The Fragments of Anaxagoras: Introduction, Text, and Commentary
by David Sider

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David Sider's fine edition of Anaxagoras (originally published in 1981
by Verlag Anton Hain) has been reissued in a second edition by Acad-
emia Verlag in their International Pre-Platonic Studies series. The
first edition was a major contribution, but suffered from some flaws.
It was a photographic reproduction of a typescript, ugly and difficult
to read, from before the days of computerized typesetting. There
were some words left out of the translations [B1, B4a]; some errors of
translation ('force produces speed' instead of 'speed produces force'
in B9; 'earth is separated out of clouds' instead of 'water. . . ' in B16);
and a typo or two in the Greek. The new edition is typeset and
easy to read. New sections have been added to the introduction—
'Diagrams', 'Style', and 'Allegory'—and the bibliography has been
brought up to date. Overall the text has not changed much since the
first edition, though there are some additions. Nevertheless, since
the first edition has been out of print and is virtually impossible to
get, even used, this new edition is welcome simply for making the
work available again in an improved version.

Sider provides a thorough, scholarly edition of the Greek text,
following the order and numbering of Diels' B-fragments. His text
is based on a new examination of microfilms of the MSS (including
a number not collated by Diels) of Simplicius, who preserves most
of the fragments. Sider corrects some errors in the previous texts,
perhaps most notably pointing out that ἡ γῆ in B15 was not an
emendation of the text by Diels, but was in the MSS (the article,
however, was omitted in most of them). He defends the reading of
F for B2, ἀπὸ τοῦ πόλου τοῦ περιέχοντος (other MSS have πολλοῦ),
translating 'out of the vault of the surrounding matter'. He points

out that at this early period πόλος typically means 'celestial sphere' rather than 'pole', and makes perfectly good sense. This provides an attractive reading of a difficult passage—although perhaps πόλος is too precise a term for what was present in the early stages of the cosmogony. Sider gives evidence for rejecting B20 as a fragment of Anaxagoras (it is now recognized as referring to Hesiod).

Sider diligently sifts through ancient readings and commentaries as well as modern interpretations to provide a balanced view of the fragments and the theory they express. He is careful in his treatment of problems, thorough in his review of scholarship, and judicious in his interpretations.

It would be nice if Sider had expanded the edition to include testimonies—which are referred to in many cases, but not reproduced systematically. Since a good deal of Anaxagoras' theory, especially his cosmology, appears only in testimonies, a treatment of the fragments alone leaves us without a complete account of his theory. Sider's 66-page introduction gives a good overview of Anaxagoras' life, works, and style, as well as an account of the text and its transmission. But there is little there about content. Sider does address questions of philosophical interpretation in the commentary, and sums up in a seven-page conclusion dealing with Anaxagoras' theories. There is not, however, a detailed analysis of Anaxagoras' philosophical system in Sider's book. Sider subscribes to the widely-held view that the elemental stuffs are composed from contrary qualities, e.g., gold is composed of hot and cold, wet and dry, light and dark, and so forth, in certain proportions. Though this view solves some theoretical problems, it does not adequately account for Anaxagoras' failure to make a formal distinction between contraries and stuffs; and in general it turns his theory into something quite different from the lavish ontology it appears to be [see Graham 2004].

Sider argues that Anaxagoras had a theory of perspective that allowed him to say that the large and small have the same number of parts. His attention to some previously overlooked reports on this subject is an important contribution. He also accepts reports that Anaxagoras provided allegorical interpretations of Homeric passages and provides plausible evidence for this. His exposition of Anaxagoras' style in a new section of the introduction provides an intelligent and valuable analysis of what seem to modern readers to be a convoluted way of expressing oneself.

While Sider's philological analyses are in general excellent, I have a couple of bones to pick. In dealing with the verb διακρίνεσθαι, he says,

> While ἀπόκρισις describes the separation of simples (δυνά-μεις or seeds) from the περιέχον or from each other, result-ing in the predominance of some new substance, διάκρισις, on the other hand, is limited to the breaking-up process, i.e. the disarranging, as in B 17, where it = ἀπόλλυσθαι. The following formula is suggested: ἀπόκρισις = διάκρισις + σύμ-μιξις. [109]

In accordance with this interesting analysis, Sider translates διακρί-νεσθαι by 'to break up'. But the evidence for this reading seems less than obvious to me. Several times [e.g., B12.16, 26] Anaxagoras pairs διακρίνεσθαι and ἀποκρίνεσθαι as synonyms. No doubt the terms have different nuances, but I do not see how the dissolution implied by the former term in B17 is very different from the separation of parts implied by the latter term.

As I have noted, most of the problems of translation in the first edition are fixed in the second, but there is one place where the second edition is inferior. In B11 (second edition) Sider renders ἐν παντὶ παντὸς μοῖρα ἔνεστιν πλὴν νοῦ, ἔστιν οἷσι δὲ καὶ νοῦς ἔνι by 'In everything *but Nous* there is a share of everything, but there are some things in which Nous too is present' [123, emphasis added]. That the first νοῦς goes with μοῖρα is clear both from its position and from the second clause, in which it is the subject. The correct translation is surely that of the first edition: 'In everything there is a share of everything *but Nous. . . .*' The erroneous translation is presented without any change in the commentary accompanying it to explain the alteration (one new comment is added, which does not concern the first clause). Sider leaves '*Nous*' transliterated because 'there can be no exact equivalent'. Still, the same could be said of διακρίνεθαι and most of the substantive terms Anaxagoras uses; translators should translate, not transliterate.

One last problem of translation I worry about is Sider's treat-ment of ἄπειρος, which he consistently translates as 'infinite'. He holds that Anaxagoras has a fairly sophisticated view of numbers, including concepts of the infinitely large and infinitely small [86–88]. But there is a gap between Anaximander's boundless (ἄπειρον)and

Aristotle's concept of infinity [*Physics* 3], and it is not clear to me that Anaxagoras is near Aristotle. The things 'boundless in multitude and smallness' that were together in the primeval chaos [B1] may just be uncountably large in number and immeasurably small. The fact that later commentators understand Anaxagoras' elements to be infinite may say more about their use of the term ἄπειρος than about Anaxagoras' meaning. There is no question that Anaxagoras thinks that division can go on without end [B3], but whether he thinks the basic realities are infinite is not so obvious. Furthermore, even if the things (χρήματα) are infinite in number, it is not immediately clear whether the elements are infinite in number; the things in question may be 'seeds', that is, on Sider's plausible reading [94–95], small concentrations of some character, e.g., earth or water, in which case a finite number of elemental stuffs could be present in an infinite number of particles. Indeed, why did Anaxagoras speak of the smallness of the things if he was not thinking of particles? In any case, more needs to be said about Anaxagoras' ἄπειρα.[1]

All in all this is a first-rate edition of the fragments of Anaxagoras. It sets a high standard of scholarship and can be used as the definitive edition of the philosopher. It does not provide a full-blown philosophical study of Anaxagoras with testimonies. For that we can look forward to the forthcoming book by Patricia Curd in the Phoenix series of the University of Toronto Press. But Curd's work could not be what it is without Sider's edition. And we can be grateful to Academia Verlag for making Sider's study available.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Graham, D. W. 2004. 'Was Anaxagoras a Reductionist?' *Ancient Philosophy* 24:1–18.

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[1] One small complaint about references in the apparatus. Sider frequently cites β among the MSS. This reference is easily found in the *conspectus siglorum* of the first edition (it refers to common readings of MSS Δ and Θ); and the same conventions are used in the second edition. But, since 'β' does not appear in the *conspectus* of the second edition, it is almost impossible to discover in this edition what it stands for. The diligent reader can find the answer in a parenthesis on page 58, though it appears in this form, 'b: agreement of D and Q', where the desired Greek letters have been set in a roman typeface.