

THE PRE-SOCRATICS

HZT4U1 - GRADE 12 PHILOSOPHY - MR. A. WITTMANN

UNIT 1 - LECTURE 4



The School at Athens by Raphael

"In all of history, it is difficult to account for the sudden rise of the civilization in Greece. Much of what makes civilization had already existed for thousands of years in Egypt and in Mesopotamia, and had spread to Greece. The Greeks advanced art and literature beyond others, but what they did in the purely intellectual realm (science and philosophy) is even more exceptional."

Bertrand Russel, History of Western Philosophy

The Greek World c.650 BC



Early Conception of the World

- ◆ Philosophy begins between c.600-400 B.C. the Pre-socratics (before Socrates).
- ◆ Metaphysics
- ◆ First to try to understand the world through logic and reason (scientific thinking) alone, not religion, mysticism or the supernatural
- ◆ First philosophers and scientists of the Western tradition.
- ◆ Before them the Greek conception of the world (its origin, organization and operation) was dominantly theocentric, animistic, anthropomorphic, or mystical.

Early Conception of the World (continued)

- ◆ The universe was what it was and functioned the way it did because of the will of the gods
- ◆ They differed from humans only in power, as outlined in Hesiod's Theogony (poet 750-700 B.C.)
 - ◆ For example...

Early Conception of the World (continued)

◆ Persephone, Hades and Demeter



Early Conception of the World (continued)

- ◆ heiros gamos, Gaia (mother earth) and Uranus (father sky)



10,000BC



Fertility



Egypt

Early Conception of the World (continued)



Early Conception of the World (continued)

- ◆ Pre-socratics were not concerned with god/human based explanations for the world and natural phenomena.
- ◆ They proposed a more scientific and naturalistic cosmology, not supernatural or humanistic.

Milesian or Monist School

- ◆ Miletus, on the coast of Ionia in Asia Minor, was large trading centre with numerous colonies throughout the Greek World.
- ◆ Aristocratic government with no king or priesthood to dominate society and learning.
- ◆ Tried to discover one primary substance which was the elemental foundation of all matter, energy and motion.
- ◆ Thales (first philosopher & father of science) –water
- ◆ Empedocles –water, air, earth, fire
- ◆ Heraclitus –fire (change, flux)
- ◆ Parmenides –Existence and the world is unchanging and static

Pythagorean School

- ◆ Wealthy Greek city-states of Southern Italy and Sicily (i.e. Syracuse).
- ◆ Searched for metaphysical truths to determine an intellectual foundation for a religious or truly moral way of life.
- ◆ More abstract and mathematical than the Milesians and thus much still remains obscure.
- ◆ Essential unity of reality lies not in a physical substance, but in numerical relationships.
- ◆ Pythagoras –Soul purification, morality & metempsychosis
- ◆ Xenophanes -abstract, universal, unchanging consciousness

Heraclitus & Parmenides

 *KygenThieves*
PRESENTS

Atomist School

- ◆ Democritus, & others, stated that an infinite number of atoma randomly come together and form the sensible world.
- ◆ Adopted and expanded by the later Hellenistic philosopher, Epicurus, who directly contradicted his stoic rival Zeno.
- ◆ Epicureanism vs. Stoicism
- ◆ Zeno believed there was a universal good that can be discovered by true reason, a universal consciousness.
- ◆ Epicurus influenced the thinkers of the enlightenment like Newton.

Epicurus & Zeno

 *Xygen Thieves*
PRESENTS

To sum up...

THE END