts. That said, it does not seem plausible to me that when Nietzsche portrays the *Nous* as thought and/or rational thought, he intends to reduce the *Nous* to one of Kantian mental faculties, particularly the faculty of reason, a syllogistic faculty that, ultimately, fulfills the task of a systematic organization of knowledge. That is not the issue at hand. The goal here is, I believe, more strategic – it is simply about aligning

[60] In this context, André Laks' study is noteworthy. Building on fragment B12 of Anaxagoras, and aiming to illuminate aspects not fully explored by Von Fritz, Laks argues that it is reasonable to assume that the *Nous* possesses an intellectual capacity for discernment. See LAKS, 1993, p. 19-38.
[61] See WILLASCHEK, 2018, 23-24.
[62] See KANT, 1974, p. 281.

the *Nous* with the Kantian intellect so that the dialectical progression of the argument can proceed. If the *Nous* were characterized in Chapters 13 to 15 as possessing special intuitive knowledge, this connection would be undermined.

According to what has been discussed, it is now evident that Nietzsche's interpretation of the Anaxagorean *Nous* in PTAG is anachronistic. This observation is crucial, as it reveals that the assertion of Anaxagoras as the originator of MTO is likewise anachronistic. Consequently, the issue is no longer one of historical accuracy regarding Nietzsche's claim, as it is obviously untenable.

Thus, we are left with the question of Nietzsche's motivations. For these anachronisms certainly do not reflect naivety or ignorance. In this regard, I propose that the answer lies in Nietzsche's thesis that the original philosophers are intimately connected to the tradition of modern philosophy and science, as they, as *types*, established the elementary theoretical paradigms.

> Fundamentally, one can ask of any modern science: how did it stand with the Ancients? For example, mathematics, medicine, or agriculture, horse breeding. However, they achieved the highest scientific classicality as philosophers: never again has there been a comparable series of thinkers in which all philosophical possibilities could be fully realized. The most captivating period is almost the earliest one: such magnificently original figures as Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Parmenides, and Democritus (*Encyclopädie der klassischen Philologie*, KGW II, 3. 407).

> Pre-Platonic Philosophers (…) The original views of these philosophers are the highest and purest ever achieved. The men themselves are formal incarnations of philosophy and its various forms (…) They capture the eternal problems and also the eternal solutions (PF 14[28], KSA 7. 387).

> The Greeks created the philosopher's types [*Die Griechen haben die Philosophentypen geschaffen*]. We recall a community of such diverse individuals as Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Parmenides, Democritus, Protagoras and Socrates. Their inventiveness at this distinguishes the Greeks above all other peoples: normally a people produces only one enduring philosophical type. The Germans as well cannot measure up to this wealth. Each one of those men is entirely hewn from one stone; between their thought and their character lies rigorous necessity; they lack every agreement, because, at least at that time, there was no social class of philosophers. Each is the first-born son of philosophy. (…) We should emphasize the originality of their conceptions, from which

> subsequent history has taken its fill. Ever again we move in the same circular path, and almost always the ancient Greek form of such conceptions is the most majestic and purest, for example, with so-called materialism (PPP 1, KGW II, 4. 212-213)[63].

> The Greeks also philosophized as men of culture and with the aims of culture [*Die Griechen haben auch als Menschen der Kultur und mit den Zielen der Kultur philosophirt*], wherefore free of any kind of autochthonous conceit, they forebore trying to re-invent the elements of philosophy and science. Rather they instantly tackled the job of so fulfilling, enhancing, elevating and purifying the elements they took over from elsewhere that they became inventors after all, but in a higher sense and a purer sphere. For what they invented was the typical philosophical minds [*typischen Philosophenköpfe*]. All posterity has not made an essential contribution to them since (PTAG 1, KSA 1. 807).

This thesis is grounded in a particular philosophy of genius, supported by a broader commitment to a classicist intellectual agenda, which, although unconventional[64], is defended by Nietzsche during this period. His goal is to depict these philosophers as psychological and theoretical models, in a largely idealized and ahistorical manner. This does not mean that the Greeks were an autochthonous civilization or that their philosophers were free from foreign influences; nor does it argue against the possibility of mutual influences among these early philosophers, even if their relationships do not conform to the master-disciple *diadokhai*[65]. The point is that, for Nietzsche, these individuals would have assimilated the intellectual legacy they inherited to craft distinct and unique worldviews, an effort that corresponds with the pinnacle of human capabilities. Consequently, all subsequent scientific and intellectual production is nothing more than a repercussion of the accomplishments of the Greeks[66]. That elucidates why Nietzsche regards all significant modern intellectual achievements as deeply rooted in the Pre-Platonic philosophers. It is in this sense that Thales' thought is seen as a precursor to Paracelsus' theory of the transformation of water and to Lavoisier's theory of the transformation of water into earth[67]. Likewise, Democritus is presented as a forerunner of the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, which would later

[63] Part of this excerpt will later be reused in PTAG.
[64] See NASSER, 2021, p. 141.
[65] Instead of referring to the *diadokhai*, Nietzsche speaks of *types*. See PF 19[169], KSA 7. 471.
[66] See D'IORIO, 1994, p. 17-18.
[67] See PPP 6, KGW II, 4. 236. PF 26[1], KSA 7. 571.

become prominent with Locke[68]. Be that as it may, I do not wish to elaborate further on this topic. What is crucial here is that endorsing the claim that Anaxagoras was the originator of MTO entails accepting the thesis that the most fundamental theoretical paradigms were established by the Pre-Platonic philosophers. In this regard, just as Nietzsche ascribes to Anaxagoras the discovery of the law of conservation of energy and the indestructibility of matter[69], as well as the anticipation of the Kant-Laplace theory, as previously noted, he similarly credits Anaxagoras with the creation of MTO.

Concluding remarks

The findings presented in this article suggest that Nietzsche's assertion of Anaxagoras as the originator of the MTO holds some plausibility when assessed in light of Nietzsche's views on motion, wherein movement is necessarily regarded as an intrinsic characteristic of the *Nous*. This assertion can be inferred, despite lacking historical support. However, the same does not apply to defining the *Nous* in motion in Anaxagoras as *rational* thought in motion, which encompasses the premise for the argument of the MTO in its entirety. Moreover, Nietzsche fails to provide any justification for attributing the outcome of the argument to Anaxagoras – the recognition of representations in movement, followed by the demonstration of the reality of time/change – , not dealing with two widely accepted views, namely i) that Anaxagoras rejects the concept of becoming and ii) that, for Anaxagoras, the reality of time/change does not need to be demonstrated. Consequently, Nietzsche's thesis that Anaxagoras was the creator of MTO can only be upheld within the broader classicist thesis, which posits that the Pre-Platonic thinkers are responsible for the creation of the modern theoretical paradigms. Without accepting this broader thesis, much of the persuasive power of Nietzsche's claim that Anaxagoras was the creator of the MTO is significantly weakened.

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[68] See PF 52[30], 57[12], KGW I, 4. 221, 381. PPP 15, KGW II, 4. 333, 339-40.
[69] See PPP 13, KGW II, 4. 308.

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