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65%.

For completion by Marker 1 :

Comments: This is a well presented piece of work that provides clarity of argument as well as a thoughtful analysis of the issues at stake. There is a sound awareness here of the wider philosophical dimensions of the topic, with cogent & structured arguments. In places, there as a couple of points that could be further developed, & you should avoid comma-splices (running what should be two separate sentences together with a comma) to improve the writing style & avoid claims being 'run together' (avoid them running into each other). This will improve the presentation & the clarity of your claims & arguments.

Marker's signature:

Date:

For completion by Marker 2/Moderator:

Comments:

Overall, though, this is a very good piece of work that reveals a critical appreciation of the chosen texts.

Marker's Signature:

Date:

AGREED INTERNAL MARK (where necessary):

Comment on process on arriving at agreed mark:

External Examiner's comments (if relevant)

External Examiner's Signature:

Date:

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HPPH7010 - KNOWLEDGE, REASON AND REALITY
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY - ASSESSMENT ONE

1. Popper, Karl, 'Back to the Presocratics' in: *The World of Parmenides: Essays on the Presocratic Enlightenment* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012) pp. 7-32 ✓

In the first chapter of Karl Popper's *The World of Parmenides*, entitled *Back to the Presocratics* he gives us an overview of the presocratic philosophers from Thales up to Parmenides, albeit only discussing the latter briefly; seeing that the book is entitled *The World of Parmenides* this may surprise the reader however this chapter serves other aims. The chapter has two primary aims, first to give an accessible overview of some of the presocratic writers without getting too caught up in the minutia which can come from the source material, particularly issues such as translations and interpretations. Secondly and most importantly Popper wishes to demonstrate, and in various ways, valorise, the presocratics, in particular their methodology which he closely links to the culture of study apparent within the Greek speaking world of the time.

J.

Popper's writing emphasises a throughline through presocratic thought, which makes it easier to follow, especially for those who do not have a long history of studying Greek philosophy, although, as I will discuss later, this is not intended for complete novices to philosophy. Popper himself does not seem to regard himself as a leading thinker on the presocratics, possibly modestly, referring to himself as an 'amateur'¹ in the field. To make this narrative throughline Popper only focuses on what he calls the 'problem of change'²; this however does not serve an issue particularly as change itself was the primary concern of presocratic cosmology, an area which makes up the vast majority of what we know of their work.

The mid-section of the chapter largely deals with an overview of the major presocratic philosophers; however, these reviews are only brief and serve towards demonstrating his view on presocratic teachings which I shall go on to discuss later. As aforementioned, Popper deals little with problems of translation or interpretation, an area which many see as key to truly understand the presocratics. J. However however I think that often this can be off putting for those who are relatively new to the subject so in that regard it works as intended, that of a general overview. The only direct discussion of translation happens in response to G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven's work on Heraclitus which Popper finds lacking.³ J.H. Popper here only gives a brief explanation as to this and largely asks us to take on faith that he is correct in this matter. To what extent it was important to discuss Kirk and Raven's work in this chapter seems debatable and to an extent distracts from the main themes of the work, however it is only a short section and therefore is over within two pages which can be easily read and quickly forgotten.

J.S.

Of the two main areas of the chapter the second is by far the most interesting and the first is there primarily to provide the backing for it; namely it is that philosophy is at its most pure when it embraces a 'critical discussion'⁴ approach. This according to Popper is why presocratic philosophy was such a rapidly evolving period of thought, in which the student is expected to being critical of their teacher and peers as well as other school of thought, be they philosophical schools or not; and this was done without the worry of looking foolish if one is wrong. This would go some way to explain why in this relatively short period of time there was a time of flourishing which clearly build upon and reject one another but which are also all incredibly innovative; all ideas are valid as long as they sound. be

¹ Popper, Karl, *The World of Parmenides: Essays on the Presocratic Enlightenment* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012), p. 8.

² Ibid. p. 8.

³ Ibid. pp. 18-19.

⁴ Ibid. p. 20. ✓

JH
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Popper argues that this tradition can earliest be seen in Thales, although there could have been previous thinkers we are unaware of, and carries through until Aristotle, with notable followers being Anaximander and Xenophanes.⁵ Although he does point out that Pythagoras could be seen as rejecting this practice in his school, however as this was more akin to a cult than a traditional school that is unsurprising. The sift away from critical discourse can be seen in Aristotle according to Popper who preferred a rigorous critique of the world with the aim to show 'certain and demonstratable knowledge'⁶ according to the Aristotelian tradition of episteme.

The critical discourse is one which Popper compares to modern schooling, which he takes a dim view of stating 'it is the task of a [modern] school to hand on the tradition, the doctrine of its founder, its first master, to the next generation, and to this end the most important thing is to keep the doctrine inviolate'.⁷ This to Popper stifles innovation where knowledge is reproduced rather than innovated upon; I find this to be a fair assessment as often having too radical ideas can be seen as a problem in itself, even if the arguments are sound, within modern academic philosophy, where small changes are preferred over paradigm sifting thoughts. This preference is also strange when we think that the most valorised philosophers in history such as Plato, Hegel, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger all provided radical new ways of looking and understanding the world in a way that was normal for the presocratics. ✓ Good point

A final note on how Popper deals with the presocratics which is important is that he does not treat them as foolish or silly which is often the case in modern philosophy, particularly within the analytical tradition. Nor does he treat them as doing their best with what we had before *proper* science evolved but rather as unique and interesting thinkers in their own right who deserve to be taken seriously.

Overall, Popper's *Back to the Presocratics* provides a picture of philosophy which is both alluring and agreeable, one in which philosophers should be completely free of all constraints and aim for larger theories which build and critique previous thought rather than spend years debating small aspects of a previous thinker to find a small and relatively inconsequential new interpretation. The chapter can be seen as a call to reinvigorate philosophical inquiry, and in that I propose it is best suited for those who wish to get a feel of presocratic philosophy but also those who have a solid basis in philosophy and need reminding of the genuine wonder which is why we get into studying philosophy in the first place.

1078 words not including titles and footnotes.

⁵ Ibid. p. 22.

⁶ Ibid. p. 23.

⁷ Ibid. p. 21.

2. Osbourne, Catherine, 'Heraclitus', in *From the Beginning to Plato: Routledge History of Philosophy*, ed. By C. C. W. Taylor (London: Routledge, 2003), pp.80 - 116

Catherine Osbourne's chapter 'Heraclitus' can be found in the edited collection of work entitled *From the Beginning to Plato* edited by C. C. W. Taylor and rather than just give an overview of Heraclitus it aims to both inform and put forward an interpretation of his work which puts emphasis on areas which are not traditionally seen as important.

The chapter starts with an observation that Heraclitus is almost certainly the most influential presocratic thinker, which is almost certainly true, and that there is a great deal of disagreement on interpretation of Heraclitus which is definitely true.

Osbourne will be arguing her own interpretation which states that 'Heraclitus' most important observation was that the significance of things changes with the time and place and context of the observer, and of the speaker'⁸. This is an unusual take on Heraclitus as it puts much of the significance in both a social and temporal context whilst most accounts only take into consideration the temporal aspect change.

There is a great deal of discussion in the in the paper on the issue of interpretation. Particularly in light of how Heraclitus' work is only seen in fragments and exclusively from later sources as well as the fact Heraclitus seemed to have to have expressed his thoughts in short pithy sayings⁹. Osbourne also correctly identifies that many different thinkers have interpreted his work to their own ends from Stoics, Christians to Post-Structuralists, which, in many ways, makes finding interpretations that are not polluted by other biases tricky.

To Osbourne's credit, each time she introduces a new fragment, she provides in an endnote, a short, yet informative explanation of the translation, where it came from and any notable influences present within the translation when needed. This will be of great interest to someone looking for more sources on Heraclitus and with an interest in the history of translations.

There is an interesting section regarding the gods and how Heraclitus is often considered as an atheist to at least indifferent to the gods, but this is almost certainly wrong as atheism was almost unheard of in the Ancient Greek world. Rather, Osbourne puts forward a picture of Heraclitus' view in which 'what is truly divine is a cause outside and beyond the humdrum decisions of unpredictable individuals'¹⁰. In his view the traditional Greek Pantheon are still there and intervening in the human world, but they are lower than the logos.

Osbourne continues discussing Heraclitus and religion but this time in regard to religious practice where she again takes a contrary opinion to many other writers on Heraclitus in that he never was belittling to the religious but rather used their practices as a prime example of the social/temporal practices which he sees as demonstrating the logos of the world. I find this to be an agreeable take, which, whilst not unique to Osbourne, is from my reading an underrepresented view within the literature and for that alone is worth reading and contemplating for one interested in studying Heraclitus.

Using the fragment concerning the religious ceremony in which the participants clean themselves spiritually with mud, Osbourne brings in a major theme of the unity of opposites. The unity of

⁸ Catherine Osbourne, 'Heraclitus', in *From the Beginning to Plato: Routledge History of Philosophy*, ed. By C. C. W. Taylor (London: Routledge, 2003), pp 80 – 116 (p. 80).

⁹ Ibid. p. 80.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 82.

opposites takes up a great deal of the paper and is explained clearly and in great detail, this might be somewhat daunting to those who have not already gotten a grasp of the basics of Heraclitus but with some work it should become surmountable by most with an interest in the subject.

Another major theme of the paper is that of differing interpretations and translations, not just in the well-researched endnotes as previously mentioned but also through the main body of text. This heavy emphasis on translation is one which will certainly interest those who have an already pre-existing interest in Heraclitus' philosophy and the topic of translation; there was plenty in this paper which gave me more nuanced view of Heraclitus; however, I do get the impression that this would be off-putting to many who are only at the beginning of studying Greek philosophy, or philosophy in general for that matter. But I do not think that is inherently a problem with the paper as when we write at an academic level there are still levels of accessibility to be aimed at, from pieces aimed at first year undergraduate students to post-doctoral research which are meant to be read by those already with a solid understanding of the subject and this is often required to allow for an in-depth analysis of a topic without the writing becoming bloated explaining every aspect of the work.

As with any work on Heraclitus the logos is discussed in detail but instead of a definitive definition, as many other writers give, Osborne gives a more tentative answer in her attempt to try and not put her own views upon Heraclitus as others have done; a particular issue with Heraclitus in that even the primary sources we have for his work such as Aristotle, it is thought, did not give an accurate picture.

A final point that Osborne discusses of note is that Heraclitus is probably particularly hard to translate and interpret because he used word-play and puns in his writing in an attempt to both show the importance of change but primarily the unity of opposites; this is particularly interesting as it demonstrates how there can be so many radically different interpretations of Heraclitus because that is what he wanted, namely for the reader to be able to see his writing in more than one way and in this contrast see the unity of opposites. This observation goes to prove Osborne's original thesis, that Heraclitus was interested not just in temporal change but also the societal context lending meaning and as we have lost much of the social context of the time of Heraclitus' lifetime we struggle to understand his work.

Support

Overall, Osborne's paper is certainly not for beginners and might be off putting for to some but if one has an interest in translation or wishes to deepen their knowledge and understanding of Heraclitus it is a valuable source which one could learn a great deal from and also gain many further resources from its excellent endnotes and references which would aid anyone who wishes to further their own research.

1084 words not including titles and footnotes.

3. Priest, Graham, 'What is philosophy?' *Philosophy* 81, 316 (2006) 189-207, <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/what-is-philosophy-graham-priest/docview/231320939/se-2> (accessed November 16, 2022)

The paper *What is Philosophy?* By Graham Priest is a transcript of a speech given at the University of Melbourne in November 2003 and acts as a relatively light read which never gets into too much detail, often to its own detriment.

In this paper Priest asks the titular question what is philosophy? A question which even though the subject is over 2,500 years old as an academic discipline, has never had a particularly satisfactory answer given by anyone even though many of the most prominent names in the history of philosophy have tried. From personal experience I too struggle to define the topic either resorting to a short and unsatisfactory explanation which does not capture what it is to do philosophy or a long list of the major areas of philosophy which ends up being a description rather than an explanation.

The piece is split into three sections, the first two dealing with the most prominent theories of what philosophy is, that of the later Wittgenstein and Derrida and why Priest finds both to be lacking. In the final section he gives his own view which is noticeably different from the previous two positions.

In the first section which pertains to Wittgenstein, Priest focuses on what is largely considered his *magnus opus*, *The Philosophical Investigations*¹¹ which acts as a fundamental departure and rejection of his earlier work which is codified with the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*¹². Priest starts by giving a basic overview of the *Tractatus* which is often needed as a basis for grasping what Wittgenstein was trying to say in his later work; Priest's explanation is not particularly informative and is certainly meant for those who already have a familiarity with the work. Although, to his credit he does admit that 'It is, of course, dangerous and potentially misleading to summarise any philosopher's views in a few words – especially Wittgenstein's'¹³.

The section continues by giving a solid introduction to *The Philosophical Investigations*, in particular the aspects of language games and forms of life by using Wittgenstein's chess analogy. If one wanted an introduction to Wittgenstein's later thought this section has its positives and negatives. It has the benefit of being clear and concise which is welcome in commentaries on his work, but the drawbacks come from the form in which the paper was originally given, that of a speech, and in being one I assume there was a time limit which constraints full explanations, nor are there any endnotes and only a few footnotes which are references to various major works of philosophy which one would easily come across in other sources. Due to this the reader would struggle to use this paper to gain any new further readings as they will almost certainly be aware of any texts discussed.

Wittgenstein's view of what is philosophy is well explained and would be perfectly understandable to those with at least some knowledge of his work, again it is clear and without any unnecessary terminology which is very welcome.

Priest's critique as previously mentioned of Wittgenstein's account of philosophy is wholly negative. Personally, I have an unfavourable view of Wittgenstein's conception on the nature of philosophy, but I find Priest's initial salvo, that Wittgenstein's argument is self-refuting 'For after all, the claim that 'philosophy only states what everyone admits' is a pretty substantial philosophical thesis – and not one that everyone would admit'¹⁴ to be weak. This is due to it being easily refuted by a standard rebuttal that once we speak clearly and free of linguistic confusion in our statements we would be saying the same thing.

¹¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd edn. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972)

¹² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981)

¹³ Graham Priest, 'What is Philosophy?' *Philosophy* 81, 316 (2006) 189-207 (p.190)

<https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/what-is-philosophy-graham-priest/docview/231320939/se-2>

¹⁴ Priest, 'What is Philosophy?', p. 194

4. Bostrom, Nick, 'Are you living in a computer simulation?', *Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. 53 No. 211, (2003), pp. 243-255

H In the paper *Are you Living in a Computer Simulation?*¹⁵ Nick Bostrom argues for the affirmative giving an argument based upon probability whilst never trying to provide a definitive answer which makes his argument stronger overall. He then finishes the paper by discussing the possible ramifications of living in a simulation, however while he does a good job at describing some of the possibilities this is the weakest section of the paper due to some of the assumptions that he makes without any probable basis. Ja

At the very beginning of the paper Bostrom lays out the foundation of the main body of the paper clearly and succinctly. He states that he wishes to demonstrate:

that at least one of the following propositions is true: (1) the human species is very likely to go extinct before reaching a "posthuman" stage; (2) any posthuman civilization is extremely unlikely to run a significant number of simulations of their evolutionary history (or variations thereof); (3) we are almost certainly living in a computer simulation¹⁶

To accept Bostrom's theory he states one would have to accept a material conception of the mind which is fairly standard across the field of philosophy of mind, and that a mind could be simulated/created by a computer. There is another possibility which he does not discuss that one could have a dualist approach but in which souls are endowed to an A.I., this would be contrary to any mainstream religious belief, however, from a non-religious dualist perspective it is certain possible. While this

Good point, particularly that a religion is held by the majority of the world's population. Bostrom tends towards adopting a substrate-independence theory of mind where the mind can supervene on the physical although he rightly points out that for his argument to work all we need to do is accept that minds can be created and exist on a computer. This demonstrates one of the best strengths of Bostrom's argument, that he will not claim more than is inherently necessary for his conclusion. This makes it a clear paper to read and creates a surprisingly flexible theory without any real excess which could be picked apart.

The main crux of the paper and why it is based upon probability, rather than a definitive proof, is that posthuman societies will have the capability to build machines easily powerful enough to create consciousness and that theoretically this could be used to run simulations of the creator ancestry a near infinite number of times, therefore chances are heavily in favour of us being a part of one of these simulations. The alternative being the comparatively unlikely chance that we are in the non-simulated world which and one day humanity will either go extinct or we will end up running these simulations ourselves. JT

Several pages are devoted to relatively simple calculations using approximate numbers to prove that computers are able to recreate the power of the human mind and they are near infinitely scalable so workable models including billions of people are certainly possible. There are also some examples given on how the simulation could be made even more simple such as by not having the world be simulated wherever a mind is not aware of; this is a sensible observation as this is the way that video games save on processing power and is seen as standard practice within the industry. Bostrom also observes that if anything was to ever go wrong with the simulation those running it could easily reset the simulation or just erase our memory of the incident.

Bostrom devotes a few pages to complex mathematical equations to try and demonstrate the unlikely (according to him) chance humans are not going to achieve posthuman status and run ancestry simulations. The mathematics itself is beyond my capabilities but if I take his word on their validity.

¹⁵ Nick Bostrom, 'Are you living in a computer simulation?', *Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. 53 No. 211, (2003), pp. 243-255

¹⁶ Ibid. p.243.

The concept of post-human itself is problematic, too.

However, this does raise my only major issue with the paper, that Bostrom assumes we would be living in an ancestry simulation. We might well be living in one, but we could also be in a video game only meant for pleasure and one day we will suddenly be deleted when the player grows bored, or we might be living, from the programmer's perspective, a fantasy realm, which could be any degree of difference from their own. In fact, we do not even know if the programmer is human or posthuman, we could just easily be at the whims of a creature which is as distant from humans as the most fanciful alien that humanity has ever conceived of. None of this goes against Bostrom's claim we are living in a simulation; in fact, it makes it more likely as it vastly expands the possibilities and therefore makes it more likely, what it does do is make the idea that we are living in a posthuman simulation of their own ancestry considerably less likely.

The final point in the paper worth noting is Bostrom's thoughts on the ramifications of living in a simulation. He correctly points out that if we are in a simulation we might then have a real possibility of an afterlife, or an objective ethical system present within the world as if god given; in many ways the runners of the simulation would be as gods to ourselves. The problem, however, is that it presumes a human/posthuman programmer with divivable ethics and any interest in our wellbeing. If we are living in a video game let us hope the player is a caring one and knows what they are doing but there is no reason to believe one way or another; the possibilities are quite literally endless. ✓

In conclusion, Bostrom provides an excellent argument for our existence in a computer simulation which is bolstered by the way he argues based on probability whilst allowing for a slim chance we do not living in a simulation. The issue that I have raised while being damaging to his conception of the type of simulation only make the possibility that we are living in one even more likely. Overall, this is an intriguing paper and well worth investigating by anyone with an interest in philosophy of mind, A.I. or simulation theory.

1013 words not including titles and footnotes.

4228 words overall not including titles, footnotes, and bibliography.

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