

Greek Philosophy

What was philosophy for the Greeks?

- ▶ The pursuit of the understanding of PHYSIS – nature.
- ▶ Originally it was the nature of the world
- ▶ Later it became the nature of humanity

- ▶ NOTE the word: PHILOSOPHIA, means LOVE OF WISDOM / KNOWLEDGE / CLEVERNESS

The Presocratics

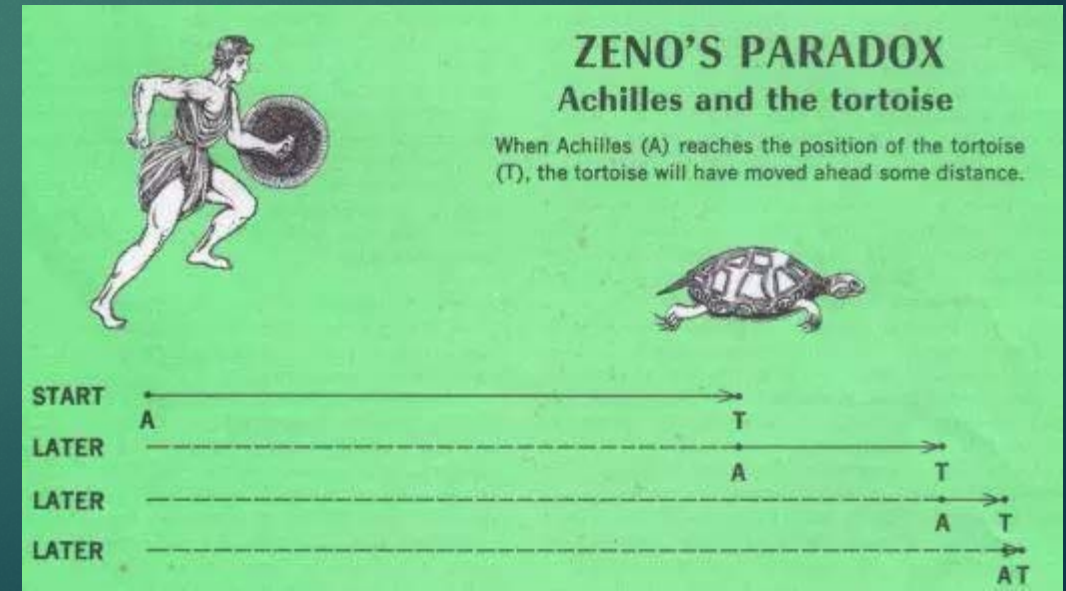
- ▶ Essentially all philosophers before Socrates (careful not chronologically, but rather as to influences).
- ▶ This is a modern philosophical term, not an ancient one.
- ▶ The ancients did NOT consider Socrates a new beginning or a break with tradition per se
 - ▶ But Socrates is considered to be the first philosopher to work exclusively on the nature of MAN / HUMAN without consideration of nature or cosmology.
 - ▶ Parmenides was much more important in terms of philosophical breaks historically.

Pre-Socratics: The Ionian Natural Philosophers

- ▶ Ionian Natural Philosophy: The nature of the world, or the original matter/principle of the world.
- ▶ Thales = c600-550, Original matter is WATER. One of the 7 Sages
- ▶ Anaximander = c600-550, worked on astronomy. ~Original matter is APEIRON – matter itself.
- ▶ Anaximenes = 6th century. Original matter is AIR.
- ▶ Heraclitus = c500. Original matter is FIRE, and focus is change.

Pre-Socratics: The Eleatic School

- ▶ Starts with Parmenides, and follows his teachings.
- ▶ Main dogma: Non-Being does not exist
- ▶ Parmenides: Poem in epic hexameter, late 6th century. Truth vs doxa.
- ▶ Zeno: 5th century. Dialectic. Rejection of pluralism. Paradoxes.



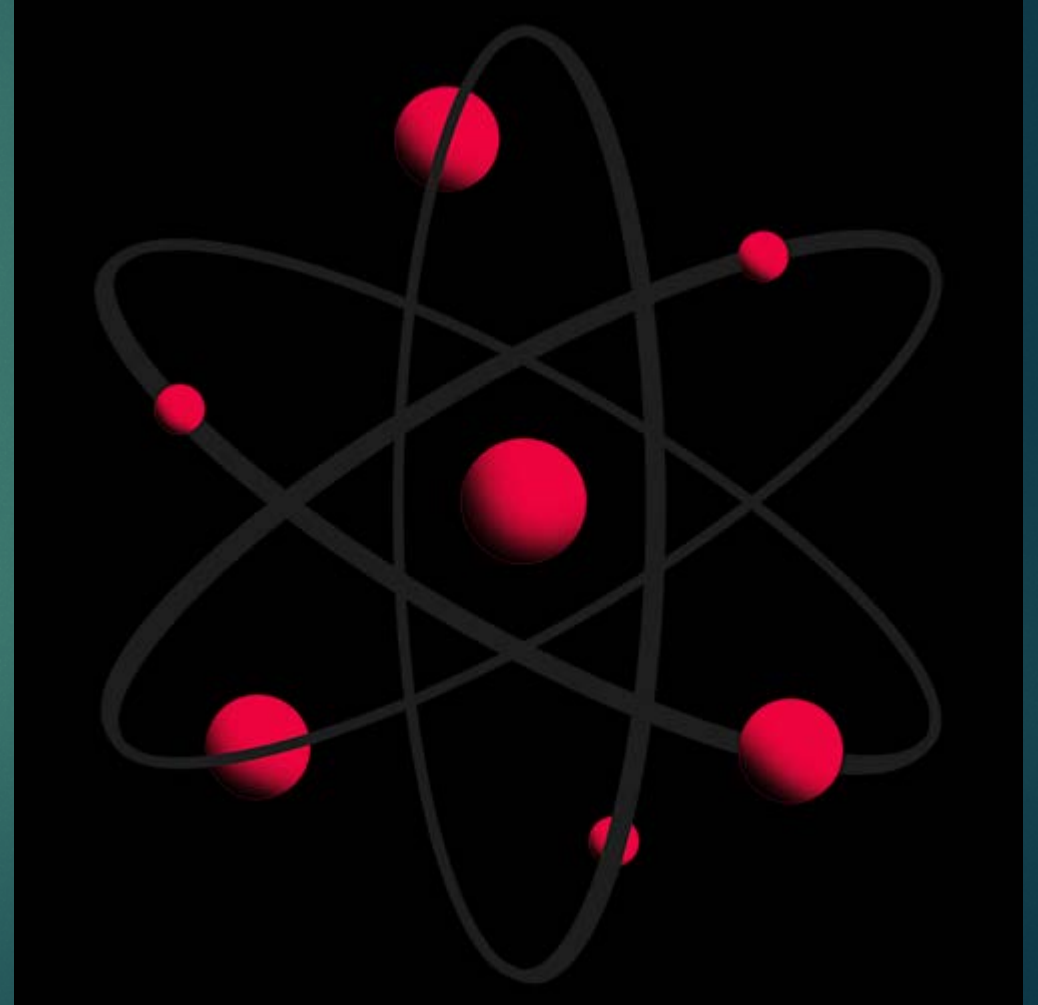
Presocratics: Rejection of religion

- ▶ Xenophanes: c570-467. Ionian but moved West. Some connection with Eleatic school. Rejected anthropomorphism in religion. Wrote many poems. First epistemologist.
- ▶ Anaxagoras: c500-428. Ionian, moved to Athens, left around 431. Focus on matter, but accepting change. Natural objects, rather than anthropomorphism.



Presocratics: Atomism

- ▶ Reaction to Eleatism.
- ▶ Democritus: The indivisible atom. 450-400.



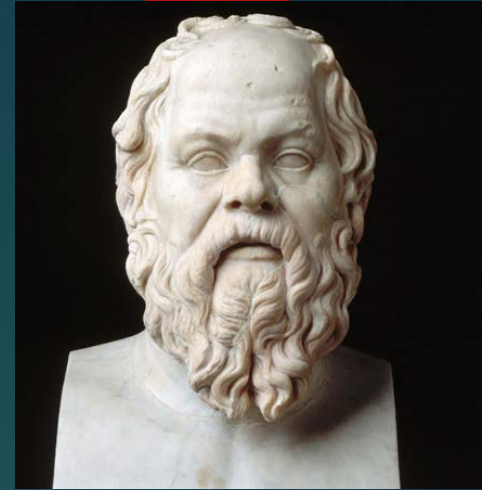
The Sophists



- ▶ No coherent system, but rather a description of the peripatetic teachers that taught mathematics, natural philosophy, dialectic and oratory.
- ▶ A rather political movement, because of the emphasis on Rhetoric and Dialectics. It was their students that made a difference.
- ▶ Protagoras: 5th century, Abdera-Athens. Man is the measure of all things
- ▶ Gorgias: 480-380, rhetor, and dialectic
- ▶ Prodicus: b.460s from Ceos. Lexicography and rhetoric
- ▶ Thrasymachus: 5th century, from Chalcedon. Rhetorical theory
- ▶ Hippias: late 5th century, from Elis. Polymath, mathematics
- ▶ Antiphon: 480-411, Athenian, Rhetor
- ▶ Critias: 460-403, Athenian, politics

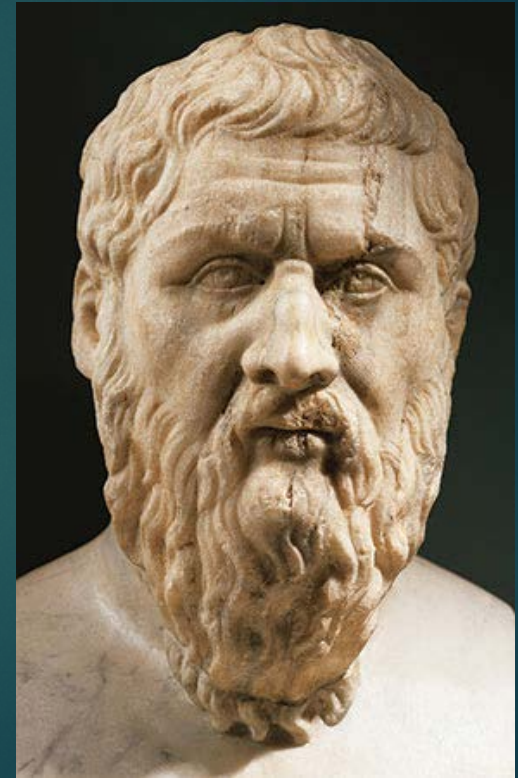
Socrates

- ▶ 469-399, Athenian.
- ▶ Never wrote anything. All we know about his views comes from his students, particularly Plato and Xenophon.
- ▶ The Platonic and the Xenophontic Socrates are not the same.
- ▶ Practical philosopher – but accused of being a sophist, and a corrupter of youth
- ▶ Focus on moral good.



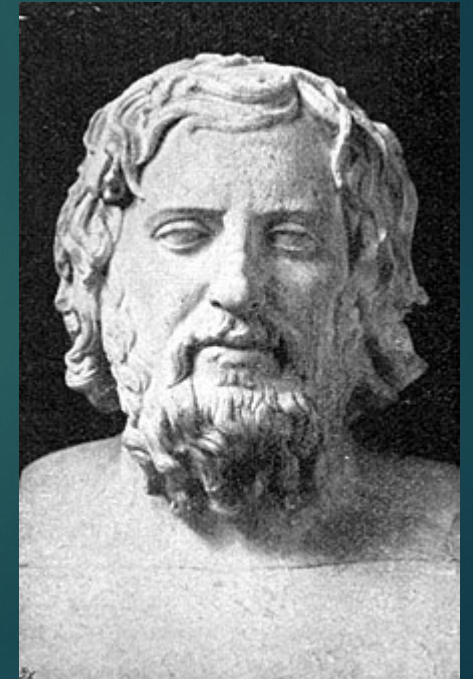
Plato

- ▶ 428-348, Athenian, student of Socrates
- ▶ Wrote dialogues, on a variety of subjects relating to virtue and politics
- ▶ Many dialogues ending in aporia



Xenophon

- ▶ 430-354, Athenian, student of Socrates
- ▶ Prolific author – philosophical dialogues are among his minor works
- ▶ Not as used or influential as Plato



The Cynics

- ▶ Movement started in 4th century, influenced by Socrates
- ▶ Short-cut to virtue doctrine
- ▶ Making philosophy available to everyone, and rejecting social norms
- ▶ Founder: Diogenes, of Sinope, 412-324

