

ARTICLES

# Philosophy of / as a Journey

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**ABSTRACT** This article is introductory in nature, seeking as it does to shed preliminary light on issues relating to the connections between philosophy and travel. Its primary claim is that it is valuable to conceive of philosophy as a specific type of journey, and to contrast it with the philosophical conception of travel. Both philosophy and travel may converge in a specific activity that is worth characterizing, at least in broad terms, in order to enrich each of them with aspects that would not be visible when considering them separately. Initially, some of the earliest uses of terms related to philosophical activity in early Greek thought, as well as an iconic fragment from Plato's *Symposium*, are analyzed. On this basis, certain characteristics of the philosophical journey will be demonstrated. Subsequently, the phenomenon of travel itself will be subjected to philosophical reflection, resulting in the delineation of one of its possible forms—the eidetic journey. As a result, it will be possible to outline selected connections between the philosophy of the journey and philosophy as a journey.

**KEYWORDS** Greek philosophy; journey; spiritual exercises; wandering; zetetic attitude

Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, that alluvion which covers the globe, through Paris and London, through New York and Boston and Concord, through church and state, through poetry and philosophy and religion, till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call reality, and say, This is, and no mistake.

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*.<sup>1</sup>

Henry David Thoreau's provocative exhortation is likely to resonate with many philosophers, though not necessarily always in positive terms.<sup>2</sup> It might well perturb not only those who seek to deliberately distance themselves from the American thinker's position, but also those who simply hold different views on core issues arising in philosophical reflection: ones that bear on what we are fundamentally aiming to address when we engage in philosophical discourse. To mitigate possible controversies, it could be pointed out that the term "reality" is multifaceted, and that its employment leaves room for discussions about the "reality of the mind," the "reality of language," and the "reality of other entities." Prejudice aside, however, one must admit that in the context of the entire body of his work Thoreau's statement is remarkably lucid: one must navigate through the mire of opinions, someone else's words, foreign perspectives, alien books, and tangled discourses, to finally reach "the hard bottom and rocks" of that solid reality that is experienced. Indeed, the thinker from Concord gained notoriety as a devout promoter of the view that one should not write more than one walks, for a philosopher cannot be confined to the library alone, or solely to the immediate vicinity of his or her writing desk. Mistrustful of "armchair philosophy," Thoreau advocates committing oneself to the continuous discovery of reality—both the world's and one's own. Such tangible and corporeal engagement with reality translates into the formation of a sense of kinship with the surrounding world, a union with the whole. Unity of this sort is a function of one's constant readiness to plunge, head first, into the world: a cause and at the same time an effect of the constant immersion in "rock-bottom" reality that leads one to

1. Thoreau 2004, 97–98.

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daily discoveries of “the new.” It is interesting that it was only in 1964 that George Santayana would feel inclined to open his article *The Philosophy of Travel* with a query that clearly disregarded the Thoreauvian legacy, and a hypothesis that the transcendentalist had already proven correct: “Has anyone ever considered the philosophy of travel? It might be worthwhile” (Santayana 1964, 1).

Since then, of course, much has changed. Today, philosophical reflection on travel would not raise any eyebrows; it is, one could risk claiming, self-evident. What remains constant, however, is that Thoreau continues to instruct us that no one can live our deliberate life *for us*: living at the most profound level excludes proxies—only we ourselves can embrace it. By extension, our philosophical lives, lest they be superficial, require that we plunge into the experience of a unique engagement with reality at the level of its deepest possible dimensions. Such philosophy demands action; it must be founded upon committed inquiry and, inevitably, incentivize a reaching out towards others. It therefore hardly comes as a surprise that philosophy has often been conceived of as a voyage: with so many traits in common, the experience of philosophy and the experience of journeying run parallel, and the elucidating of their mutual relationships proves intriguing. In this light, philosophy conceived as a voyage—*philosophy as a journey*—should be juxtaposed with a philosophical conception of travel or, to put it another way, the *philosophy of the journey*.

Indeed, philosophy and travel can converge, with them both boiling down to a unique activity that is in itself definitely worth characterizing, albeit only in broad terms. Although the motives, trajectories, and goals of philosophy and travel may differ, the image of the philosopher as a traveler (a wanderer, a sailor, a pilgrim) remains iconic—or, at the very least, is deeply entrenched in literature. Furthermore, the journey itself is a phenomenon that merits attention and, not infrequently, emerges as a philosophically intriguing concept: an art form of sorts, or even a mode of existence.<sup>3</sup> Let us, then, explore what happens when these diverse yet convergent experiences engage in dialogue with each other.

#### PHILOSOPHY AS A JOURNEY

Understandably, it would not be feasible to carry out a detailed analysis of the wide variety of approaches to philosophy-as-a-journey within the confines of a brief article. Embracing these limitations, however, I intend

3. See, e.g., Thomas 2020; Scapp and Seitz 2020; Gros 2014; MacCannell 1999; Montiglio 2005; Tribe 2009; Iyer 2014; Moeller and Whitbread 2014.

to narrow down my reflections to a few selected examples of the earliest historical conceptualizations of philosophy. In so doing, I will be focusing on the literal sense of the term “philosophy” in early Greek thought, and on its use, concentrating specifically on its iconic representation associated with Plato. My interests revolve around three particular instances of ancient thinking about philosophy, which I intend to explore in order to (at least partially) reveal philosophy’s relatedness to travel in terms of their shared conceptual structures.

To explain this, one must start with the oldest extant testimony concerning philosophy, namely fragment B35 of Heraclitus as cited by Clement of Alexandria in his *Stromata*:<sup>4</sup>

χρη̃ εὖ μάλα πολλῶν ἱστορας φιλοσόφους ἄνδρας εἶναι.

Men who love wisdom must be investigators into very many things.<sup>5</sup>

Although the noun “philosophy” does not appear here, a reference to “men who love wisdom” (φιλοσόφους) does. Setting aside controversies regarding the authenticity of this fragment,<sup>6</sup> what is crucial is the assertion that each such person must be an *inquirer* (ἱστωρ), and an inquirer into a great many “things” at that. Thus the investigative element (inquiring, seeking) that defines φιλοσόφους finds its complementation in the necessity of the engagement with multiplicity. The Ionian concept of ἱστορίη resonates here—not merely in its basic sense (i.e. the conventional cumulative collection of facts and observations), but also in its more complex dimension involving the critical evaluation, comparison and non-directive assessment of the accumulated facts.<sup>7</sup> Fragment B35 thus describes the activity of a researcher and thinker seeking answers, and not the procedures

4. All references to the works of the presocratic philosophers are made to the texts included in the following edition: Diels and Kranz 1992 (henceforth abbreviated as DK). In parentheses, I also provide the fragment numbers referencing the Laks and Most edition of 2016 (hereinafter cited as LM). Unless indicated otherwise, all translations of passages are derived from this latter work. A more comprehensive analysis of Heraclitus’ ideas can be found in (Kubok 2021a); the following remarks concerning Heraclitus serve as a recapitulation of those earlier research findings.

5. DK B35 (LM D40), Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 5.140.6.

6. According to Markovich, it is only the phrase πολλῶν ἱστορας χρη̃ that is originally Heraclitus’s (Markovich 2001, 26). Some scholars regard this fragment as (at least partially) questionable in terms of its authenticity (Markovich, LM), while others propose that it reveals traits of irony (Cornford 1957, Zhmud 2017) or mockery (Granger 2004).

7. See Floyd 1990; Raaflaub 2002.

characteristic of an expert or an exponent of dogma.<sup>8</sup> In the paragraphs below, I will attempt to succinctly demonstrate the connections obtaining between this assertion and other significant fragments by Heraclitus, with a view to sketching out that philosopher's understanding of the phrase "men who love wisdom."

I take Heraclitus to be advocating the validity of referencing sensory experiences as a starting point for further inquiries<sup>9</sup>—insisting, at that, that one must be an observer of "a great many things." However, such a procedure has its principles and its limitations. Firstly, observation must serve as the foundation and essential material for understanding, for a holistic comprehension, for grasping the depth of matters,<sup>10</sup> and for integrating

8. It is noteworthy that Clement of Alexandria references this passage in the context of reflections on happiness and misery conceived as knowledge of God or ignorance thereof. Clement writes there that Heraclitus asserted that "men who love wisdom must be investigators into very many things," and he supplements this statement with the following: "καὶ τῷ ὄντι ἀνάγκη πολλὰ πλανηθῆναι διζήμενον ἔμμεναι ἐσθλόν" ("and truly must he who seeks to be good err in many things") (Clem. Alex., *Strom.* 5.140.6). Compare: "Πόλλ' ἄέκοντα παθεῖν διζήμενον ἔμμεναι ἐσθλόν" (Phocylides, fr. 13). For Clement, happiness is associated with the knowledge of God, whereas Heraclitus believes that philosophizing men, though they should be investigators of many things, (must) err in many respects. There may be doubts as to whether these are the views of Heraclitus himself, but Clement, in my opinion, captures an essential feature of the early Greek project of those who love wisdom: namely, the combination of "investigating many things" with the possibility (or even necessity) of "erring in many matters." The sage, the god, the person enlightened by divine knowledge, has access to knowledge that is *certain*; those who love wisdom, on the other hand, *err*—which does not diminish their determination in seeking answers.

9. Marcovich is thinking along similar lines when he writes that for Heraclitus "[s]ense-perception and experience remain the basic condition for the apprehension of the omnipresent Logos [...]; but this is not the only condition: more are required [...]. Among them, the intelligence or faculty correctly to interpret sense-data [...] and insight [...] are the most important. Without these conditions men cannot reach the Logos nor attain wisdom (νόος [...]), but will stay at the stage of sterile πολυμαθίη. Thus ἱστορίη is not rejected by Heraclitus [...]; but it is only the first step toward the apprehension of the universal Logos" (Marcovich 2001, 28). It is in this vein that I read the fragment: "ὄσων ὄψις ἀκοή μάθησις, ταῦτα ἐγὼ προτιμέω" (DK 22 B55 (LM D31))—not necessarily in the Laks and Most version only (LM, III, 155). See also Pritzl 1985.

10. Bruno Snell asserts that Heraclitus introduced a novel understanding of the soul, fundamentally divergent from the Homeric conception. He primarily emphasizes the profundity of the soul (DK 22 B45), and stresses the issue of intensity. As illustration, Snell (1953, 17–18) points out that just as lyric poetry is characterized by constructs with βαθυ-, Homer employs those with πολυ- to express the amplification of vision and experience. This is evidenced by the latter's descriptions of Odysseus, which emphasize certain traits of the hero in an intensified form (πολύ-)—as in, among others, πολύτλας, πολυμήχανος, πολύμητις and πολύτροπος. In Ionian thought there are clear indications of research being carried out into a broad range of subjects. Of particular note is Xenophanes' self-conscious grappling with epistemological challenges (fragments DK 21 B34, B18, B35, B36, B38). Mention should also be made of

multiplicity into unity (λόγος). Secondly, relying on a multitude of experiences must not devolve into a descent into πολυμαθίη.

- πολυμαθίη νόον ἔχειν οὐ διδάσκει· Ἡσίοδον γὰρ ἂν ἐδίδαξε καὶ Πυθαγόρην αὐτίς τε Ξενοφάνεά τε καὶ Ἑκαταῖον (DK 22 B40 (LM D20)).
- Πυθαγόρης Μνησάρχου ἱστορίην ἤσκησεν ἀνθρώπων μάλιστα πάντων καὶ ἐκλεξάμενος ταύτας τὰς συγγραφὰς ἐποίησατο ἑαυτοῦ σοφίην, πολυμαθίην, κακοτεχνίην (DK 22 B129 (LM D26)).

Hence, the multiplicity experienced through the procedure known as ἱστορίη may either lead to *understanding* or to πολυμαθίη. The latter term, ambiguous in itself, denotes improper cognitive states: polymathy (drawing from many sources) or encyclopedism (knowledge of many things). Taking into account the contents of fragments B104 and B114, where the term νόος appears, one may understand fragment B40 as describing both the learning process and the issue of authority. In this case, πολυμαθίη would represent a model of investigation and inquiry characterized by a mechanical and unreflective attitude to learning, consisting in the absorption of numerous pre-existing views and in acquiring information from a variety of individuals, where these jointly engender a cognitively scattered mixture of opinions. Such polymathy presupposes *multiplicity* (of external authorities) without recognizing *unity*. A different meaning of πολυμαθίη is more evident in B129, where the word denotes a set of views concerning “many things,” which neither teach nor lead to the knowledge of unity expressed in the term λόγος. Heraclitus’ critique of πολυμαθίη is thus a critique of both the *effects* and the *method* of observation of the world: one cannot be content with *multiplicity* while disregarding *unity*, and neither should one listen to the multitude of human opinions at the expense of focusing on the all-unifying λόγος.

Fragment B1 encapsulates a multitude of themes characteristic of Heraclitus.<sup>11</sup> In the present context, however, my interest is in only some of these.

other researchers, such as Hecataeus, who plans his investigations with a view to gaining knowledge based on eyewitness experience: “Ἑκαταῖος Μιλήσιος ὧδε μυθεῖται· τάδε γράφω, ὡς μοι δοκεῖ ἀληθέα εἶναι· οἱ γὰρ Ἑλλήνων λόγοι πολλοὶ τε καὶ γελοῖοι, ὡς ἐμοὶ φαίνονται, εἰσὶν” (Demetr.: *De eloc.* 12, 8–10). See also Thucydides: “οὕτως ἀταλαιπώρος τοῖς πολλοῖς ἢ ζήτησις τῆς ἀληθείας, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἐτοῖμα μᾶλλον τρέπονται” (*History of the Peloponnesian War*, I, 20, 3). The above notwithstanding, it is Heraclitus who would appear to be the pivotal thinker of the period. As Snell (1953, 144) writes, “In place of extensive searching, he demands an intensive approach.”

11. “τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ’ ἐόντος αἰεὶ ἀξύνετοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι καὶ πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκούσαι καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον· γινομένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε ἀπίροισιν εἰοικασί, πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιούτων, ὁκοίων ἐγὼ διηγέυμαι κατὰ φύσιν διαιρέων

One of the primary motifs of his reflection is that people are *uncomprehending* (ἄξύνετοι) of the *logos*, as a result of which they seem *inexperienced* (ἀπείροισιν) both *before* they listen to the *logos* and *after* they have heard it. From fragment B34 we also learn that ἄξύνετοι can be understood as the assertion that *people are akin to the deaf* (κωφοῖσιν εἰκόασι),<sup>12</sup> because—as Laks and Most express it—“[...] being present, they are absent.”<sup>13</sup> Fragment B107 is a fitting complement to these observations:

κακοὶ μάρτυρες ἀνθρώποισιν ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ ὦτα βαρβάρους ψυχᾶς ἐχόντων  
(DK 22 B107 (LM D33)).

Contrary to some interpretations, Heraclitus does not assert that if one trusts the reliability of the senses, one possesses a barbaric soul; rather, the converse—if one has a barbaric soul, then one’s eyes and ears must be poor witnesses. Taken in themselves, however, the eyes and ears need not necessarily be poor witnesses. A soul that is βάρβαρος is characterized by its *alienness* and *incomprehension*, its language bordering on incomprehensible gibberish (Nussbaum 1972a, 1972b).<sup>14</sup> Those with βαρβάρους ψυχᾶς are incapable of attuning themselves to the λόγος, and thus the scattered and dispersed multiplicity of things fails to coalesce into a unity of understanding. It is this *logos* that is the aim of the investigative efforts of those who love wisdom: by examining the multiplicity of things, or the manifest testimonies, one will reach the hidden nature of things. The problem, indeed, lies in the fact that “nature loves to hide” (φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ, B123).<sup>15</sup> Consequently, those who love wisdom seek nature, which loves to hide; the love of the seekers is directed towards what is concealed, what

ἕκαστον καὶ φράζων ὅκως ἔχει. τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους λαμβάνει ὀκόσα ἐγερθέντες ποιοῦσιν, ὅκωσπερ ὀκόσα εὐδοντες ἐπιλαμβάνονται” (DK 22 B1 (LM D1)).

12. Heraclitus writes that ἄξύνετοι are κωφοῖσιν εἰκόασι. It is noteworthy that the verb κωφάω denotes such concepts as *make dumb, silence, grow dumb or deaf, become stupid*; in turn, the adjective κωφός means, among other things, *mute, noiseless, dumb, deaf, dull, obtuse, senseless, unmeaning and obscure*.

13. “ἄξύνετοι ἀκούσαντες κωφοῖσιν εἰκόασι· φάτις αὐτοῖσιν μαρτυρεῖ παρεόντας ἀπεῖναι” (DK B34 (LM D4)). In fragment B51 Heraclitus affirms that the greatest deficiency among humans is their inability to comprehend how diverse entities can harmonize, and therefore their inability to understand how opposites may constitute a unity.

14. See Marcovich 2001, 47; Leshner 1983, 158; Nussbaum 1972a, 1–16; Nussbaum 1972b, 153–170.

15. In a different fragment Heraclitus emphasizes that “invisible harmony is stronger than a visible one” (“ἄρμονιᾷ ἀφανῆς φανερωῆς κρείττω”) (B54). Laks and Most’s translation, however, reads somewhat differently: “Invisible fitting-together (*harmonie*), stronger than a visible one” (LM, III, 163).

delights in hiding, and hence the lover and the beloved do not originally dwell in a harmonious embrace of love. The philosophical effort is directed towards the hidden and the unifying.

In fragment DK B101 Heraclitus declares that “I searched for myself” (ἐδιζήσάμην ἐμεωυτόν),<sup>16</sup> and he adds, in DK B22, that “[t]hose who search for gold dig up much earth and find little (χρυσὸν γὰρ οἱ διζήμενοι γῆν πολλήν ὀρύσσοσι καὶ εὕρισκουσιν ὀλίγον).” Thus, we have come full circle in our analyses. The latter fragment, once again, shows the examination of multiplicity; this time, however, such an examination is not conceived as the starting point of inquiry, but is rather viewed in the context of its suggestive culmination. Those who love wisdom must examine a vast multiplicity of things, but what they find, however small, is valuable. An understanding of this multiplicity can be gained in the form of what Heraclitus calls λόγος—the all-unifying order that loves to hide. Lovers of wisdom must come to terms with the fact that their love may not be fulfilled in the sense of attaining certitude or completeness of knowledge, and yet they should appreciate that it is nonetheless possible to find “nuggets of gold,” insights into the hidden structure of reality. Such an effort is simply a journey—and it is crucial to comprehend that the most important of all the journeys is the journey into oneself, and that this journey’s value does not lie in its culmination or conclusion but, precisely, in the inquiry itself and the search for unity in multiplicity:

ψυχῆς πείρατα ἰὼν οὐκ ἂν ἐξεύροιο, πᾶσαν ἐπιπορευόμενος ὁδόν· οὕτω βαθὺν λόγον ἔχει.

He who travels on every road would not find out the limits of the soul in the course of walking: so deep is its account (*logos*) (DK 22 B45 (LM D98)).

It is to this dimension of philosophy as “skeptical inquiry”—conceived not as Sextus’ ἐποχή, but as a relentless effort of searching and examining without presupposing the culmination of these acts—that I refer when I use the term *zeteticism*; the *zetetic* attitude thus rests upon a negation of both positive and negative dogmatism.<sup>17</sup>

16. DK 22 B101. Plutarch associates this fragment with the Delphic injunction γνῶθι σαυτόν: “ὁ δ’ Ἡράκλειτος ὡς μέγα τι καὶ σεμνὸν διαπεπραγμένος «ἐδιζήσάμην» φησὶν «ἐμεωυτόν» (B101), καὶ τῶν ἐν Δελφοῖς γραμμάτων θειότατον ἐδόκει τό «γνῶθι σαυτόν»”. Plutarch: *Adv. Colot.*, 1118 C.

17. According to LSJ, the verb ζητέω means: I. “seek,” “seek for,” “inquire for,” “search after,” “search out,” “search or inquire into,” “investigate,” “examine,” “require,” “demand;” II. “seek after,” “desire,” “seek to do;” III. “have to seek,” “feel the want of.”



Tracing the earliest assertions concerning philosophical activity, it would be impossible not to mention Herodotus. In Book I of the *Histories* (Herodotus, I, 30) he describes Solon, who, driven by the need to settle certain affairs, but also for the sake of seeing various lands,<sup>18</sup> sets out on a journey—first to Egypt, and then to Sardis, then under Croesus’s rule. The king addresses Solon thus:

“Ξεῖνε Ἀθηναίε, παρ’ ἡμέας γὰρ περὶ σέο λόγος ἀπῖκται πολλὸς καὶ σοφίης [εἶνεκεν] τῆς σῆς καὶ πλάνης, ὡς φιλοσοφῶν γῆν πολλὴν θεωρίας εἶνεκεν ἐπελήλυθας.”

“Athenian guest, much report of thee has come to us, both in regard to thy wisdom and thy wanderings, how that in thy search for wisdom thou hast traversed many lands to see them.”<sup>19</sup>

Firstly, let us consider two matters. The title of Herodotus’ work is Ἱστορία, indicating not only histories but also inquiries; Solon embarks on his journey motivated by θεωρία—that is, observation of the world. Thus, ἱστορία and θεωρία converge in this activity, as both investigation and observation fulfill the essence of traveling. Croesus, in addressing Solon, highlights two qualities, for which Solon is famous: wisdom (σοφία) and his experience of wandering and travel (πλάνη)—these can be considered Solon’s key resources. Moreover, Croesus’ words reveal the following connections: the motif of the journey (efficient cause) → love (search) for wisdom (expressed in the text as φιλοσοφῶν); the object (purpose) of the journey → many lands (γῆν πολλήν); the final cause → observation of things (θεωρία).<sup>20</sup> Therefore, for Solon, πλάνη is oriented

18. Snell observes that “[t]his enthusiasm for investigation lives on in Herodotus. For him, experience forms the one and only basis of knowledge. He distinguishes between what he has seen himself, what he has heard from eye-witnesses, and what he has learned merely as rumour, and thus completes the pattern which had first been sketched in the invocation of the Catalogue of Ships” (Snell 1953, 144).

19. Herodotus I, 30, 9–12; transl. G.C. Macaulay. (Compare the translation by Robin Waterfield: “My dear guest from Athens,” he said, “we have often heard about you in Sardis: you are famous for your learning and your travels. We hear that you love knowledge and have journeyed far and wide, to see the world” (Herodotus 1998).

20. A similar conception of philosophy—and even the invention of the term “philosophy”—is attributed to Pythagoras. The oldest testimony regarding the above seems to be that provided by Heraclides Ponticus, with Cicero and Diogenes Laertius referencing his work. The credibility of Heraclides’ account is often questioned, and there is no certainty that “philosophy” in its nominal form can be traced back directly to Pythagoras. Cicero (*Tusculanae disputationes*, V, 8–9) recounts a story of Pythagoras meeting with Leon, the ruler of Phlius. When asked by Leon in which art he was most proficient, Pythagoras responded: “artem

towards experiencing (observing) the multiplicity through—and because of—philosophy conceived as the love of wisdom.<sup>21</sup> In contrast to Heraclitus, in Herodotus' account “observation” is not specified in terms of its proper objective, yet it can be assumed that Herodotus dismisses believing rumors and, instead, advocates one's involvement in firsthand experience of what is different, and thereby becoming a witness to places and events. The philosophical motif of the journey in this fragment does not offer any strict definition of philosophical methodology; nor does it posit any epistemic resolution, such as, for instance, understanding the world by means of reducing multiplicity to unity. However, an important proposition seems to stand out: a journey is an act of purposeful wandering that may be philosophically motivated. The model of philosophy applied to it is therefore secondary.<sup>22</sup> From this we can conclude that not all journeys are motivated in these terms: e.g., escape, exile, eviction, or a walk for health purposes would not be driven by philosophical concerns. Hence,

quidem se scire nullam, sed esse philosophum.” Pythagoras further illustrated his position by comparing life to the Olympic Games, attended by three types of people: athletes for glory, merchants for profit, and those who come solely to observe the spectacle. Philosophers belong to this last category—those who observe and inquire into the nature of the world. Diogenes Laertius writes, “Φιλοσοφίαν δὲ πρῶτος ὠνόμασε Πυθαγόρας καὶ ἑαυτὸν φιλόσοφον, ἐν Σικυῶνι διαλεγόμενος Λέοντι τῷ Σικυωνίων τυράννῳ ἢ Φλιασίων, καθὰ φησιν Ἡρακλείδης ὁ Ποντικός ἐν τῇ Περί τῆς ἄπνου· μηδένα γὰρ εἶναι σοφὸν [ἄνθρωπον] ἀλλ' ἢ θεόν. θάττον δὲ ἐκαλεῖτο σοφία, καὶ σοφὸς ὁ ταύτην ἐπαγγελλόμενος, ὅς εἴη ἂν κατ' ἀκρότητα ψυχῆς ἀπηκριβωμένος, φιλόσοφος δὲ ὁ σοφίαν ἀσπαζόμενος” (Diogenes I, 12). It is important to emphasize the definition of philosophy as an activity that does not lend itself to being reduced to any art or specialization, suggesting that philosophy is tantamount to a non-specialized, general contemplation. Another source illustrating the early conception of philosophical reflection in Greek culture that is worth mentioning *critiques* philosophy—or, more precisely, criticizes a certain form of it. This is the treatise *Περὶ ἀρχαίας ἰητρικῆς* from the Hippocratic Corpus, whose dating is uncertain (though likely the last quarter of the 5th century or early-4th century BCE). The anonymous author writes: “δι' ὧν πολλὸν ποικιλώτερα τε καὶ διὰ πλεονος ἀκριβῆς ἐστί. Δεῖ γὰρ μέτρον τινὸς στοχάσασθαι· μέτρον δὲ, οὐδὲ σταθμὸν, οὐδὲ ἀριθμὸν οὐδένα ἄλλον, πρὸς ὃ ἀναφέρων εἴση τὸ ἀκριβές, οὐκ ἂν εὐροίης ἄλλ' ἢ τοῦ σώματος τὴν αἴσθησιν· διὸ ἔργον οὕτω καταμαθεῖν ἀκριβέως, ὥστε μικρὰ ἀμαρτάνειν ἔνθα ἢ ἔνθα» (*De prisca med.*, IX, 10–14). In contrast to philosophy, which relies on hypotheses, medicine must aim for precision and accuracy. Thus, philosophy should not be applied in medicine due to its methodological approach and its engagement with τὰ ἀφανέα τε καὶ ἀπορέμενα. “Καὶ διὰ ταῦτα οὐκ οὐδὲν δέεται ὑποθέσιος” (*De prisca med.*, II, 19–20).

21. Thus conceived, the activity of Solon (as depicted by Herodotus) may be inconsistent with testimonies that regard this thinker as one of the Seven Sages—that is, those who already possess knowledge. Regarding the connections between Homer, Ionian θεωρία, and Herodotus, see Montiglio 2005, 118–146.

22. It is worth noting that ancient literature is replete with narratives about the philosophical journeys of eminent thinkers (Thales, Empedocles, Democritus, Plato and Pyrrho). See also Niblett 2021, 56–59.

in speaking of the philosophical journey as an activity of an essential kind, we should consider the motive and purpose of its commencement. Solon, of course, is not a “professional” philosopher, a specialist in the field denoted by this appellation; however, the above notwithstanding, he demonstrates a particular type of philosophically motivated attitude, conceived both as *θεωρία* in the original sense of the word and as “wandering” and “seeking wisdom.”

It is worth remembering that the subsequent part of the conversation between Croesus and Solon concerns happiness, which, according to the latter, can only be judged in light of the end of the entire process (for instance, at the end of one’s life). Besides, “anyone who lives for a long time is bound to see and endure many things he would rather avoid.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, the journey of life is essentially tantamount to wandering and roaming, in which pleasures and suffering mix. It is interesting to register the contexts of the fragments from Clement and Herodotus as indicating that however the philosophical effort should be conceived, it is originally associated with the observation of multiplicity, and must reconcile the latter with elements of wandering (Clement) or suffering (Herodotus). In my view, the key element of the quoted conversation is its emphasis on the dynamics of the philosophical journey—a journey driven by an attitude of inquiry, requiring mindfulness, and stemming from a willingness to authentically participate in otherness.

To conclude this brief overview of instances where we encounter philosophical activity being made mention of in literal terms, we will make a certain temporal—and substantive—leap. We will skip the remaining pre-sophist thinkers, as well as the sophists themselves and Socrates,<sup>24</sup> in order to dwell at greater length on a passage from Plato’s *Symposium*<sup>25</sup> that introduces a new dimension to thinking about philosophy and, by extension, also thinking about philosophy-as-a-journey. The dialogue, one of Plato’s major works on love (Eros), also deals with the love of wisdom. In fragment 204b, we find the following reasoning: i) wisdom is [one of the] most beautiful things (*ἔστιν γὰρ δὴ τῶν καλλίστων ἢ σοφία*), and ii) Eros

23. Herodotus I, 32; transl. R. Waterfield.

24. The model of early Greek philosophy undergoes a transformation with the sophists—beginning with Protagoras and Gorgias who, broadly speaking, replace philosophy with rhetoric, or perhaps, more specifically, with the contesting of words and arguments. Socrates, the philosopher averse to travel, becomes a quintessential example of the non-peripatetic practitioner of this sort of dialogue.

25. For a more detailed discussion of the travel-related aspects of Plato’s philosophy, see: (Montiglio 2005, 155–79).

is love of the beautiful (“Ἔρως δ’ ἔστιν ἔρως περὶ τὸ καλόν). The conclusion that necessarily (ὥστε ἀναγκαῖον) follows from these premises is that *Eros is a philosopher* (“Ἔρωτα φιλόσοφον εἶναι). Plato further identifies the proper domain of philosophical activity as dwelling “in the mean” or “in between” (μεταξύ or ἐν μέσῳ) wisdom and ignorance, mortality and immortality, the gods and humans. This is no longer a horizontal observation of multiplicity, nor a vertical insight into oneself, but a relation of the mortal to the eternal, unchanging forms. Moreover, Eros-the-philosopher is described as a δαιμόνιος ἀνὴρ (203a), δαίμων μέγας (202d), or even the ἔρμηνεῦον (202e). Diotima notes that the whole misunderstanding relating to Eros arose from his treatment as an object (the beloved, the object of love) rather than the lover.<sup>26</sup> Regarding love, and thus philosophy, the key issue is the act of loving itself, the desire, the craving for what one does not possess. It is the other—the unknown—that is the object of love and desire, which Diotima expresses with the verb ἐπιθυμέω, meaning “to long for,” “to covet,” “to desire.” In the context of love thus conceived, the primary issue is not fulfillment but rather the fervor of desire, the love of beauty.

Philosophy, as a love that transcends the mortal, the human, and the ignorant, and yet is not immortal, divine, or fully wise, is realized in desire and inflamed longing for, and the unquenched pursuit of, inquiry into, and aspiration towards, beauty (the good). Central to such a philosophy is its zetetic activity,<sup>27</sup> an inextinguishable desire free from *a priori* judgments regarding the realizability/viability of this process, such as are expressed in terms of either positive or negative dogmatism.<sup>28</sup> It is not necessarily about thinking of the outcome of the process in terms of some promise of fulfillment, nor about coming to terms with the inevitability of non-fulfillment, or about resignation or surrendering hope. Philosophy is a zetetic activity that combines desire, continuous searching, and the hope that one will attain what one does not possess. It is thus a journey focused on the enthusiasm that comes with a perspective of hope and a desire to grasp beauty.

It is evident that when we analyze ancient conceptions of the enterprise commonly characterized as “philosophical,” we encounter the notion of philosophy-as-a-journey, in which philosophical activity is conceived of as a voyage through multiplicity towards an eventual sounding of the

26. „ὄν δὲ σὺ φήθης Ἔρωτα εἶναι, θαυμαστόν οὐδὲν ἔπαθες. φήθης δέ, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ τεκμαιρομένη ἐξ ὧν σὺ λέγεις, τὸ ἐρώμενον Ἔρωτα εἶναι, οὐ τὸ ἐρών” (*Symp.*, 204c).

27. For more information on *zeteticism* or *zetetic criticism*, see Kubok 2021a, 115–146.

28. See Kubok 2021b.

depths of unity. Such a journey exhibits a characteristic trait that may come in useful when seeking to address the general concept of the journey in a philosophical context—reflections that, unlike the argumentation presented in the previous sections here, would fall within the scope of discussions of the *philosophy of the journey*. Our initial glimpses of what such metaphilosophical reflection might look like can now serve to illustrate a specific type of journeying: the philosophical journey. Understanding the philosophical enterprise (unfolding at the originary stages of the development of philosophy itself) as a journey also affords one a retrospective view of the latter as a realization of the stance of the first Greek thinkers.

In light of the analyses carried out in the previous section, we may venture a tentative generalization concerning the uniqueness of philosophy as a philosophical journey. Along with the interpretation of selected fragments of early Greek thought and of those passages from Plato's work that describe philosophical activity in literal terms, we have arrived at the observation that Heraclitus portrays the philosopher-traveler as an inquisitive, curious researcher of *multiplicity* (otherness and diversity), whose examination of this multiplicity must not devolve into *πολυμαθιη*, meaning polymathy understood as the unreflective drawing of information from many sources, or into encyclopedism, based on a collector-like accumulation of knowledge concerning numerous things and/or experiences. A characteristic component of journeying thus conceived is some sort of voracious experience of otherness driven by an intention to understand a different world in all of its authenticity. Such a journey is meant to recognize the hidden harmony of interconnected "things," or their inner nature (*λόγος*), given the fact that ordinary mortals mostly fail to understand how dissimilar things may be consonant with one another. As has been recognized, nature loves to hide, and thus, in his or her quest, the philosopher-traveler is compelled to continually uncover that which is hidden behind the facade of everyday life and cheap trinketry (*zetetic attitude*).

Heraclitus also demonstrates that eyes and ears are poor witnesses for those possessing barbaric souls (DK 22 B107). The dominant form of spiritual barbarism in travel is imposing one's own world and language upon that which is different; in such cases, the other is not allowed to *remain other*. Such travelers are but tourists wanting to see, and therefore anticipating, the familiar in their encounters with the other. On the other hand, being *βάρβαρος* means intruding with one's speech into a world that speaks a language different from one's own, resulting not only in a failure to understand that world but also in a failure to realize one's own unwillingness to learn about it. Finally, in cases where our unwillingness to

become familiar with the unfamiliar world is conscious, *the other* remains *foreign*. Travel-related barbarism can thus manifest itself either through forcing the other into familiarity, or through rendering it entirely foreign. Hence, the philosophical journey really amounts to the art of shedding the barbarism of one's soul. Such a journey should be founded upon acceptance of the unexpected, while anticipating conversation, understanding, fascination, or beauty (B18); it is nothing other than being-in-a-state-of-wakefulness conceived of as openness to what is common.<sup>29</sup> Employing the awake/asleep opposition, Heraclitus also indicates that the journey is a departure from oneself—from one's dreams—and a motion towards what is common and unifying. Finally, fragment B34 provides us with a general principle distinguishing non-philosophical travel from philosophical travel, where non-philosophical travelers, "being present, are absent," as opposed to philosophical journeymen who, "being present, are present." Respecting otherness in its authenticity involves participating in it, treating it as material for reflection, or a springboard for self-transformation.

Herodotus' account illustrates the philosophical journey focused on *θεωρία*, i.e. observation of the world, which—alongside the *efficient* cause, which is the love (search) for wisdom and the uncovering of the object of the journey through experienced multiplicity—constitutes the *final* cause of travel. The philosopher also clearly emphasizes the dynamics of the philosophical journey—based on zetetic inquiry, sensitive awareness, and a desire for authentic participation in otherness. Plato complements this image of the journey by highlighting the subjective function of travel: its answering to an erotetic desire for otherness (i.e. for what one does not possess). The driving force of such a journey is a fervent craving for beauty in zetetic activity, unfolding between mortality and divinity, rather than the prospect of arriving at, and then enjoying, some pre-planned outcome.

#### THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE JOURNEY

Travel can serve as a frame for a unique experience of the world—a frame conducive to experiencing one's self. It allows one to delve into oneself and to transcend oneself at the same time, as the journey simultaneously grounds one and uproots one. Irrespective of what type of an attractor motivates it, traveling stimulates maieutic reflection. The experience of the journey, however, cannot be reduced solely to witnessing the richness of the world's diversity. Travel, after all, is also tantamount to an opportunity;

29. See DK 22 B89, B73, B75, B1.

it is both a provocation and an obstacle, it requires effort, it entails the toil of the road and the pain of weary feet—and all of these elements, jointly, contribute to the building of a cognitive attitude towards life. The above notwithstanding, traveling is also a search, an inquiry, an exploration, a zetetic abandonment of stagnation tantamount to an ultimate resolution. Importantly, no journey seems to be final, fulfilled, or one's last, as one trip presupposes the next. This may be the case because traveling gives one a sense of both familiarity and strangeness, of both continuity and change, of both the new and the old. Nevertheless, since one may travel in various ways, journeying across physical, religious, philosophical, or mnemonic dimensions, the question arises as to what binds these various forms of travel together.

Among the vast spectrum of possible journey types, I wish to highlight the kind that seems to epitomize journeying in the deepest sense—the most essential and resonant kind. To this end, I will categorize journey types using the diaretic method, noting that this categorization does not claim to be either exhaustive or definitive; its aim is not to precisely define each and every type of journey, but to capture their defining features. The following diaries will employ three criteria in succession: volitional, intentional and teleological. At the most fundamental and—simultaneously—the most general level, travel is understood as mobility, conceived of as *variability* and *locomotion*.<sup>30</sup> My first classification of mobility is based on the volitional criterion, and distinguishes between *voluntary* and *involuntary* mobility. Voluntary mobility may be either intentionally and zetetically oriented towards experiencing *novelty (otherness) and authenticity*, or it may lack such an orientation. Novelty-oriented voluntary mobility may then be subdivided into mobility aimed at a *substantial* transformation in the subject (of any scope—be it existential, cognitive, moral, philosophical, etc.) and mobility resulting in *insubstantial*, or accidental, change.<sup>31</sup> The former I propose to call an *eidetic journey*, representing the type of voluntary mobility that is focused on

30. George Santayana, for whom movement is a key feature of human beings, writes thus: "Locomotion—the privilege of animals—is perhaps the key to intelligence" (Santayana 1964, 1).

31. In this context, I assume that every journey, when open to novelty and authenticity, leads to some form of change, at least on a cognitive level. Therefore, the distinction lies in whether this change is essential or accidental. Naturally, it would be pertinent to further refine the criteria for what constitutes an essential change. However, such an endeavor would require more detailed analyses, which cannot be accommodated here. Nonetheless, it appears that the main indicators of the essential nature of a change include its permanence, its impact on the subject's structure, and the strength of its influence.

inner transformation, where one's movement in the outer world and the experiences of novelty (otherness) associated therewith provide a foundation and inspiration for change.<sup>32</sup>

A more profound study of eidetic journeys thus conceived would require elaborate theoretical analyses of a sort that would be obliged to consider its affinities with both other travel-related typologies and other kinds of existential experience. However, bearing in mind the aims of this article, I would like to stop at highlighting just one aspect of the issue, where this consists in demonstrating that the *eidetic journey* converges with the model of the *philosophical journey* revealed through our analysis of selected examples of ancient modes of thought. As I have sought to show, Greek philosophy—based on experiences associated with multiplicity (realized in the form of the erotetic desire for otherness)—aims at understanding the world by means of the recognition of its internal unity (*logos*, order); such an understanding naturally meets the criteria for essential change. Philosophy comprehended in this manner is a *manifestation* of the eidetic journey but, at the same time, the eidetic journey may also manifest itself as philosophy conceived in the form of a journey.

Every journey can be intentionally directed towards novelty and authenticity (as with Xavier de Maistre),<sup>33</sup> and each may also (but need not) serve inner transformation. It is, however, important to remember that “philosophy” cannot be reduced to “philosophical systems” alone; it is also, if not primarily, a “philosophical effort”—a special kind of love—that can be understood as practical activity or a unique type of spiritual exercise, as discussed by Pierre Hadot (1995) and other thinkers. The eidetic journey and philosophy understood as a journey share a common trait: both involve a zetetic enterprise, whose subject matter consists in a search of, inquiry into, and examination of the world, reflecting an unquenchable curiosity, mindfulness and sensitivity. Therefore, it can be assumed that the types of zetetic journeys described here are treatable as examples of *exercitia spiritualia*. Philo lists two sets of such spiritual exercises.<sup>34</sup> His account

32. S. Köb, for instance, delineates three types of journey: a journey in the external world, a journey in the counter-world, and a journey in the inner world. At the same time, that author's characterization of the latter does not fully align with the concept of an eidetic journey as outlined here. She primarily emphasizes the quasi-personalistic (psychological-spiritual) nature of the inner journey, involving self-discovery and introspection (Köb 2005, 199).

33. See: de Maistre 1871.

34. „πάντα γὰρ τὰ τῆς ἀσκήσεως ἐδώδιμα καθέστηκεν, ἡ ζήτησις, ἡ σκέψις, ἡ ἀνάγνωσις, ἡ ἀκρόασις, ἡ προσοχή, ἡ ἐγκράτεια, ἡ ἐξαδιαφόρησις τῶν ἀδιαφόρων” (Philo, *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*, 253); „Συρία γὰρ ἐρμηνεύεται μετέωρα· ὁ ἀσκητῆς οὖν Ἰακώβ νοῦς, ὅτε μὲν ὄρᾳ ταπεινὸν τὸ πάθος, περιμένει λογιζόμενος αὐτὸ νικῆσειν κατὰ κράτος, ὅτε δὲ μετέωρον



of these, containing as it does exercises named ἡ ζήτησις and ἡ σκέψις, focuses on practices of investigation: i.e. attentive observation and in-depth inquiry. Leaving their detailed analysis aside,<sup>35</sup> we may conclude that as spiritual exercises aimed at the subject's transformation, both eidetic and philosophical journeys are, in fact, *zetetic exercises*: exercises in searching for the “natural vision of things.”<sup>36</sup>

Venturing towards the other may transform us into others, as eidetic journeying challenges us to shift, and transcend, boundaries. In our own travels, we should be guided by the desire to establish otherness not just as *difference*, but also as a quality of openness towards diversity and alterity. Primarily, an eidetically conceived journey will be tantamount to deepened forms of discovery, listening closely to new questions and uncovering new perspectives upon the world. Such a journey comes to be elevated to the rank of philosophy, and philosophy—shedding its potential dogmatism—can rise to the level of a journey oriented towards conversional-eidetic ends.

In the motto of his book *The Creative Act: A Way of Being*, Rick Rubin quotes Robert Henri: “The object isn't to make art, it's to be in that wonderful state which makes art inevitable.” Yet, since creativity is a form of motion, it seems quite sensible to extend Henri's epiphany to the eidetic journey. After all, it is true that the object of philosophical journeying is not simply to make a journey: it is to be in that wonderful state which makes journeying inevitable.

καὶ ὑψαυχεοῦν καὶ ὑπέρογκον, ἀποδιδράσκει τε ὁ νοῦς ὁ ἀσκητῆς πρῶτος, εἶτα καὶ τὰ αὐτοῦ πάντα μέρη τῆς ἀσκήσεως, ἀναγνώσεις, μελέται, θεραπείαι, τῶν καλῶν μνήμαι, ἐγκράτεια, τῶν καθηκόντων ἐνέργειαι, καὶ διαβαίνει τὸν τῶν αἰσθητῶν ποταμὸν τὸν ἐπικλύζοντα καὶ βαπτίζοντα τῇ φορᾷ τῶν παθῶν τὴν ψυχὴν, καὶ ὁρμᾷ διαβάς εἰς τὸν ὑψηλὸν καὶ μετέωρον <τόπον> τὸν λόγον τῆς τελείας ἀρετῆς” (Philo, *Legum allegoriarum*, III, 18).

35. See: Kubok 2021a.

36. “The philosophical act is not situated merely on the cognitive level, but on that of the self and of being. It is a progress which causes us to *be* more fully, and makes us better. It is a conversion which turns our entire life upside down, changing the life of the person who goes through it. It raises the individual from an inauthentic condition of life, darkened by unconsciousness and harassed by worry, to an authentic state of life, in which he attains self-consciousness, an exact vision of the world, inner peace, and freedom” (Hadot 1995, 83). Elsewhere this same author adds the following: “We have here a complete reversal of our usual way of looking at things. We are to switch from our ‘human’ vision of reality, in which our values depend on our passions, to a ‘natural’ vision of things, which replaces each event within the perspective of universal nature” (Hadot 1995, 83).

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