

An analysis of fragments from Anaximander and Xenophanes

By Harri Wilkinson

Anaximander's fragment (560BC)

‘Says that it [arche] is neither water nor any other of the so-called elements but some different infinite nature, from which all the heavens and worlds come into being. And the things from which existing things come into being are also the things which they are destroyed in accordance with what must be’

(Simplicius, *Commentaries on the Physics*)



Outline of the idea

- Argument against Thales
- Diving nature
- Contingency

My thoughts on the frgment

- Almost rejects at the time science
- Heavy emphasis on a divine being

Appraisal

- Highlights his idea of arche
- Not centred on what the beginning was
- Denial of science

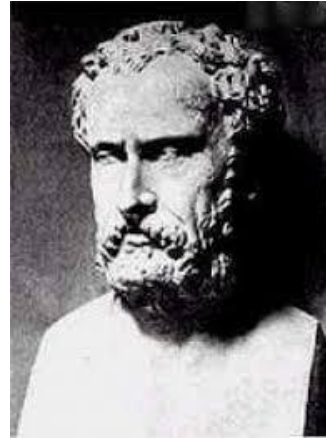
Other Pre-socratic comparisons to Anaximander

- Thales would strongly disagree
- As would Anaximenes

Xenophanes' fragment (570BC)

‘And the truth no man has seen nor will anyone know concerning the Gods and about all the things of which I speak; for even if he should actually manage to say what was indeed the case nevertheless he himself does not know it; but belief is found over all’

(Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Mathematics*)



Outline of the idea

- Belief in a God or Gods
- But also that we cannot ever know the truth of if there is a God(s)
- Follows the modern idea of religion at the time

My thoughts on fragment

- Hypocritical of his own belief in many ways
- While a modern way to think, he still challenges somewhat

Appraisal

- Nature potentially divine
- Undermines human understanding of the truth
- Potential reality cant be known

Other Pre-Socratic comparisons to Xenophanes

- Democritus' view
- Thales' disbelief in the argument

Comparison of the two fragments

- Both believe in a creator
- Anaximander is more definite on the creator
- Xeonphanes seems more insecure about his idea

Bibliography

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