

SESSION ONE

FIRST PHILOSOPHY: MYTH, FLUX, AND DIALOGUE

STUDY EXERCISES

See the handout that contains fragments on the Pre-Socratic philosophers. These quotes provide material that can be interpreted liberally, as an exercise in philosophical argument.

Exercise 1

Use the quotations to explore the following questions:

- a. What is the nature of metaphysics?
- b. What distinguishes philosophy from science and mythology?
- c. What is the role of reason in philosophy?
- d.
 - i. Why is inquiry into *arche* a philosophical issue?
 - ii. Why isn't it something to be done by empirical science?
 - iii. Why is it to be done by reasoning rather than just by observation?
 - iv. How are observation and reasoning related to one another in philosophy?

- e. What does Xenophanes' claim about the form of a horse's god tell us about the possibility of human knowledge of the Divine?
- f.
 - i. Is Zeno right?
 - ii. What is he trying to demonstrate in his paradoxes?

Exercise 2

Study questions on Heraclitus, knowledge and change

- a. Is it contradictory to see change and sameness as core principles of nature?
- b. Heraclitus is known for his idea that everything flows. If it is true that everything flows, how is it possible to know anything for longer than an instant?
- c. What difficulties ensue from the Heraclitean doctrine of flux?
- d. What sort of evidence can one put forth to either support or challenge Heraclitus' views?
- e.
 - i. Is there something general we should learn from Heraclitus?
 - ii. What does he mean by saying that up and down are the same?
 - iii. What is the example of the river supposed to show?