

Philosophy study notes greek philosophers

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Philosophy Study Notes — Greek Philosophers - The earliest Greek philosophers are sometimes called NATURAL PHILOSOPHERS because they were mainly concerned with the natural world and it's processes -

Pythagoras (570 B. C), Heraclitus (500 B. C), Empedocles (490 B. C.), Zeno (490 B. C.), Parmenides (470 B. C.), Democritus (460 B. C.) = Pre-Socratic -

All the earliest philosophers shared the belief that there had to be a certain basic substance at the root of all change

Pythagoras - Basic Beliefs: - He held the soul to be immortal - Transmigration of the soul - Past events repeat themselves in a cyclical process - One must regard all living things as kindred - Condemned carnivorousism as unethical because he believed that the soul transmigrated into all living creatures - He stated that eating animals is the same as eating people - " You are what you eat"

Heraclitus - The first Western philosopher to go beyond physical theory in search of metaphysical foundations and moral applications - He observed the world as being in continual strife and chaos - Proposed that as long as the world moved according to set measures and proportions, it would go on - The only enduring realities are the recurring patterns of change itself (example: seasons) - The world is characterized by opposites — you must experience a low, to experience a high (example: you will never appreciate the value of food, unless you have starved) - CHANGE IS A FUNDAMENTAL REALITY - Nature is constant in the state of change - " Everything flows" - Without a constant interplay of opposites (good vs. bad), the world would cease to exist

Parmenides - " Nothing can come from nothing" - Held that change is an illusion and that the universe, in reality, is an unchanging object - If something changes, it must change into something that did not exist before - Something must come into being from non-being but non-being does not

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exist, therefore, NOTHING CAN COME FROM NON-BEING... MEANING CHANGE DOES NOT EXIST - Believed that everything that exists has always existed - Change is an ILLUSION - We are REAL because we came from something; even if we are dead, we are still something, therefore, we never change (the soul still lives) Heraclitus Parmenides - Everything changes (all things flow) - Nothing can change - Sensory perceptions are reliable - Sensory perceptions must be unreliable Zeno - Was a student of Parmenides - Defended Parmenides teaching that the world is static and unmoving - First to use an argument style known as "reduction ad absurdum" meaning, you start off with hearing your opponents ideas, and reducing them to meaningless or obscurity - Examples of Paradoxes: - Half distance (Paradox of Movement): To get from one place to another, you must move half the distance, meaning that overall, you will never reach your end distance - Arrow (Paradox of Movement): Things do not move, they exist where they are - Comes from Parmenides idea that "change is an illusion" - Famous for his paradoxes Empedocles - Could not accept that change was unreal, but did not completely deny Parmenides thoughts on change - He believed that things change, but on a fundamental level, things stay relatively the same, in terms of their build - He argues that objects as wholes begin to be and cease to be, but they are composed of material particles and these particles are indestructible and unchanging - Believed in the notion of the four basic elements: fire, water, earth, and air - "The fundamental particles of matter are unchanging. There are elements that do not change. They do not become different kinds of things, they only conglomerate. A conglomeration is a whole, and we simply give that whole the name SUBSTANCE. There is not real substance, there are just 4 kinds of matter, and particles of that

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matter conglomerate to form what seems to be one distinct kind of thing. " - There is only a " mingling and interchange of what has been mingled" - This is called REDUCTIONISM Democritus - Agreed with his predecessors that transformations in nature could not be due to the fact that anything actually " changed" - He therefore assumed that everything was built up of tiny invisible blocks, each of which was eternal and immutable — he called them ATOMS - Believed nature's blocks had to be eternal because nothing can come from nothing (Agreed with Parmenides) - Believed that all atoms were form and solid, but they are not all the same - If they were all identical, there would still be no satisfactory explanation of how they could combine to form different things - Believed that nature consisted of an unlimited number and variety of atoms, but however infinite they might be in number and shape, they were all eternal immutable and indivisible - In terms of Lego experiment: - Like atoms, they come in many different shapes and sizes, and they have " hooks" and " barbs" so that they can be connected to form every conceivable figure, and can later be broken again so that new figures can be constructed from the same blocks Socrates - Most enigmatic figure in philosophical history; He never wrote a single line, but has still had the greatest influence on European thought - Known to us through the writings of Plato, one of his pupils. It is Plato's portrait of Socrates that has inspired thinkers in the Western world for nearly 2, 500 years - He did not appear to want to instruct people. Saw his task as helping people to " give birth" to the correct insight, since real understanding must come from within - By playing ignorant, Socrates forced the people he met to use their common sense. He pretended to be dumber than he was, which is what we call Socratic irony - This allowed him to continually expose the weakness in people's thinking - <https://assignbuster.com/philosophy-study-notes-greek-philosophers/>

He always said that he had a "divine voice" inside him. Socrates protested against having any part in condemning people to death. He moreover refused to inform on his political enemies. This was eventually to cost him his life - In the year 399 BC he was accused of "introducing new gods and corrupting the youth," as well as not believing in the accepted gods - Could have saved his life by agreeing to leave Athens, but he valued his conscience and the truth, higher than life. So he was condemned to drink hemlock and drank the poison in the presence of his friends and died - Sophists and Socrates were different because he did not consider himself to be a "sophist" -- a learned or wise person. Unlike the Sophists, he did not teach for money. He called himself a philosopher in the true sense of the word. A "philosopher" really means "one who loves wisdom" - Socrates vs. Jesus - Both were enigmatic personalities, as neither of them wrote down their teachings. We are forced to rely on the picture we have of them from their disciples - They both believed that they spoke on behalf of something greater than themselves - They challenged the power of the community by criticizing all forms of injustice and corruption - Their activities cost them their lives - Both could have saved themselves by appealing for mercy, but they both felt they had a mission that would have been betrayed unless they kept faith to the bitter end Plato - Had been a pupil of Socrates for some time, and was 29 when he finally drank the hemlock (was executed) - To him, the death of Socrates was a striking example of the conflict that can exist between society as it really is, and the TRUE or IDEAL society - Plato created the first known higher level of education, The Academy - Was concerned with the relationship between what is eternal and immutable, on the one hand, and what "flows" on the other - Socrates and Sophists were

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interested in the problem as it related to human morals and society's ideals or virtues, which Plato was concerned with BOTH what is eternal and immutable in nature, and what is eternal and immutable in regards to morals and society - Plato believed that EVERYTHING tangible in nature "flows", so there are no "substances" that do not dissolve - Absolutely everything that belongs to the "material world" is made of a material that time can erode, but everything is made after a timeless "mold" or "form" that is eternal and immutable - Came to the conclusion that there must be a reality behind the material world — he called the reality the WORLD OF IDEA; it contained the eternal and immutable "patterns" behind the various phenomena we come across in nature - Believed that everything we see around us in nature, everything tangible, can be likened to a soap bubble, since nothing that exists in the world of the senses is lasting - Example: thoughts and opinions change, but things like the answer to 8×3 , doesn't change — because these are said in reason — reason, in a way, is the direct opposite of thinking or feeling - Reason is eternal and universal precisely because it only expresses eternal and universal states - Believes man is a dual creature — we have a body that "flows" and an immortal soul (the soul is the realm of reason; since it is not physical it can survey the world of ideas) - Believed that the soul existed before it inhabited the body, and as soon as it wakes up in a human body, it has forgotten all perfect ideas - As the human being discovers various forms in the natural world, a vague recollection stirs in its soul — people cling to the sensory world's REFLECTIONS of ideas - The Cave: - Imagine some people living in an underground cave — they sit with their backs to the mouth of the cave, and their hands and feet in such a way that they can only look at the back wall of the cave. Behind them is a high wall,

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and behind that wall pass human-like creatures, holding up various figures that cast flicking shadows on the back wall of the cave, so that the cave dwellers can only see the shadow play. They have been sitting in this position since they were born so they think the shadows are all there is. Imagine one of the cave dwellers now manages to free himself, and after rubbing his eyes, he sees the beauty of everything. The cave dweller could have gone anywhere, but instead he goes back to the cave to share his knowledge. He tries to convince the dwellers that the shadows are nothing but reflections of "real things", but they don't believe him and kill him -

Demonstrates the philosopher's road from shadowy images to the true ideas behind all natural phenomena - Relationship between the darkness of the cave and the world beyond corresponds to the relationships between the forms of the natural world and the world of ideas - He didn't mean the natural world is dark and dreary, but that it is dark and dreary in comparison with the clarity of ideas - His political philosophy is characterized by RATIONALISM — the creation of a good state depends on its being governed with reason Aristotle - A pupil at Plato's Academy - Using an example of a horse: he agreed with Plato that the horse flows, and that no horse lasts forever, and agreed that the form of the horse is eternal and immutable BUT the "idea" of the horse was simply a concept that humans had formed after seeing a certain number of horses - Therefore, the "idea" or "form" of the horse thus had no existence of its own — to him, the idea or form of the horse was made up of the horse's characteristics (species) - Plato: the highest degree of reality is that we think with our reason while Aristotle: the highest degree of reality is that which we PERCEIVE with our senses - Plato though that all the things we see in the natural world were purely reflections

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of things that existed in the higher reality of the world of ideas, and the human soul BUT Aristotle thought that things that are in the human soul were purely reflections of natural objects - Therefore, nature is the real world - Held that all our thoughts and ideas have come into our consciousness through what we have heard and seen, but we also have an innate power of reason THEREFORE showing that our reason is completely empty until we have sensed something, meaning man has no innate " ideas" as Plato would say - Having come to terms with Plato's theory of ideas, Aristotle decided that reality consisted of various separate things that constitute a unity of " form" and " substance" — the substance is what things are made of, while the form is each thing's specific characteristics - Believes everything can be categorized - Believes there are always 4 causes of a thing: 1. Material Cause: Material Component 2. Efficient Cause: That which makes the thing (external agent) 3. Formal Cause: that which makes the thing what it is 4. Final Cause: Purpose for which the thing is made Plato Aristotle - True knowledge is found " above" the world of ideas - True knowledge is