

# *Anaximander and the Multiple Successive Worlds Thesis*

## *A Discussion Note*

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**Abstract:** Many commentators suppose that Anaximander subscribes to a multiple worlds thesis. In particular, they assume that: *either* Anaximander accepts that there are innumerable co-existent worlds, *or* he accepts that there are innumerable successive worlds. The first of these interpretations has been shown to be problematic. In this discussion note I present two new arguments against the multiple successive worlds reading of Anaximander, with the intent to buttress a single world reconstruction of his cosmology.

**Keywords:** Anaximander, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Simplicius, multiple successive worlds, multiple co-existent worlds, the unlimited, the governing power of the unlimited.

## **1 The Issue Set Out**

All that survives from Anaximander's work is a very short fragment which rests within a doxographical context.<sup>1</sup> The immediately

<sup>1</sup> Commentators take it for granted that Anaximander authored at least one book in which he presented his views on nature/philosophy; see e.g. Kirk - Raven - Schofield (KRS) (1988, 111 - 112), and Kahn (1960, e.g. 11 - 12). For a discussion concerning the various available definitions of "doxography", see Mansfeld (2008).

relevant part of the text by Simplicius, to whom we owe the fragment, reads as follows:<sup>2</sup>

Of those who claim that the ‘principle’ (ἀρχή) is one, in motion and ‘unlimited’ (ἄπειρον), Anaximander, son of Praxiades, a Milesian who became the successor and student of Thales, said that ‘the unlimited’ (τὸ ἄπειρον) is the principle and ‘element’ (στοιχείον) of the things that exist, and he was the first to introduce this name for the principle. He says that it is neither water nor any of the other so-called ‘elements’ (στοιχείων), but some other nature which is ‘unlimited’ (ἄπειρον). Out of this come to be all the heavens and the worlds in them (ἐξ ἧς ἅπαντας γίνεσθαι τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς κόσμους). And the sources from which all the things that exist have come to be, are also the ones into which these (things) get destroyed, *in accordance with what must be* (κατὰ τὸ χρεῶν). *For they give justice and reparation to one another for their injustice in accordance with the ordinance of time* (διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν), as he says in a rather poetic fashion. It is also clear that, having observed the change of the four elements into one another, he did not think fit to make one of these an underlying element, but something else apart from these.<sup>3</sup>

This passage gives rise to a number of different issues, both philosophical and philological, most of which will not be taken up here.<sup>4</sup> The

<sup>2</sup> Simplicius, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Physics (In phys.)* 24.13-23. [Barnes’ (1982, 29) translation, modified.]

<sup>3</sup> The (purportedly) actual fragment from Anaximander’s writings is in italics. It is customarily assumed that in *In phys.* 24.13-23. Simplicius quotes (some of the material) from Theophrastus’ now lost *Φυσικαὶ Δόξαι*. It should be noted that Simplicius’ text is not the only version in which Theophrastus’ account of the Anaximandean cosmology has come down to us. For a useful discussion of this issue, see Finkelberg (1994, esp. 485 – 496). See also KRS (1988, 114 – 118).

<sup>4</sup> Here are just a few of these issues: (a) Is it exegetically plausible to suppose, as suggested by Simplicius, that Anaximander is familiar with the four elements?, (b) What is the most appropriate translation for ‘τὸ ἄπειρον’ – apparently ‘the unlimited’ is not the only viable option?, and

aim of this discussion note is a rather modest one. As Simplicius reports, Anaximander posits 'the unlimited' (τὸ ἄπειρον) as the 'principle' (ἀρχή) of his cosmology. Moreover, he tells us that Anaximander maintains that out of the unlimited come to be all the 'heavens' (οὐρανοὺς) and the 'worlds' (κόσμους) contained in them. Putatively, this last statement, with the explicit use of the plurals, is one of the indications we have that Anaximander admits the existence of a plurality of worlds. More specifically, it is often assumed that there is textual evidence which supports the claim that: *either* Anaximander accepts that there are innumerable co-existent worlds, *or* he accepts that there are innumerable successive worlds. What I propose to do in what follows is to scrutinize the second of these two options.

What needs to be clarified at the outset is that the debate over whether Anaximander adopts some version of the multiple worlds thesis or not has a long history.<sup>5</sup> It is not my intention, however, to indulge in a review of literature. It has recently been shown that the multiple co-existent worlds reading may be decisively undermined by an array of different objections.<sup>6</sup> Yet, the same kind of authority cannot be claimed for the existing arguments against the multiple succes-

(c) What *exactly* is the nature of the Anaximandean 'principle' (ἀρχή), i.e. the unlimited? Detailed treatments of most of these issues may be found in: Kahn (1960, 119 - 196, 219 - 239); KRS (1988, ch. III, esp. 114 - 124); Barnes (1982, ch. II, esp. 28 - 37); Finkelberg (1993); McKirahan (1994, ch. 5, esp. 33 - 38, 43 - 47); Gregory (2007, 30 - 48).

<sup>5</sup> This is just a sample of the history of the debate: Zeller (1931) argues for a multiple successive worlds interpretation; Burnet (1920) argues for a multiple co-existent worlds reading; Cornford (1934) criticizes Burnet (1920) and defends the successive worlds view; Kirk (1955) & KRS (1988, 131 - 136) and Kahn (1960, 46 - 53) opt for a single world interpretation; Finkelberg (1994) criticizes both Kirk and Kahn and defends the multiple successive worlds thesis; McKirahan (2001) argues for a particular version of the multiple co-existent worlds position; Gregory (2007, 30 - 46) criticizes both versions of the multiple worlds reconstruction of Anaximander and defends anew the single world view.

<sup>6</sup> See Gregory (2007, 32 - 36).

sive worlds interpretation.<sup>7</sup> My objective here is to present two new arguments against this construal of Anaximander with the intent to make a contribution towards buttressing a single world reading of his work.<sup>8</sup>

## 2 An Evaluation of the Multiple Successive Worlds Reading

The focal claim of this paper is that there is textual evidence at hand which may provide us with two previously unnoticed arguments against the multiple successive worlds interpretation of Anaximander. I will begin with the argument I regard as the more basic of the two.

Simplicius' *In phys.* 24.17-18 is not the only text routinely cited in support of the successive worlds reading. There are a few other pieces of textual evidence that are often employed towards the same end. In *Meteorology* II. 1. 353b6-11 Aristotle states that certain thinkers suppose that the world undergoes some kind of drying-out process. In his commentary on this very same passage, Alexander of Aphrodisias tells us that Theophrastus does what Aristotle omits to do in *Meteorology* II. 1. He identifies the philosophers who adopt the aforementioned view. According to Alexander, Theophrastus reports that this theory is championed by Anaximander and Diogenes.<sup>9</sup> Apparently, Theophrastus' attribution of the drying-out theory to Anaximander is one of the motivations for the multiple successive worlds reading among

<sup>7</sup> For some of the existing attempts to discredit the multiple successive worlds reading of Anaximander, see e.g. Gregory (2007, 36 – 43) and KRS (1988, 133 – 136).

<sup>8</sup> Both of these arguments are inspired by the discussion in Gregory (2007, 32 – 41). It should be noted that Gregory (2007, 32 – 36) uses a version of the second argument (to be developed here) against the multiple co-existent worlds interpretation. Yet, for some reason he does not see its use against the multiple successive worlds thesis.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander, *Commentary on Aristotle's Meteorology* 67.11-12. It is worth noting that the only Presocratic philosopher Aristotle himself eventually connects to the drying-out theory is Democritus (*Meteorology* II. 3. 356b10).

the excerptors and the doxographers.<sup>10</sup> To be more specific, it seems that many of the ancients assume that Theophrastus credits Anaximander with a view along the following lines: there is in place an ever-flowing process *via* which (a) each world that comes to be is eventually destroyed by being dried-out, and (b) when a world does get dried-out, it is absorbed back into the unlimited and replaced by a new one.<sup>11</sup>

Gregory (2007, 38) and Kirk – Raven – Schofield (1988, 148 – 149) argue that the Theophrastean claim that Anaximander's world undergoes a terminal drying-out process, which signifies its death and the birth of a new world, is patently misguided. Very briefly, the argument has it that Anaximander clearly meant the progressive drying-out of the world to be understood as part of the reversible changes of the earth's surface, and *not* as an irreversible process that signifies the death of a world (and the birth of a new one) – which is presumably Theophrastus' interpretation.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Gregory (2007, 39) sug-

<sup>10</sup> For further discussion of this point, see (e.g.) Gregory (2007, 38 – 39).

<sup>11</sup> A cosmology along these general lines is attributed to Anaximander by some of the most prominent excerptors and doxographers; see e.g. *Simplificus, In Phys.* 1121.5-9 and Aetius, I. 3, 3. For further discussion of this issue, see Kahn (1960, 185, and especially fn. 3).

<sup>12</sup> Concerning this issue, I will have to agree with the spirit of Finkelberg's (1994, 496) claim: "... assuming the possibility of error on Theophrastus' part is methodologically a highly problematic procedure ...", and it should be resorted to only "... as an emergency move". What I would like to submit is that there is no need to saddle Theophrastus with the mistake identified by Gregory and KRS. As we have just seen, Alexander reports that Theophrastus does indeed attribute a drying-out thesis to Anaximander. Nevertheless, Alexander's text does not specify what the exact nature of this drying-out process is. The text is at best inconclusive; (on its own) it does not seem to support either the single world or the multiple worlds reading of the Milesian philosopher's cosmology. Thus, it is fair to conclude that: (a) It is certainly true that some of the excerptors and doxographers ascribe to Anaximander a specific version of the drying-out thesis; and, on the basis of this thesis they proceed to claim that he also adopts a multiple worlds view, but (b) This particular reconstruction of the Anaximandean cosmology cannot lightly be attributed to Theophrastus; the

gests that this mistake was exploited by the doxographers who were more than eager to associate Anaximander with the atomists.<sup>13</sup> Finally, he also asserts that this is how most of the literature in support of the multiple successive worlds interpretation came to be.

It should be conceded that the arguments sketched out above, both the one for as well as that against the multiple successive worlds reconstruction, are at best highly speculative. As it stands, Theophrastus' report that Anaximander adopts some version of the drying-out thesis is inconclusive. It cannot solidly back either one of the readings under consideration, as the available text does not specify whether the drying-out process is terminal or not.

It seems to me, however, that we have a different and good reason to doubt the exegetical validity of the multiple successive worlds interpretation. We need to acknowledge that the very first thesis for the existence of multiple worlds, of any variety, is customarily attributed to Anaximander. That is to say, according to many of the commentators, both ancient and modern, the very first Presocratic philosopher to accept such a view is Anaximander.<sup>14</sup> If this is so, and given that (i) the origins of this interpretative claim, along with most of the body of doxography, may be traced back to Theophrastus' now lost *Φυσικαὶ Δόξαι*, and (ii) the latter shared his sources on the Presocratics with his teacher, Aristotle, then one conclusion seems to follow.<sup>15</sup> It is only natural to expect that the ostensibly Theophrastean claim for the presence of a multiple successive worlds thesis in Anaximander's cosmology is somehow reflected in Aristotle's scattered comments on the Milesian thinker.

available textual evidence does not seem to allow such a move. Some further (indirect) support for the position outlined here may be provided by the ensuing arguments in this paper.

<sup>13</sup> The atomists do accept the existence of multiple (co-existent) worlds. It should be noted that it was a common practice among the ancients to draw doctrinal connections between later Greek philosophical schools and earlier thinkers. For a discussion of this point, see Mansfeld (1999, 32 – 34).

<sup>14</sup> There does not seem to be any evidence for such a thesis in Thales; see Gregory (2007, 29 – 30).

<sup>15</sup> For further discussion of (ii), see Kahn (1960, 11 – 12, 17 – 19).

What is important to note here is that in *On the Heavens* I. 10. 279b12-17 Aristotle tells us, among other things, that his predecessors adopted a variety of mistaken views about the 'world' (κόσμος).<sup>16</sup> Some accept that the world is generable and everlasting. Others claim that it is generable but perishable. Finally, some others adopt a far more complex view: there are multiple successive worlds; more specifically, there is an everlasting process *via* which each (generable) world is destroyed and replaced by a new one. The interesting detail here is that Aristotle attributes this third thesis to Empedocles and Heraclitus. Anaximander's name is conspicuously absent from his list of philosophers who adopt this cosmological position. If we are to believe that the Milesian philosopher was the very first thinker to advocate a thesis along these lines, and that his book was probably available to Aristotle, then one would expect to find his name right next to those of Empedocles and Heraclitus.<sup>17</sup> It would be strange, to say the least, to assume that Aristotle neglects to mention the name of the founder of the theory in question. As is well known, the Stagirite is invariably very diligent in tracing the origins of the theories he considers to be untenable.<sup>18</sup> Thus, I would like to submit that *On the Heavens* I. 10. 279b12-17 warrants two closely related claims. First, the immediately relevant textual evidence from Aristotle, who was one of the very few commentators who may have had access to Anaximander's work, appears to suggest that the Milesian philosopher never subscribed to a multiple successive worlds thesis. And second, it is true that Theophrastus does credit Anaximander with a thesis according to which the world undergoes some kind of drying-out process. Nevertheless, the fact that Theophrastus had access to the very same sources as his master, significantly reduces the plausibility of the

<sup>16</sup> Although Gregory (2007, 41) notices this passage, he does not pursue its implications for the issue at hand.

<sup>17</sup> Kahn (1960, 11 - 12) argues that both Aristotle and Theophrastus did have access to Anaximander's book. In fact, there are indications that the Milesian philosopher's book was available up to the time of Apollodorus (180 - 109 BC).

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. the discussion in *Physics* I. 2-4.

claim that he also credited Anaximander with a multiple successive worlds thesis.

If we accept that Aristotle is a tolerably reliable historian of philosophy, then some of his comments on Anaximander may form the basis for yet another argument against the multiple successive worlds interpretation.<sup>19</sup> Central to this argument is *Physics* III. 5. 204b22-29:

Yet it is not possible either that an 'unlimited' (ἄπειρον) body should be one and simple, whether it is (as some say it is) the body that exists in addition to the 'elements' (στοιχεῖα), and out of which they make the elements come into being, or whether it is taken without qualification. There are some who make this 'the unlimited' (τὸ ἄπειρον), not air or water, so that the other bodies may not be destroyed by the infinite element they posit, since the elements have an opposition to one another. For instance, air is cold, and water moist, and fire hot. (εἰσὶν γὰρ τινες οἱ τοῦτο ποιοῦσι τὸ ἄπειρον, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἄερα ἢ ὕδωρ, ὅπως μὴ τᾶλλα φθείρηται ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀπείρου αὐτῶν· ἔχουσι γὰρ πρὸς ἄλληλα ἐναντίωσιν, οἷον ὁ μὲν ἀήρ ψυχρός, τὸ δ' ὕδωρ ὑγρόν, τὸ δὲ πῦρ θερμόν). If one of these were unlimited, the others would by now have been destroyed (ὢν εἰ ἦν ἐν ἄπειρον, ἔφθαρτο ἂν ἤδη τᾶλλα). But as it is, they say, there is another thing from which these elements come to be (νῦν δ' ἕτερον εἶναί φασιν ἐξ οὗ ταῦτα).<sup>20</sup>

Commentators take it that the philosopher Aristotle has in mind in this passage is Anaximander.<sup>21</sup> If this is so, then Aristotle's report may be analyzed as follows:

<sup>19</sup> Kahn (1960, 19 - 22) correctly notes that Aristotle cannot always be counted on for reliable information about his predecessors. At the very same time, however, it ought to be recognized that the content of the Aristotelian texts cited below has never been challenged by the commentators.

<sup>20</sup> Hussey's (1983, 11) translation, modified.

<sup>21</sup> See e.g. KRS (1988, 122 - 124), McKirahan (1994, 35 - 36) and Hussey (1983, 76, 80).



1. Anaximander posits 'the unlimited' (τὸ ἄπειρον) as the 'principle' (ἀρχή) of his cosmology.
2. The unlimited is not one of the known elements, i.e. air, fire, water and earth, but something which exists in addition to them.
3. The four elements come to be out of the unlimited.
4. The Milesian philosopher posits the unlimited as the principle of his cosmology for very specific reasons.
5. The four elements are clearly in opposition to one another.
6. The principle of any cosmology has to be something which is unlimited in quantity.
7. If we were to suppose that the principle is one of the four elements, then a serious problem would ensue. Given that the principle is unlimited in quantity, then it would by now have exterminated all the other (limited in quantity) elements.
8. Sensory experience readily confirms that the world is still populated by all four of the elements.
9. The (Anaximandrian) explanation for the above, i.e. (8), is the fact that the principle is not one of the four elements, but something apart from them, namely, the unlimited.

Obviously, the remaining question here is this: "How can *Physics* 204b22-29 help us resolve the interpretive puzzle at hand?"

I would like to submit that this passage ought to be considered in conjunction with two more pieces of textual evidence. The first one is Simplicius' *In phys.* 24.18-23, and the second is yet another stretch of text from Aristotle's *Physics* (III. 4. 203b10-15):

That is why, as we say, the unlimited has no principle. Nevertheless, this [the unlimited] is thought to be the 'principle' (ἀρχή) of all other things, and it surrounds and 'governs all' (πάντα κυβερνᾶν), as is said by all those who do not suppose other explanations, such as mind or love, beyond the unlimited. Furthermore, it is thought to be the divine,

as it is immortal and imperishable as Anaximander says, along with most of the natural philosophers.<sup>22</sup>

Now we have all the relevant texts before us, we may proceed to assemble our argument.

It should be evident that *Physics* 204b22-29 on its own cannot block the multiple successive worlds interpretation. One may readily argue that: out of the Anaximandean unlimited come to be the four elements that make up the world; these elements are in constant struggle with each other; at some point in time, however, the world somehow gets destroyed; the elements get absorbed back into the unlimited, out of which comes to be a new world; this process of generation and destruction is everlasting.<sup>23</sup>

In *Physics* III. 4. 203b10-15 Aristotle in effect reports that the Anaximandean principle, the unlimited, shapes the elements into a well-ordered structure, i.e. a 'world' (κόσμος).<sup>24</sup> It transpires then that Anaximander's unlimited is not merely the source from which the elements emanate. It is also a creative force. As we are told, it 'governs' (κυβερνᾶν) everything. How *exactly* does it do this? The answer seems to be in *In phys.* 24.18-23 and in *Physics* III. 5. 204b22-29. The rough picture that emerges out of these two texts is something along the following lines. The elements come to be out of the unlimited. These are by nature in constant opposition to each other. But, something stops them from becoming a chaotic heap of material substances. The unlimited forms them into a 'world' (κόσμος), i.e. a well-ordered structure, through the imposition of a cosmic law of justice.<sup>25</sup> The precise details concerning the way this law works are

<sup>22</sup> Hussey's (1983, 8) translation, modified.

<sup>23</sup> Compare this reading of *Physics* 204b22-29 with the one suggested in Finkelberg (1994, 497 - 498).

<sup>24</sup> This is evidenced by the explicit claim that the Anaximandean unlimited is analogous to the Anaxagorean mind and the Empedoclean love. For a detailed discussion of the usage(s) of the term 'κόσμος' in early Greek philosophy, see Kahn (1960, 219 - 230).

<sup>25</sup> This seems to be suggested by the presence of the expressions 'κατὰ τὸ χρεῶν' and 'διδόναι ... δίκην' in Simplicius' text.

at best murky. *In phys.* 24.18-23 is not sufficiently illuminating on this point. Yet, I would like to suggest that an adequately neutral reconstruction of the cosmological position described in Simplicius' text is this:

- (1) To begin with, the four elements are formed into a well-ordered structure by the governing power of the unlimited. That is, each one of them is assigned a specific amount of space or territory.
- (2) The elements, however, are naturally opposed to each other.
- (3) In their struggle with each other, the four elements often do injustice to each other. For instance, in the winter water encroaches onto the territory of earth, thus doing the latter a great injustice.
- (4) If one of the elements encroaches onto the territory of another element, then it is inevitable that it will eventually pay back for the injustice done. In the summer, water not only pays back for the injustice done to earth, but it itself suffers an injustice. Earth recovers its territory and also encroaches onto the territory of water.

This reciprocal process, which is governed by the cosmic law of justice imposed by the unlimited, is continuous.<sup>26</sup> And, it may ensure that the

<sup>26</sup> Finkelberg (1994, 500) adopts a different reading of *In phys.* 24.18-23. Very briefly, he takes it that 'ἀλλήλοις' in the text is meant to signify not the reciprocal but "... the non-reciprocal, that is, a chain reaction". In other words, Finkelberg supposes that in this passage we are essentially told that: (a) The occupants of the Anaximandean world are in constant struggle with each; this struggle eventuates in the eradication of one thing by another, and (b) Through this series of transformations the Anaximandean world is in some way led to its own destruction - and its replacement by a new world. It should be noted that Finkelberg's suggestion faces two closely related difficulties. First, his proposed construal of 'ἀλλήλοις', and of the whole passage in general, is not the most natural one. And second, Aristotle's *Phys.* III. 5. 204b22-29 and Simplicius' *In phys.* 24. 21-23 suggest that the elements in the Anaximandean world are in a constant process of reciprocal changes. Simplicius clearly ascribes to

world remains for ever what it is supposed to be, namely, a κόσμος. In particular, the creation may remain for ever a well-ordered structure if and only if the equilibrium of power is maintained among its various fundamental ingredients. The cosmic law of justice seems to be there to guarantee just that.

What we are yet to explain, is how the above can discredit the multiple successive worlds interpretation of Anaximander. By postulating that the unlimited has governing power over the world, the Milesian philosopher essentially eliminates the need for multiple successive worlds. The rationale for this last claim is fairly simple. As just noted, Anaximander supposes that the unlimited is a creative and sustaining force. The unlimited orders the elements it generates into a well-ordered structure. Furthermore, it imposes upon the creation a cosmic law of justice which may ensure that it never ceases to be a κόσμος. If Anaximander's intention is to somehow argue for the eternity of the world, then he has no philosophically compelling reason to multiply the entities in his ontology. He does not need to theorize that there is a ceaseless process *via* which each world eventually reaches a halt and gets absorbed back into the unlimited so that a new one may get generated. He can simply uphold the claim that the existing world/κόσμος may remain in place for ever due to the action of the cosmic law of justice imposed by the unlimited.

To spell things out a bit, the overall position defended in this paper is the following. The fact of the matter is that there is nothing to prevent one to conjecture that Anaximander does believe in the existence of multiple successive worlds. After all, such a claim seems to be congruent with some of the points reported by the excerptors and the doxographers – see e.g. *In phys.* 24.13-23. Yet, certain things need to be kept in mind. The textual evidence from Aristotle's *On the Heavens* (I. 10. 279b12-17) suggests that Anaximander never subscribed to a mul-

Anaximander a process involving the reciprocal changes (μεταβολή) of the elements, and not a process involving the eradication of one thing by another. And, Aristotle suggests that Anaximander posits the unlimited as the 'principle' (ἀρχή) in order to ensure the eternity of the reciprocal interchanges of the elements.

multiple successive worlds thesis. Furthermore, we have just seen that Anaximander has no philosophical motivation whatsoever to invest in such a thesis. The Anaximandean world is ontologically complete as it is. The only reason the Milesian philosopher would have for positing such a theory, is that the unlimited is by nature fit to accommodate such a view.<sup>27</sup> However, *given* that (a) Aristotle never counted Anaximander among the supporters of such a theory, and (b) the Milesian philosopher's world is self-sufficient as it stands, i.e. the hypothesis for the existence of multiple successive worlds would be ontologically otiose, *then* one conclusion seems to follow. We have no compelling reason, either textually or philosophically motivated, to suppose that Anaximander ever adopted a multiple successive worlds thesis.

### 3 Conclusion

In this paper I presented two arguments against the view that Anaximander subscribes to a multiple successive worlds thesis. Given the present state of the debate, i.e. the fact that there are a number of robust arguments against the multiple co-existent worlds interpretation, it is fair to say that the arguments presented above support a single world reading of Anaximander. What remains to be addressed, of course, is the issue concerning the presence of the plurals κόσμους and οὐρανοῦς in Simplicius' text. These are customarily taken to be Anaximander's own words quoted initially in the Theophrastean *Φυσικαὶ Δόξαι* and then repeated in *In phys.* 24.17-18.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, commentators such as Finkelberg seem to have a valid point when they assert that: (a) Some of the textual evidence from Simplicius, as well as from other excerptors and doxographers, seems to suggest that Theophrastus does ascribe to Anaximander a multiple successive worlds thesis, and (b) We are well advised to doubt Theophrastus'

<sup>27</sup> That is to say, if the Anaximandean principle is in fact boundless and divine, then what is there to stop it from creating innumerable worlds - either successive or co-existent?

<sup>28</sup> See e.g. Kahn (1960, 48 - 50) and Finkelberg (1994, e.g. 485 - 496).

testimony only on the basis of truly good reasons.<sup>29</sup> I believe that rejecting the multiple (successive) worlds interpretation of Anaximander does not necessarily entail rejecting the reliability of Theophrastus' testimony. To thoroughly substantiate this claim, however, we would have to venture into territory far beyond the scope of this short discussion note.<sup>30</sup> What suffices to note here is that we have some really good reasons to assume that Anaximander never adhered to a multiple successive worlds thesis. Hence, in light of the two arguments recounted earlier on, I would like to submit that an old suggestion made by C. Kahn gains new currency. It may indeed be the case that Anaximander himself used the terms 'κόσμους' and 'οὐρανοὺς' – in their plural forms. Even if this is so, however, we do not have to accept that his intention was to affirm his adherence to some version of the multiple worlds thesis. The overall evidence suggests that it is quite possible that his real intention was to simply refer to the many celestial rings (οὐρανοί), and the distinct arrangements of earth (κόσμοι) in the sublunary realm.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Finkelberg (1994, 496).

<sup>30</sup> See one of the suggestions made towards justifying the claim made above in fn. 12.

<sup>31</sup> See Kahn (1960, 50 – 51). It should also be noted that Kahn traces the origins of this interpretation back to Zeller (1931) and Cornford (1934).

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