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Comments on the Sources of Greek Philosophical Criticism

Abstract: The present article attempts to shed light on the sources of philosophical criticism of early Greece and on the origins of the critical attitude adopted by the thinkers of the period. Above all, however, reflections presented hereby are meant to serve as a backdrop for analyses of a much broader scope. The study seeks to identify the defining characteristics of early Greek criticism, upon which basis the author puts forth a proposition for a general typology of its forms. Complementing the present comments is a brief discussion of the suggested types of philosophical criticism in light of the views of some of the leading philosophers of the time.

Keywords: early Greek philosophy, critical thinking, criticism, skepticism, typology

There is universal agreement that a critical approach is the main force pushing human thought forward, and that criticism, as an attribute of thought, must be an essential element of rational reflection on reality. A deficit of criticism leads not only to stagnation in scholarship and science, but also to the appearance of various forms of dogmatism, which do not permit the emergence of alternative views, nor the revision of positions acknowledged as final. Dogmatism in science often goes hand in hand with dogmatism in worldviews, which manifests itself in the social sphere in the form of a conviction that final solutions have been found. The ability to think critically is a refreshing quality in both academic and social debates, and may even be—in the Pyrrhonian spirit—an antidote to the deceitful consequences of unreflective dogmatism.

From a historical perspective, researchers seeking the source of the critical approach most frequently point to the views of Pyrrho (earlier, possi-

bly, to the Sophists) and to those of the Academics, who present a mature, though not entirely unambiguous form of criticism and as such have been the subject of a slew of studies. However, it is worth taking a look at historically earlier sources of critical reflection in pre-Pyrrhonian thought. There exist, of course, studies dedicated to specific problems encompassed by criticism during this period of the history of philosophy, such as Plato's elenctics or hypothetics, or the aporetics of Aristotle. Reflection on pre-Platonic critical thought, analyzed, for example, in light of the skeptical themes present within it, seems especially interesting. For skepticism—in its Greek sense—is an expression of criticism[1] and, as such, stands in opposition to dogmatism in both its positive and negative forms. It is worth noting here that many scholars understand criticism solely in light of the thought of Immanuel Kant, who refers to the concept of the *a priori* conditions of the possibility of experience. In light of such an understanding, criticism appears as a cognitive approach in opposition to both dogmatism and skepticism. Such a conviction is based on Kant's typology, which presents the necessary stages of philosophy as he sees them: dogmatism, skepticism, and criticism.[2] The thinker from Königsberg describes dogmatism as a way of thinking that blindly trusts the authority of reason, which expands *a priori* by way of conceptions, that is, which declares trust of knowledge without first investigating the ability to make judgments on objects beyond the sphere of possible experience. Skepticism, on the other hand, assumes the impossibility of achieving certainty. Kantian criticism was to go beyond dogmatism and skepticism. In my opinion however, such a stance may be qualified as dogmatic because it considers the acquisition of knowledge impossible and therefore may be described in terms

[1] Criticism refers back to the verb κρίνω (to separate, distinguish, judge, evaluate, explain, investigate, among others) and to the adjective κριτικός (critical, able to distinguish, deciding, among others).

[2] See Immanuel Kant, "Logik," in: Immanuel Kant, *Werkausgabe*. 6. Bd. Ed. by W. Weischedel. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1993); see also: Immanuel Kant, "Welches sind die wirklichen Fortschritte, die die Metaphysik seit Leibnizens und Wolffs Zeiten in Deutschland gemacht hat?" in: Immanuel Kant, *Werkausgabe*. 6. Bd. W. Weischedel, ed. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1993).

of *negative dogmatism*. In my reflections, I will employ the root understanding of skepticism (Gr. σκέπτομαι—to investigate, examine, consider, judge) as a philosophical stance that consists in perpetual searching and examination (zeteticism). Adopting such a position, I refer back to the typology of Sextus Empiricus, who, in his *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, distinguishes three philosophies:[3] dogmatic (δογματική), characteristic of those who assert that they have found the truth; academic (ἀκαδημαική), described as negative dogmatism, which rejects the possibility of finding truth; and skeptical (σκεπτική), which postulates a lasting search for truth. Of course, we have to be aware of the fact that this division occurs for the first time only in the writings of Sextus—and that it does not appear *explicite* in pre-Platonic texts. Nevertheless, it is worth using this typology as a frame of reference for the purpose of analysing the views of the thinkers of this period, because it will allow us to grasp the difference between negative dogmatism (academic philosophy) and true skepticism more precisely. In light of such a distinction, criticism as skepticism appears as an anti-dogmatic stance, and, as such, stands in opposition to both positive and negative dogmatism. Skepticism, in its root understanding,[4] that is, above all, as zeteticism (conversely to what it is in Kant's typology, in which it is essentially

[3] Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, translated by R.G. Bury (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1990), I, 1–2.

[4] Sextus specifies that skeptical philosophy (σκεπτική) is zetetic (ζητητική), because it commands one to search and examine (τὸ ζητεῖν καὶ σκέπτεσθαι), effectic (ἐφεκτική), due to the holding back that follows after investigation, aporetic (ἀπορητική), because it presupposes helplessness and searching (ἀπορεῖν καὶ ζητεῖν) and Pyrrhonian (Πυρρώνειος), as Pyrrho came closest to true skepticism (Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines…*, I, 7). Diogenes Laertios, on the other hand, writes, that this doctine got its name from the fact that its adepts were called "aporetics (ἀπορητικοί), skeptics (σκεπτικοί), effectics (ἐφεκτικοί) or zetetics (ζητητικοί). Zetetics due to the fact that they searched for truth everywhere (ἀπὸ τοῦ πάντοτε ζητεῖν τὴν ἀλήθειαν), skeptics because they always searched for, but never found, solutions (ἀπὸ τοῦ σκέπτεσθαι ἀεὶ καὶ μηδέποτε εὑρίσκειν), effectics due to their approach to research, that is, from holding back (ἀπὸ τοῦ μετὰ τὴν ζήτησιν πάθους· λέγω δέ τὴν ἐποχήν); aporetics because, in their opinion, dogmatics also stood before problems in the face of which they were helpless (ἀπὸ τοῦ τοὺς δογματικοὺς ἀπορεῖν καὶ αὐτούς) and Pyrrhonians from Pyrrho." Diogenis Laertii, *Vitae Philosophorum*, rec. H. S. Long, 2 voll. (Oxonii: E Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1964), IX, 69–70.

tantamount to negative dogmatism), fits within the bounds of criticism. Simultaneously, it is worth noting that in Kant's understanding, criticism stood in opposition to *both* dogmatism and skepticism. Thereby, taking categories proposed by Sextus Empiricus as our point of departure, we can say that Kantian typology could be revised thusly: positive dogmatism, negative dogmatism, criticism.

Here we must assert that the opposition between positive and negative dogmatism is tied with the cognoscibility of truth; the former stance asserts that truth *can* be cognized, the latter—that it *cannot* be cognized. These stances are, then, in logical opposition to one another, while their negations—as Jan Woleński observes[5]—correspond to the stance of a skeptic, i.e. one who asserts that it is impossible to say whether truth can be cognized, or not, which drives him to continue his search. Skepticism, especially in its zetetic dimension, boils down to continual examination and search for truth: a search propelled by the rejection of all dogmatic claims. In other words, skepticism is equivalent to withholding oneself both from positive and negative dogmatism. Such a stance is equally distant from the conviction that one has come into possession of ultimate (irrefutable) knowledge, as it is from the certitude that such knowledge is unattainable for human beings. Thus, skepticism may be described (in a narrower sense) as *zetetic anti-dogmatism*. The skeptical approach, in this sense, would be a symptom of a broadly-understood critical attitude. Criticism understood in this way can be interpreted as a coherent frame of reference for all of ancient Greek thought. The proposed interpretation, then, constitutes an alternative to hitherto synthetic readings of the philosophy of this period. It questions the validity of arguments of those scholars who treat early Greek thought as dogmatic, and even totalitarian (E. Lévinas). It is then the broadly-understood concept of criticism that may serve us as an *organizing idea*; an idea which allows us to systematize the whole of Greek thought.

[5] Jan Woleński, *Epistemologia. Poznanie, prawda, wiedza, realizm* (PWN: Warszawa, 2005), p. 493, see also: Jan Woleński, "A note on scepticism," *Kriterion*, nr 3 (1992), pp. 18–19.

Today, criticism is defined rather broadly.

Firstly, it is conceived of as a group of traits co-defining the unique orientation of one's reflection, including, in particular, one's need to *make multi-faceted references* to existing facts and to *confront* these facts with *one's own convictions*, which in turn, leads to the recognition of the necessity to *reconsider the original reasons* why these convictions had been embraced in the first place. These traits underly the potential of critical reflection to open space for revisions of one's views.

Secondly, it is defined as a cognitive approach in opposition to dogmatism manifesting itself, for example, as skepticism in the aforementioned understanding. Such an approach calls for an inquiry into the grounds for, and limits of, knowledge.

Thirdly, in epistemology, criticism is understood as a stance adopting which one declares that all philosophical reflection must be based on, and preceded by, an inquiry into the theory of cognition, i.e. as a critical inquiry of epistemological character.

Bearing in mind the importance of thus understood criticism for the development of contemporary academic reflection and all other aspects of human intellectual activity today, it is worth retracing its history back to its roots and to systematically analyze the presence of certain elements of the critical stance in early Greek thought with the view to opening space to reflection upon continuity and change in the evolution of criticism in western culture.

In order to offer a more detailed reflection on early Greek criticism, and, consequently, an insight into the historical sources of western criticism in general, we should return to the manifestations of this concept as documented in works (or extant fragments of the writings) by the thinkers of that period. It is common sense to assume that the recognition of the scopes of the semantic fields of categories under discussion will be tantamount to the recognition of the uniqueness of the past metanarratives, which, historically, would determine the understanding of the notion of our interest. Such recognition, at least

to some extent, may be attained in the course of the study of narrative contexts, in which lexis related to cognition functions in surviving ancient texts. To grasp the essence of criticism, therefore, we should first familiarize ourselves with the etymological roots of this concept. Above all, it is necessary to focus upon the adjective κριτικός (critical, able to distinguish, decisive, etc.), upon the verb κρίνω (to separate, distinguish, judge, explain, elucidate, study, etc.), and, subsequently, upon other concepts tied with philosophical criticism and their derivatives (among others: ζήτησις, ἔλεγχος, ὑπόθεσις, σκέψις, ἀπορία, πρόβλημα). Thus, in the analyzed texts we should focus upon those contexts of usage, which—bearing in mind our preliminary hypothesis derived from the analysis of Pyrrhonian philosophical stance—might reflect the limits of the historically-conditioned semantic field, or, effectively, the source meaning of the ancient Greek concept of criticism. It is on such basis that we will be able to offer an initial insight into extant texts, a small step towards more specialized and more thorough linguistic (cognitivist/pragmatist) research, which might inspire a more profound philosophical—epistemological—reflection.

We may begin our exploration by adopting the premise that philosophical criticism in the broadest and, as it turns out, also (historically) earliest, and (conceptually) most rudimentary sense,[6] is tantamount to the ability to differentiate, distinguish, separate. This ability is indeed *rudimentary* because it makes all other actions, including reflection, possible.[7] Being critical means being able to distinguish, that is to place proper πείρατα between things, spheres, abilities, things cognized, values, etc. All philosophical reflection must follow from some preliminary premise(s), which involves the concept of a separation because it is inevitably tied to a proposal of some (fundamental) distinction. In this sense, we could say that

[6] —as documented by the usage of vocabulary listed above.

[7] In *De anima* (432 a) Aristotle asserts that the soul of animals may be defined with the help of two faculties: the faculty of differentiation (τῷ τε κριτικῷ) and the faculty of motion (τῷ κινεῖν). The first is proper to the functions of thought and perception. In *De motu animalium* (700 b), in turn, he writes that sense-perception is just as critical (κριτικά) as thought.

every philosophy is critical, but only in the broadest sense described above. Of course, this thesis assumes that *de facto*, there is no philosophy without premises, which is not a novel idea, though it remains controversial for some and erroneous for others (phenomenologists, for example). Philosophical reflection begins with the indication of a boundary (boundaries), which means that it is absent from the undifferentiated whole, or the One, which Plato discussed in hypothesis I of part two of the dialogue *Parmenides*.[8] This broadest form of criticism may be described as *source-separative criticism*.

In a narrower sense, as has already been mentioned, criticism may be understood as a certain cognitive approach in opposition to dogmatism, which consists in constant inquiry, involves a ceaseless search for truth, and requires the most comprehensive analysis possible of any issue subjected to study, yet without claiming to have achieved any final, irrefutable truth. As we have already established, such a cognitive approach is tied in with a certain quality of thought consisting in a multi-aspected reference to given facts and in their confrontation with one's own convictions, which leads to the necessity of reflecting on the reasons why these convictions are held, and results in the possibility of revising one's views. In this sense, criticism corresponds with the source Greek understanding of skepticism[9] as zetetic anti-dogmatism. Criticism understood as this type of skepticism stands in opposition both to positive and negative dogmatism, both in its actual (weaker) and modal (strong) dimensions, and therefore a skeptic searches for truth without prejudging whether he will attain it or not. I propose to call this type of criticism *anti-dogmatic criticism*.

[8] Plato writes that "the One neither *is*, nor is *one*" (τὸ ἓν οὔτε ἕν ἐστιν οὔτε ἔστιν), and adds that—in that case—the One "has no name, nor is there any description, nor knowledge, nor perception, nor opinion of it" (Οὐδ᾽ ἄρα ὄνομα ἔστιν αὐτῷ οὐδε λόγος οὐδέ τις ἐπιστήμη οὐδὲ αἴσθησις οὐδὲ δόξα). Plato, *Parmenides*, 141 e–142 a.

[9] —laid out *expressis verbis* by Sextus Empiricus, and earlier present *implicite* in the texts of pre-Pyrrhonian thinkers.

Another narrower understanding of criticism, of course, within the boundaries of source-separative criticism, is criticism understood as a position declaring that epistemological reflection (or, in the Greek understanding, epistemologico-methodological reflection) precedes all other types of philosophical reflection. Of course, this type of criticism assumes a separation of subject and object, thought and being, at their source, and even that the basic epistemological distinction is the separation of the subject from the object of cognition. As Karl Jaspers notes,

> Dieses Urphänomen unseres bewußten Daseins ist uns so selbstverständlich, daß wir sein Rätsel kaum spüren, weil wir es gar nicht befragen. Das, was wir denken, von dem wir sprechen, ist stets ein anderes als wir, ist das, worauf wir, die Subjekte, als auf ein Gegenüberstehendes, die Objekte, geriditet sind. Wenn wir uns selbst zum Gegenstand unseres Denkens machen, werden wir selbst gleichsam zum anderen und sind immer zugleich als ein denkendes Ich wieder da, das dieses Denken seiner selbst vollzieht, aber doch selbst nicht angemessen als Objekt gedacht werden kann, weil es immer wieder die Voraussetzung jedes Objektgewordenseins ist. Wir nennen diesen Grundbefund unseres denkenden Daseins die Subjekt-Objekt-Spaltung.[10]

We will call this type of criticism *epistemological criticism*.

The narrowest understanding of criticism, which is one of the historical forms of epistemological criticism, is *Kantian criticism*, the principle of which may be reduced to knowledge about the *a priori* conditions of the possibility of experience. Of course, we must keep in mind the differences between Kant's criticism and Kantian criticism, i.e.: the criticism practised by those who refer to the philosophy of the thinker from Königsberg.[11] Many such forms of Kantian criticism may exist, though there is an unchanging set of ideas characteristic for this type of critical approach. Kant understands criticism at its source as a kind of a trial: criticism does not end with the conviction of reason; it must also indicate its origins, scope,

[10] Karl Jaspers, *Einführung in die Philosophie. Zwölf Radiovorträge* (München, Zürich: Piper Verlag 1994), p. 25.

[11] The question of the distinction between Kantian criticism and critical philosophy, as well as the later appearance of neocriticism, is a separate matter.

and boundaries.[12] We may say, then, that pure reason stands before its own tribunal, it pronounces its own verdict, and, at the same time, its power is its self-limitation. From this perspective, dogmatism is understood as the action of pure reason without the prior critique of its own authority.

The understanding of criticism as an approach resulting in the passing of a value judgment (evaluation) is a separate matter. In this case as well we can refer to the root meaning of the verb κρίνω (to settle, judge, evaluate, be the judge of, give a verdict) indicating a court procedure which consists in referring the object of evaluation to a certain model and comparing its characteristics to those of the model. In the dialogue *Politicus*, Plato, speaking about the ability to evaluate (κριτικόν), compares it to an observer, who should be impartial in his declarations.[13]

As was already mentioned, a certain group of problems concerning criticism is related to the problem of cognition (knowledge) in a broad sense, not excluding ontological and methodological problems. In accordance with the accepted principal research hypothesis, we can show the continuity of development of the idea of criticism in its various forms, from the pre-Socratics, through the Sophists, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, to Pyrrho. In reference to early Greek thought, criticism and related problems concerning the theory of knowledge have rarely been considered essential problems. The dominant cosmologico-ontological interpretation of the philosophy of this period can be supplemented by a critical reading. Such an approach to early Greek philosophy is, in itself, an expression of a critical historic-philosophical attitude.

In contrast to dominant interpretations of early Greek thought, secondary literature concerning epistemologico-methodological matters is vaster in reference to Socrates and later thinkers, and these issues are both better-ordered thematically and better analyzed. Many historians of ancient philosophy tie the sources of Greek criticism in pre-

[12] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A XII.

[13] Plato, *Politicus*, 260 c.

cisely with the figure and views of Socrates, who is considered a critical thinker, moreover, a symbol of criticism important to philosophy as such, especially due to his manner of using elenctic method as a tool for purifying the soul (ψυχή) of arbitrary, uncritically accepted opinions and attitudes. There is an almost universal conviction that a revaluation of philosophy occurred with the coming of the Sophists and Socrates, a change of a paradigm of thought tied with a departure from cosmological, or—as Gorgias describes it in *Encomium of Helen*—meteorological, reflection. We can put forth the hypothesis that the sources of Greek criticism are to be found in an earlier period, or, going further, that Greek thought is critical at its source, and the problems tied with criticism (understood in the way described above) were already the object of reflection in early Greek thought. On the other hand, varied and multi-aspected disputes and controversies are connected with Plato's thought. As E. N. Tigerstedt indicates,[14] the tradition of interpreting Platonism (from antiquity up to modern times) can be reduced to a constant oscillation between a dogmatic and skeptic position (thus, in accordance with the terminology accepted in this article: positive and negative dogmatism, respectively). The majority of modern conceptions that view Platonism as a specific doctrine or system *explicite* or *implicite* consider Plato a dogmatic. On the other hand, the aporeticality and lack of conclusiveness regarding key matters present in many Platonic dialogues induced many to consider him a skeptic (or even negative dogmatic)—he was interpreted this way already in the Academy at the time of Arcesilaus and Carneades, as well as by a long tradition of academic skepticism. The one-sidedness of these interpretative positions provokes us to seek an intermediate interpretation, rejecting the doctrinal extremes of each and simultaneously making Plato a part of the Greek tradition of criticism. For example, Luigi Stefanini (in his fundamen-

[14] Eugène Napoleon Tigerstedt, "Interpreting Plato," in: *Stockholm Studies in the History of Literature,* Vol. 17. (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1977).

tal work *Platone*)[15] tried to show a possible intermediate interpretative path between these two positions, calling it "constructive skepticism"; however, this path was rarely taken and requires further systematic study. Already in the central question which orders Platonic philosophy—what is philosophy (*resp.* dialectic), in essence, and how can it be distinguished from other forms of human activity—the critical self-awareness and attitude of its author are visible. He understands philosophy as a route and views it metaphorically as the action of eros, or a perpetually renewed, insatiable effort. Thus, he indicates the erotetic (hence critical) character of philosophy at its source. This critical character is also present in Plato's philosophy both at the level of content (the indication of the boundaries of ἐπιστήμη and the cognitive possibilities of man) and method (elenctics, hypothetics, aporetics). Aristotelian criticism should be understood as a permanent search for and analysis of different positions in order to indicate the boundary between ἐπιστήμη and δόξα. What synthesized first philosophy and physics was critical reflection—taken up in the spirit of the diaporetic method—on the principles and causes necessary to determine the principles of the universe. Grasping and understanding the essence of dialectics and aporetics included in the *Topics* is directly linked to the whole corpus of "post-physical" works, which discuss the possibility of critically investigating the cognitive boundaries of man.

It does not seem risky to say that philosophical criticism (according to the above description) appears as one of the important positions that appeared in the history of philosophy and creatively influenced the development of this discipline. Contrary to the narrow understanding of criticism, which limits its meaning to a specific position

[15] Luigi Stefanini, *Platone*. 2 vols. (Padova: Cedam, 1992). Originally published between 1932–1935; 2nd edition—Padova: Cedam, 1949; then reprinted in 1992. See also: Francisco J. Gonzalez, "A Short History of Platonic Interpretation and the 'Third Way,'" in: *The Third Way: New Directions in Platonic Studies*. F. J. Gonzalez, ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 1995); and Walter Watson, "Dogma, Skepticism, and Dialogue," in: *The Third Way: New Directions in Platonic Studies*. F. J. Gonzalez, ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1995).

in the theory of knowledge (most frequently tied with I. Kant's doctrine and the so-called "Copernican Revolution"), criticism can be understood broadly—as a position consisting in the ability to separate both cognized areas and methods of cognition, in the ability to judge and evaluate, as well as in an emphasis on the anti-dogmatic approach. Already in the 19th century, Kantian criticism began to be distinguished from critical philosophy. Neocriticist Alois Riehl in *Der Philosophische Kritizismus* mentions the ancient sources of criticism and cites the views of the Eleatics and Democritus. Modern scholars also take up this problem and discuss other possible sources of criticism, a good example of which is Ernst Heitsch's book *Xenophanes und die Anfänge kritischen Denkens*. Karl Popper also gives much attention to the idea of criticism in early Greek thought, especially in *Back to the Presocratics* and in the book *The World of Parmenides: Essays on the Presocratic Enlightenment*, published postmortem. In contrast to many historians of philosophy, who treat early Greek thought almost exclusively as cosmology and ontology, this thinker clearly appreciates the value of the epistemological reflection present in early Greek thought. Popper's views are of valuable help in the study of Greek criticism and its sources, though a broader perspective should be taken in recognizing the critical attitude than his preferred position of critical rationalism. We should also note that in secondary literature the problem of criticism is widely analyzed, but mainly on the grounds of philology, as literary criticism. For instance, in reference to early Greek thought, it is worth naming the works of A. Ford,[16] G. Kennedy,[17] D. A. Russell,[18] W. J. Verdenius,[19] and R. Harriott.[20] Thus, we should distinguish literary

[16] Andrew Ford, *The Origins of Criticism. Literary Culture and Poetic Theory in Classical Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[17] George Alexander Kennedy, ed., *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[18] Donald A. Russell, *Criticism in Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981).

[19] Willem Jacob Verdenius, "The Principles of Greek Literary Criticism," *Mnemosyne* 36 (1983).

[20] Rosemary Harriott, *Poetry and Criticism before Plato* (London: Methuen, 1969).

criticism from philosophical criticism (though some thinkers, like Xenophanes of Colophon, are analyzed from both of these angles). In addition, though specialists in early Greek thought analyze selected problems tied with the criticism of individual pre-Socratics and later thinkers (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and others), while no single study exists that would encompass all the forms and sources of Greek criticism, which would not only contain a thorough survey of positions in this matter, but would also be an attempt at recognizing the essence of criticism.

It is worth briefly indicating the key aspects of early Greek criticism here, from the perspective of the types of criticism listed above, accenting only those ideas which influenced the shaping of this philosophical attitude. Already at the very source of Greek thought, whose roots can be found in Eastern cultures, we can find the first expressions of source-separative criticism in the form of a distinction between the divine (immortal) sphere and that, which is subject to decay. It is enough to mention here the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the key difference between Gilgamesh and Enkidu. However, I think the model mythological example of this type of criticism is Hesiod's *Theogony*. The theogonic beginning of all is χάος, which is also the explanatory principle of everything that was begotten. Χάος was born in the beginning (verse 116), which means that in the beginning a divide appeared between heaven and earth (a similar idea appears in the Orphic cosmogony). It is only from this moment on that reflection on and narration about this beginning becomes possible. We can say, then, that the beginning of all reflection is the primeval distinction (in the mythologico-theogonic dimension: the birth of χάος), or the appearance of a boundary. This idea is used somewhat later by Anaximander in his cosmogony, which begins with the emergence of elements from the all-encompassing τὸ ἄπειρον. Thus, the state of things preceding the birth of chaos in Hesiod, and of τὸ ἄπειρον in Anaximander, is unable to be cognized or expressed. Therefore, it is clearly visible that the theogonic or cosmogonic beginning corresponds to the historical beginning of the critical approach in the form of the most broadly-defined source-separative criticism.

In the second of his works, *Works and Days*, Hesiod slowly introduces us to anti-dogmatic criticism. His faith in a strong connection between work and justice is meant to give man the possibility of attaining the necessary humility before the gods (law) and nature, and above all to rid themselves of dogmatic arrogance[21] and greed, which in turn is to induce man to cope with those sources of suffering, which he is able to influence. Anti-dogmatic criticism is present in Hesiod as a practical attitude resulting from his ethical didactics, which boil down to the formulation of a series of normative directives whose goal is the minimization of suffering and defense from evil. These ethical indications presume the existence of the "broad-sighted" Zeus,[22] before whom no action can remain hidden. Ridding oneself of arrogance on behalf of humility means not crossing the boundary of "rightness,"[23] i.e. respecting the boundaries proper to man.[24] Humility towards nature, the gods, and the law is tied with the hardship of work, piety, and critical wisdom.[25] It is worth noting that the category δίκη is based on the root meaning of "boundary," and thus refers to the separative character of rudimentary criticism.

In Homer's epics, this source-separative criticism appears, especially in the distinction between the world of the gods and the world of man—and issues tied with the problem of cognition, which are also discussed.[26] Diogenes Laertios mentions that Homer was considered a precursor of skepticism,[27] and we must add that the problem of skep-

[21] Regarding the destructiveness of arrogance, see Hesiod, *Works and Days*, M. L. West, ed. (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1982), verses 6–7, 134–135, 146, 190–192, 213, 214, 217, 238.

[22] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, verses 229, 239.

[23] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, verse 226.

[24] "In this sense δίκη originally meant 'boundary, dividing line,' in particular the dividing boundary between two pieces of land or between any two property claims, the line being either 'straight' or 'crooked.'" Michael Gagarin, "Dikē in the *Works and Days*," *Classical Philology* 68, No. 2. 1973: 83.

[25] See, respectively, Hesiod, *Works and Days*, verses 306–316, 138–139 and 293–297.

[26] See for example James H. Lesher, "Perceiving and Knowing in the Iliad and Odyssey," *Phronesis* 26 (1981); Kurt von Fritz, "Noos and Noein in the Homeric Poems," *Classical Philology* 38 (1943). See also Shirley D. Sullivan, "The Psychic Term *Vôoç* in the Poetry of Hesiod," *Glotta* 68 (1990).

[27] Diogenis Laertii, *Vitae Philosophorum*, IX, 71. See also IX, 67.

ticism, or negative dogmatism, in his works is debatable and depends on the way we define these positions.[28] However, the most essential element in his works, especially in the *Odyssey*, is the deepening and development of anti-dogmatic criticism in the form of practical skepticism which presents a non-dogmatic, zetetic attitude towards life. It is based on a constant search for the proper route (in the broad sense of the word), in a situation where certain knowledge is lacking.[29] Such a skeptical attitude of the *Odyssey*'s protagonists, especially—as M. Zerba notes[30]—of Penelope, is a necessary delivery in a world of semblances, and divine and human deceptiveness. On the other hand, the zeteticism of this practical anti-dogmatic attitude is the source of strength and hope, which are lacking when one takes on a position of negative dogmatism. The zetetic hope of skepticism must be viewed in contrast to the helplessness and passivity of negative dogmatism. Anti-dogmatic (zetetic) criticism so understood is, in the practical sense, an antidote for the gullibility and naivety that are a consequence of human weakness. Hesiod's humility is, thus, supplemented by an element of hope which boils down to a constant search for better, even temporary solutions, in any case such that agree with the awareness of not possessing final knowledge. Negating dogmatic arrogance, the zetetic approach gives man the hope and strength—resulting from humility—necessary to cope with the adversities set forth by a changeable reality.

[28] According to scholars, the fullest expression of Homeric negative dogmatism can be found in the prologue to the catalogue of ships in book II of *The Iliad* (II, 484–487). See Harold M. Zellner, "Scepticism in Homer?" *The Classical Quarterly* 44, No. 2. 1994; Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of Mind. The Greek Origins of European Thought* (New York: Harper, 1960), p. 137, Edward Hussey, "The beginnings of epistemology: from Homer to Philolaus," in: *Epistemology. Companions to Ancient Thought*, 1st edition, Stephen Everson, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 12–16; Ernst Heitsch, "Das Wissen des Xenophanes," Rheinisches Museum für Philologie. Neue Folge. Bd. 109. 1966.

[29] Michelle Zerba accepts such an interpretative path, though her assertion that Homer was the founder of philosophical skepticism seems excessive. See: Michelle H. Zerba, "Odyssean Charisma and the Uses of Persuasion," *American Journal of Philology* 130, No. 3 (2009): 313–339; Michelle H. Zerba "What Penelope Knew: Doubt and Scepticism in the Odyssey," *The Classical Quarterly* 59 (2009): 295–316.

[30] See: Michelle H. Zerba, "What Penelope Knew…," p. 316.

Anti-dogmatic criticism in the form of zetetic skepticism appears in its philosophical dimension for the first time in the views of Xenophanes of Colophon. In passage B 18,[31] he asserts that the gods did not intimate everything at once to mortals, but in time those, who seek, may find what is better or find the better.[32] The main idea of this statement is the idea of seeking, inquiry which constitutes the essence of philosophical effort. Apart from this, assuming the universality of opinions (δόκος δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσι τέτυκται,[33] Xenophanes states that ζητοῦντες can find what is better, and not what is the best (complete, final).[34] This passage is a critique of positive dogmatism, and is, at the same time, an apology of critical zeteticism. We can add that the consciousness of qualifying what is found as ἄμεινον, and not ἄριστον, leads to the preparation of a new method, which J. Philippoussis calls "the zetetic hypothetico-comparative logic."[35] Xenophanes' criticism, then, takes on the form of syncriticism, as the ability to compare in order to grasp, what is better. Philippoussis accurately states that "Xenophanes' κριτική μέθοδος

[31] All references to the works of the presocratic philosophers are made to the texts included in the following edition: Hermann Diels, Walther Kranz, eds., *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker,* (Vols. 1–3), trans. Hermann Diels (Dublin, Zürich: Weidmann, 1964–1966). The format of the reference will henceforth include the following elements: an abbreviated name of the author (e.g. "Xenoph." for Xenophanes of Colophon), the capitalized letter denoting the section of the Diels–Kranz collection ("A" or "B"), the sequential number of the fragment and the number denoting the verse, e.g. (Xenoph. B. 34, 4).

[32] Regarding the interpretation of this passage, see James H. Lesher, "Xenophanes on Inquiry and Discovery: An Alternative to the 'Hymn to Progress.' Reading of Fr. 18," *Ancient Philosophy* 11: 229–248, Alexander Tulin, "Xenophanes Fr. 18 D.-K. and the Origins of the Idea of Progress," *Hermes* 121. 1993: 129–138, James H. Lesher, *Xenophanes of Colophon: Fragments. A Text and Translation with a Commentary by J.H. Lesher* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), pp. 150–155, Willem Jacob Verdenius, "Xenophanes Frag. 18," *Mnemosyne* 8 (1955): 221, Johannes Hubertus Mathias Marie Loenen, "In Defence of the Traditional Interpretation of Xenophanes Frag. 18," *Mnemosyne* 9: 135–136.

[33] —B 34, 4.

[34] A good example is fr. B 38.

[35] John Philippoussis, "The gnoseological and metaphysical particularity of Xenophanes' thought," in: Konstantine J. Boudouris, ed. *Ionian Philosophy* (Athens: International Center for Greek Philosophy and Culture, 1989), p. 332.

is both συγκριτική and αὐτοκριτική."[36] We must admit, though, that the thinker from Colophon, in other passages, especially B 34, takes the position of negative dogmatism. Therefore, we can assume that Xenophanes was probably not aware of the fundamental difference between skepticism and negative dogmatism.[37] In his eyes, mortals, condemned to opinion, should continually seek the better (zetetic-syncritic skepticism), keeping in mind all the while that their cognizance will never be complete (negative dogmatism). Thus, even in his case criticism was not free from dogmatic elements, specifically from the negative dogmatism inherited from the Homeric tradition with its conviction about the weakness and limitedness of man.

Xenophanes of Colophon deserves attention also due to the fact that we can—in my opinion—find in his views the epistemological criticism described above. His critique of anthropomorphism[38] and zoomorphism[39] results from epistemological reflection. People view the world and the gods from the perspective of what they know, especially from the perspective of how they view themselves. Critiquing notions about the gods requires first recognizing on what basis these notions were created, especially becoming aware of the subjectivity of human cognition and the status of one's convictions (δόκοι). We can even risk

[36] J. Philippoussis, "The gnoseological and metaphysical particularity of Xenophanes' thought," p. 333.

[37] Concerning the question of Xenophanes' skepticism, see: Ernst Heitsch, "Das Wissen des Xenophanes," pp. 193–235, Leo Groarke, *Greek Scepticism. Anti-Realist Trends in Ancient Thought* (Montreal and Kingston, London, Buffalo. 1990), pp. 32–34, Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers. Vol. I: Thales to Zeno* (London and Boston: Henley. 1979), pp. 136–143; Jürgen Wiesner, "Wissen und Skepsis bei Xenophanes," *Hermes* 125 (1997): 17–33; James H. Lesher, "Xenophanes' Scepticism," *Phronesis* 23 (1978): 1–21; Dariusz Kubok, "O półtrzeźwości Ksenofanesa," *Studia Antyczne i Mediewistyczne* 8 [43] 2010: 3–15; James H. Lesher, "The Emergence of Philosophical Interest in Cognition," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 12 (1994): 1–34; Joel Wilcox, "The Origins of Epistemology in Xenophanes and Heraclitus," in: *Greek Philosophy and Epistemology*, Vol. II., Konstantine J. Boudouris, ed. (Athens: Ionia Publications. 2001), pp. 215–226; Ernst Heitsch, *Xenophanes und die Anfänge kritischen Denkens* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1994).

[38] B 11, B 12, B 14, B 16.

[39] B 15.

the assertion that Xenophanes' theological comments are a result of epistemological inquiry.[40] He does not build a new monotheistic positive theology,[41] he is also not simply an advocate of negative theology; his goal is to construct a model of a deity, which would show the epistemological premises of all constructs concerning god (the gods) and the world. In Xenophanes, Hesiod's practical humility takes on the form of cognitive humility which is present in his restraint while voicing opinions about the gods without prior reflection on the sources, essence, and limitations of human cognition.

Epistemological criticism in the views of Parmenides takes on the form of methodological criticism, since his point of departure, made a subject of discussion already in the prologue, is the source differentiation between two paths of investigation. Δίκη πολύποινος is the symbol of a just distinction between the path of persuasion that accompanies the truth and the path of opinion which lacks true certainty.[42] Parmenides clearly indicates the necessity of analyzing both of these paths due to the fact that the object of the first is τὸ ἐόν, while that of the second is τὰ δοκοῦντα. I do not intend to delve into an analysis of Parmenides' philosophy now, but it should be mentioned that the distinction and analysis of two different paths of study (ὁδοὶ διζήσιος[43]) is an expression of the critical approach. Distinguishing between these two paths became a central idea that later appeared in various ver-

[40] I generally agree with John Philippoussis, who writes: "Yet, it seems, Xenophanes' primary concern is neither the *natura deorum* nor the *natura rerum*. His foremost consideration is not the cosmological question *per se* (whether divine or physical world), but the gnoseological question regarding epistemic certainty and its ontic reference that both his predecessors and his immediate posterity took for granted." Philippoussis, "The gnoseological and metaphysical particularity of Xenophanes' thought," p. 327.

[41] Such is the view of Peter Steinmetz, as expressed, for instance, in his "Xenophanesstudien," *Rheinisches Museum* 109 (1966): 71–72. Sharing Steinmetz's opinion, I do not agree with the idea that Xenophanes' goal was the creation of a new polytheistic notion of the gods.

[42] "[…] χρεὼ δέ σε πάντα πυθέσθαι
ἠμὲν Ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος ἀτρεμὲς ἦτορ
ἠδὲ βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἔνι πίστις ἀληθής." Parmenides B 1, 28–301.

[43] B 2, 2.

sions in the whole post-Parmenidean thought tradition (Empedocles, Anaxagoras, the Atomists,[44] the Sophists,[45] Plato,[46] Aristotle,[47] and others). We should add that the goddess' speech in Parmenides' poem should not necessarily be considered a type of dogmatic revelation,[48] since the goddess herself encourages the listener to take a critical stance toward her message:

> […] κρῖναι δὲ λόγῳ πολύδηριν ἔλεγχον
> ἐξ ἐμέθεν ῥηθέντα.[49]

Thus, it seems that analyzing the sources of Greek philosophy from the perspective of criticism allows us to look at this tradition more broadly, in any case, departing from a one-sided exegetical scheme that reduces early Greek thought to mythology, whose place was later taken by cosmologico-ontological reflection. The forms of criticism listed above can be found in extant fragments of the works of thinkers of this period.

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[44] Generally speaking, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and the Atomists distinguish the path of opinion (so-called dark cognizance by the Atomists), which refers to multiplicity, changeability, and complexity, and the path of truth which concentrates on cognizing the unchanging and indivisible essence of things in the form of ῥιζώματα, σπέρματα, or ἄτομα. For example, Democritus writes: "γνώμης δὲ δύο εἰσὶν ἰδέαι, ἡ μὲν γνησίη, ἡ δὲ σκοτίη· καὶ σκοτίης μὲν τάδε σύμπαντα, ὄψις, ἀκοή, ὀδμή, γεῦσις, ψαῦσις. ἡ δὲ γνησίη, ἀποκεκριμένη δὲ ταύτης." Democritus B 11. Commenting on this passage, Sextus Empiricus adds that "δύο φησὶν εἶναι γνώσεις· τὴν μὲν διὰ τῶν αἰσθήσεων τὴν δὲ διὰ τῆς διανοίας, ὧν τὴν μὲν διὰ τῆς διανοίας γνησίην καλεῖ προσμαρτυρῶν αὐτῇ τὸ πιστὸν εἰς ἀληθείας κρίσιν, τὴν δὲ διὰ τῶν αἰσθήσεων σκοτίην ὀνομάζει ἀφαιρούμενος αὐτῆς τὸ πρὸς διάγνωσιν τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἀπλανές." Sextus Empiricus, "Adversus Mathematicos," VII, 138.

[45] The Sophists, especially Gorgias, begin with this Parmenidean distinction, but the culmination of their views is negative dogmatism and relativism.

[46] The best example of such references to Parmenides may be Plato's *Republic* (476 e–480).

[47] See, for example Aristotle, *Anal. Post.*, 88 b—89 b.

[48] The revelational or illuminational interpretation is accepted, among others, by Willem Jacob Verdenius, "Parmenides' Conception of Light," *Mnemosyne* 2 (1949), Karl Deichgräber, *Parmenides' Auffahrt zur Göttin des Rechts: Untersuchungen zum Prooimion seines Lehrgedichts* (Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, 1959), p. 24. Werner Jaeger, on the other hand, talks about a mysterious vision. See Werner Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1947), p. 96.

[49] Parmenides B 7, 5–6.

Investigating the historical sources of Greek criticism, the sources of criticism as such are also recognized, as a certain philosophical approach. The recognition of these sources (in the broadest and most rudimentary way possible) allows for a confrontation with other types of criticism that appeared throughout the history of philosophy. One can then avoid the scenario when Greek criticism is understood *a priori* from the perspective of its later form (those in the philosophy of Kant or Popper, for example). It may turn out that certain aspects of these conceptions are similar, but not through imposing later paradigms on what appeared earlier. Criticism recognized in this way in Greek philosophy will, then, constitute the theoretical basis as an important voice in contemporary philosophical discussions. For, the critical approach describes man in his relationship to the world, including his relationship to himself. It allows for the recognition of cognitive conditions and limitations, of the way assertions are accepted and justified, of the principles behind the acceptance of certain attitudes and, finally, on the premises on which human actions are based. Criticism may also lead to the development of a particular ethical approach: an approach postulating freedom and responsibility, and formed as a result of comprehensive, multi-faceted reflection on acute social and cultural issues.

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Uwagi o źródłach greckiego krytycyzmu filozoficznego

Streszczenie: Artykuł stanowi próbę ukazania źródeł filozoficznego krytycyzmu i postawy krytycznej we wczesnej myśli greckiej. Dociekania w nim zawarte są tylko wprowadzaniem do szerszych analiz nad tym zagadnieniem, które autor obecnie prowadzi. W rozprawie ukazane zostały najważniejsze cechy charakterystyczne dla wczesnogreckiego krytycyzmu, a także zaproponowana została najogólniejsza typologia jego form. Dopełnieniem tych rozważań jest krótkie przedstawienie wyróżnionych typów filozoficznego krytycyzmu w odniesieniu do poglądów myślicieli tego okresu.

Słowa kluczowe: wczesna filozofia grecka, myślenie krytyczne, krytycyzm, sceptycyzm, typologia