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?