

## Preface and Acknowledgements

This book is about the origin of our Western world-picture in Greek cosmology. The late Cornelis Verhoeven from the University of Amsterdam guided my first steps in the study of Anaximander, which in 1989 resulted in my doctoral dissertation on the translation and interpretation of the text of his only surviving fragment. At that time, I had the opportunity to discuss my earliest thoughts about Anaximander's cosmology with the also late Jan van Paradijs, who was, being a famous astronomer himself, interested in ancient astronomy as well. With Robert Hahn from Southern Illinois University Carbondale, I have had intensive discussions for many years, by email and during visits, on the understanding of Anaximander's cosmology. The fact that I disagree with a good deal of the tenor of his work does not diminish in the least the importance of this contact. I am especially grateful that he scrutinized the whole manuscript and made a lot of wise and helpful comments. This manuscript was already finished when his latest book, *Archaeology and the Origins of Philosophy*, appeared, on which I have been able, therefore, to insert only a few incidental remarks. For an extensive review, see Couprie (2010). Less frequent, but always stimulating, were the personal and email contacts with Gerard Naddaf from York University, Toronto. The book that the three of us wrote about Anaximander in 2003 has added much to my insights in ancient Greek cosmology. The exchange of thoughts by email with István Bodnár from Eötvös University, Budapest, Andrew Gregory from the University College London, and Carlo Rovelli from the Centre de Physique Théorique de Luminy, were very fruitful. The same holds especially for Dmitri Panchenko from the State University of St. Petersburg, who was so kind as to write a Foreword to my book. The contacts with Patricia O'Grady from Flinders University of South Australia at Adelaide were inspiring, although I fundamentally disagree with her interpretation of Thales. F. Richard Stephenson from the University of Durham kindly placed at my disposal his computer computations, based on the most recent insights, of some relevant solar eclipses. I was lucky to have had a couple of discussions with Teije de Jong from the University of Amsterdam on the prediction of eclipses as well as on the measuring of the size of the sun on a flat earth. I had



the opportunity to discuss several items with other members of the Utrecht Study Group for the History of Astronomy (USHA) as well. W.H. von Soldt from the University of Leiden drew my attention to the text of a cuneiform tablet on the distances of celestial bodies. B.J. Mansvelt Beck, also from the University of Leiden, kindly answered my questions on Chinese astronomy. The same holds for J.J. de Jong as regards the measurements of columns and column drums. Olaf Kaper from Leiden University was so kind as to help me with the translation of a hieroglyphic text, although on a vital point I was so stubborn as not to follow his advice. With my wife Heleen Pott (Erasmus University of Rotterdam), together with whom I have written a couple of articles, I discussed continually every thought incorporated in this book. Ton Verschoor and Liesbeth van der Sluijs read earlier versions and offered many useful comments. My brothers Jan and Leendert Couprie helped me with the calculations in Chaps. 15 and 16. If not otherwise indicated, the pictures are drawn by myself. Hans Exterkate not only meticulously produced the illustrations for several figures, but also allowed me to include the beautiful picture of Anaximander teaching (detail of his triptych *The Seven Wonders of the World*) in the Introduction. The picture on the front cover shows another detail of the same triptych. Ton Lecluse was so kind as to make the figure of a dodecahedron inscribed in a sphere in Chap. 17 according to my directions. The acknowledgments for permission to print the other pictures are mentioned in the captions of figures. I am grateful to the editors and publishers of *Apeiron*, *Hyperboreus*, *Early Science and Medicine*, and *Greek Research in Australia*, who allowed me to make use of (parts of) formerly published articles. Where needed I have updated and (sometimes strongly) adapted the texts. I also took the opportunity to redress misunderstandings that some passages and drawings have given rise to.

Special thanks to my physical therapist Jos (“Jesus”) Kremer, who cured me from the serious after effects of a whiplash. Without his healing hands, I would not have been able to finish this book.

Last but not least, I am very glad to mention Zdeněk Kratochvíl, Radim Kočandrle, and Vojtěch Hladký of the Charles University in Prague, who invited me to give a series of lectures on Anaximander and ancient Greek cosmology in June 2009. This visit offered me the opportunity to discuss at length the gist of this study as well as many details with them and with their students and colleagues.



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