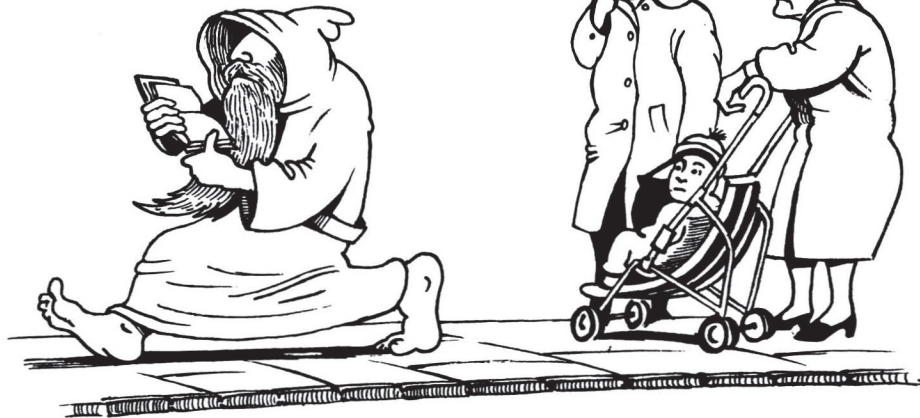


WHY DOES PHILOSOPHY GIVE SOME PEOPLE A HEADACHE, OTHERS A REAL BUZZ, AND YET OTHERS A FEELING THAT IT IS **SUBVERSIVE & DANGEROUS** ?

WHY DO A LOT OF PEOPLE THINK PHILOSOPHY IS TOTALLY **IRRELEVANT** ?

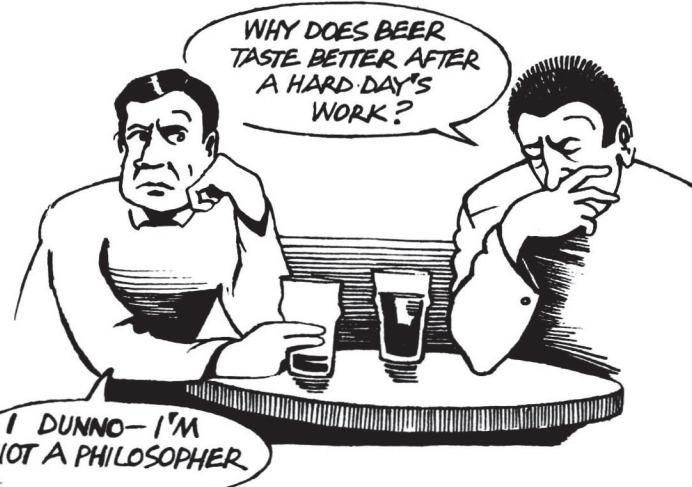
WHAT **IS** PHILOSOPHY ANYWAY ?

How can you recognise a philosopher in the street ?



We'll try to answer some of these questions

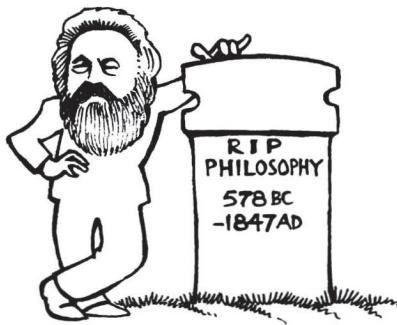
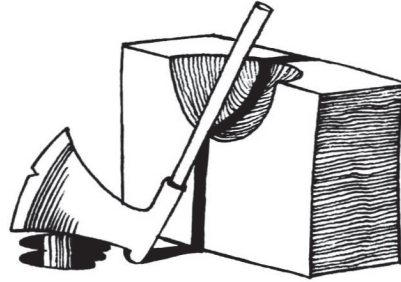
Some philosophers will naturally argue that looking at the general history of philosophy is an impossible, possibly distorting, task — but as one philosopher said, it's better to do evil than to do nothing.



SO WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY? SINCE NO ONE AGREES, IT'S PROBABLY THE WRONG QUESTION TO START WITH — BUT THEN MOST PHILOSOPHY STARTS WITH

THE **WRONG QUESTION** OR THE **WRONG ANSWER**

In Greek, philosophy means the 'love of wisdom' which seems like a reasonable definition, but doesn't get us very far, since there have been very sharp disagreements about 'wisdom' throughout history



Marx and others have announced the death of philosophy. (This makes things difficult for professional philosophers.) An Italian called **Gramsci** said *everyone* was a philosopher of sorts.

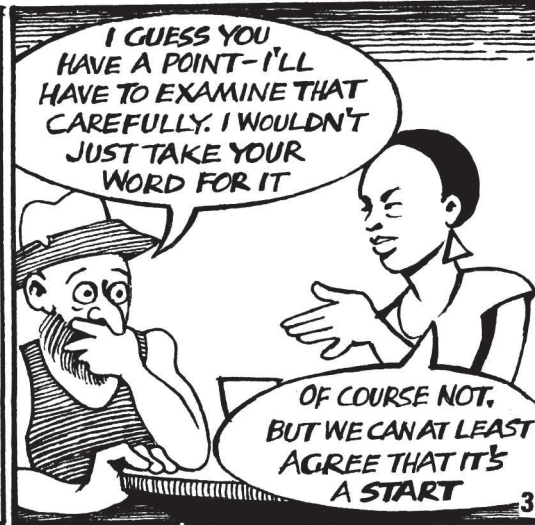
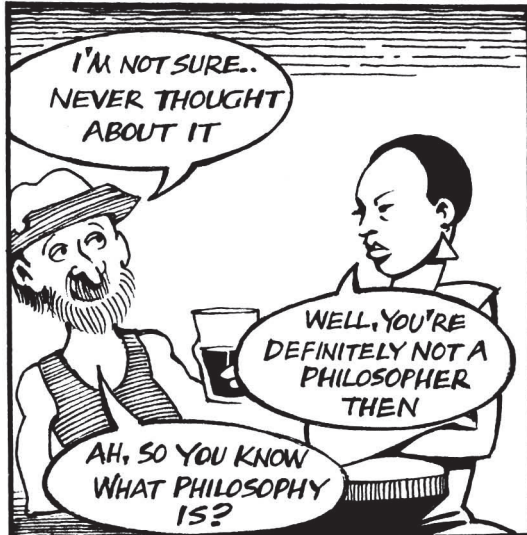
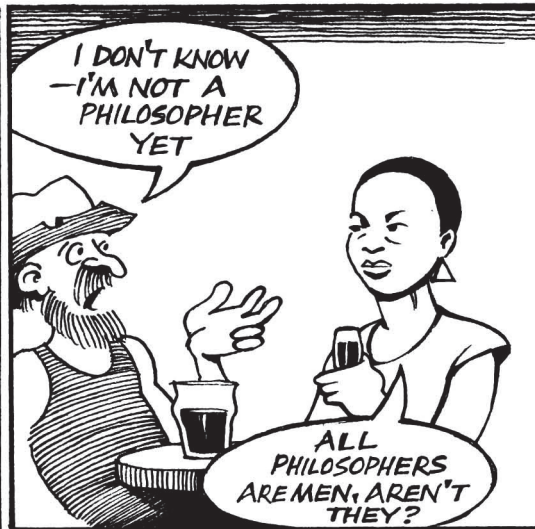
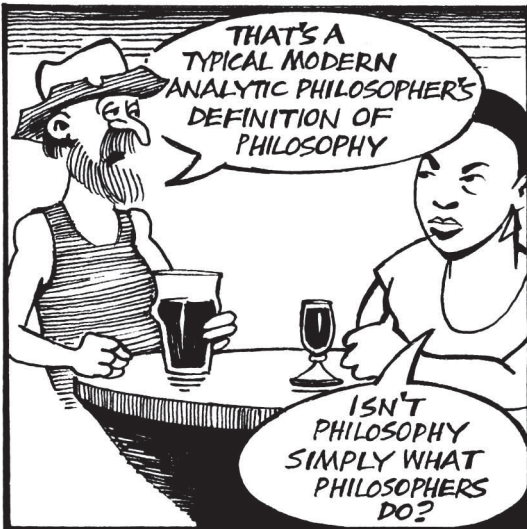
A lot earlier **Plato** had said things would only be all right when philosophers ruled the world. Other philosophers have argued that philosophy teaches that there is no meaning to anything at all, which could make ruling difficult.

~~CONFUSED?~~

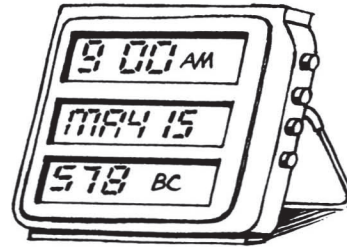
Let us leave it to **Bertie Russell** to give us a definition to be going on with:

PHILOSOPHY IS THE
NO-MAN'S LAND BETWEEN
SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY,
EXPOSED TO ATTACK
FROM BOTH SIDES





Oddly enough there seems to be general agreement on **when** philosophy started



WHY THEN? Well, listen to the German philosopher Karl Jaspers:



Clearly, there were intellectual stirrings on a wide-scale

.. and there's general agreement on **where** it started . . .



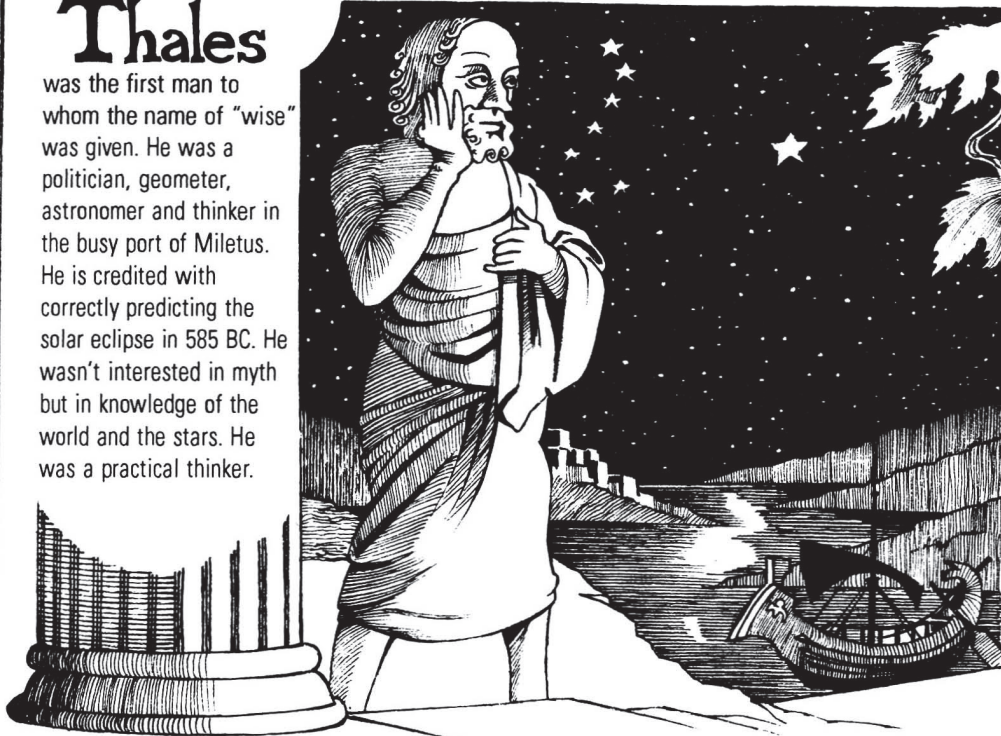
WHY GREECE?

By the 6th century BC the city-states on mainland Greece were thriving commercial centres. The Greeks were developing, through their dramatic arts, the idea of the rule of necessity, rather than blind chance. They were building the basic structure of democracy. They had inherited the adventurous sea-faring spirit of the earlier Minoan civilisation. They travelled widely. They had a language suited to precise description. They had assimilated geometry from the Egyptians, and star-lore and knowledge of the calendar from Asia Minor. This early history is not at all certain, however.

FOR WANT OF SOMEONE BETTER TO BLAME FOR STARTING PHILOSOPHY WE'LL PICK THALES

Thales

was the first man to whom the name of "wise" was given. He was a politician, geometer, astronomer and thinker in the busy port of Miletus. He is credited with correctly predicting the solar eclipse in 585 BC. He wasn't interested in myth but in knowledge of the world and the stars. He was a practical thinker.



WHAT WAS UNIQUE ABOUT GREEKS LIKE THALES WAS THAT THEY TRIED TO DISENTANGLE SCIENCE AND MAGIC, AND DARED TO THINK ABOUT THE WORLD WITHOUT FIRST THINKING OF GOD

PERHAPS, IN THE BEGINNING, EVERYTHING WAS MADE OF WATER..



Thales' question isn't as wet as it sounds – but more importantly, it's a **NEW** kind of question

What these early philosophers were looking for was the **unity of things.**



Anaximander,

alive around 546 BC was in the same tradition. He held that the earth was freely suspended in space. He suggested that all living creatures arose from water, and that men had evolved from fish. He argued that there was a single primal substance and a natural law which exerts itself in the world, maintaining a balance between different elements.



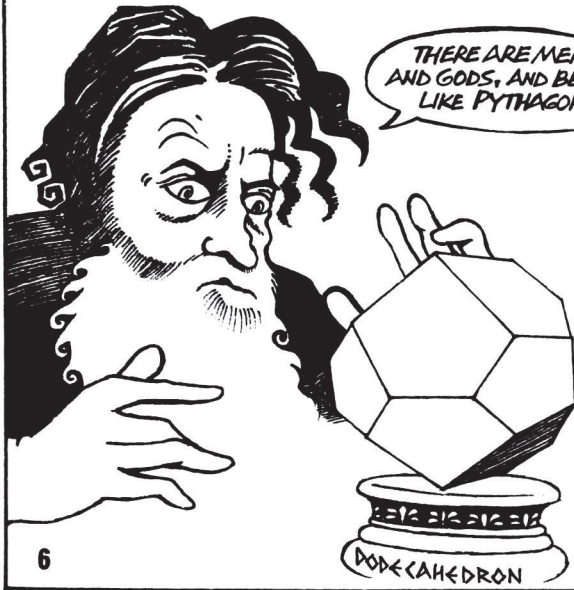
He also made the first map for the explorer-merchants of Miletus.

THESE ARE SECULAR, RECOGNISABLY SCIENTIFIC VIEWS



Pythagoras

was a curious blend of scientist and mystic



THERE ARE MEN AND GODS, AND BEINGS LIKE PYTHAGORAS

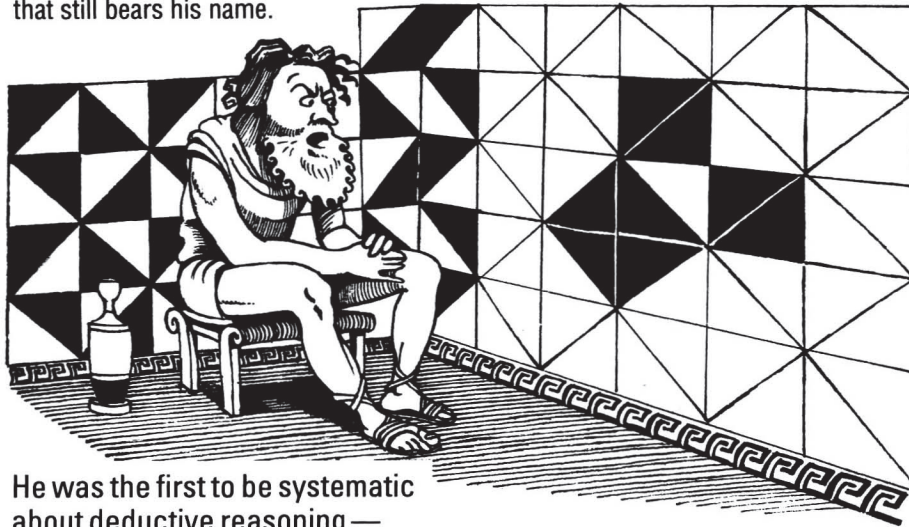
Disliking the dictatorship of Polycrates in his native Samos, he travelled in Egypt, then settled in Italy. (By this time the Mediterranean was a Greek lake.) Here he founded a school based on his mathematico-metaphysical philosophy (**What?!?**).

The Pythagoreans talked about cosmical harmony. This was based on numbers as the relations of things. For example, they discovered that halving the length of a string on a lyre produced a note one octave higher, and that all harmonies represented ratios of whole numbers. They extended this notion of **harmonies** to all things.

Pythagoras explored the geometry of the perfect solids:



He discovered the theorem that still bears his name.



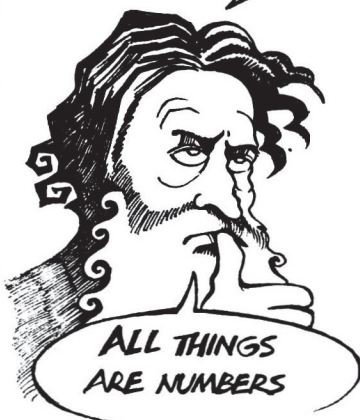
He was the first to be systematic about deductive reasoning — starting with an axiom that is self-evident, then proceeding step by logical step to a conclusion that is far from self-evident.

THIS GAVE A GREAT IMPETUS TO SCIENCE, BUT THE SEARCH FOR THE SELF-EVIDENT HAS TORMENTED PHILDSOPHERS THROUGH THE AGES

NOT CONTENT WITH SHOWING THE IMPORTANT PART PLAYED BY NUMBERS IN THE UNIVERSE, PYTHAGORAS SAID:

THE SOUL IS AN IMMORTAL THING, AND IS TRANSFORMED INTO OTHER LIVING THINGS—WHATEVER COMES INTO EXISTENCE IS BORN AGAIN IN THE REVOLUTIONS OF A CERTAIN CYCLE—NOTHING BEING ABSOLUTELY NEW

Pythagoras' advances in mathematics led him to overvalue the power of numbers. He believed the dodecahedron somehow embodied the structure of the entire Universe. He elevated his discoveries in music into a cosmic theory of the harmony of the spheres.



ALL THINGS ARE NUMBERS

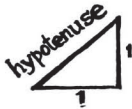
PYTHAGORAS WASN'T THE LAST PHILOSOPHER TO BE BEGUILED BY THE BEAUTY AND CERTAINTY OF MATHEMATICS

He also formed a Pythagorean Order, with a set of complex and seemingly arbitrary taboos which included:

- To abstain from beans*
- Not to eat a from a whole loaf*
- Not to sit on a quart measure*

A REMINDER OF HOW CLOSE THE ANCIENT GREEKS WERE TO THE WORLD OF SUPERSTITION & THE IRRATIONAL? OR, MORE SINISTERLY, AN INSTANCE OF THE IMPULSE OF PHILOSOPHERS TO SAFEGUARD KNOWLEDGE UNDER THE DOMAIN OF A PRIESTLY CASTE?

A member of the Order, **Hippasos**, was banished, not for eating, but for spilling the beans about the Order's most closely guarded secret — that the



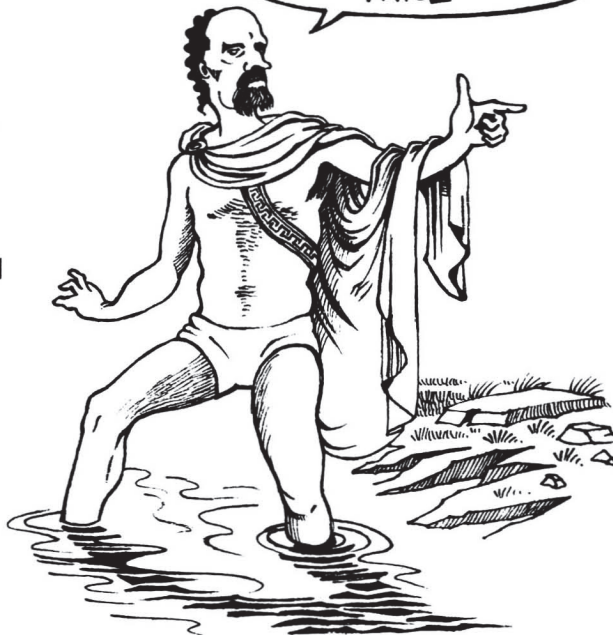
of this triangle was a surd — it could not be written as a ratio of whole numbers.



Heraclitus

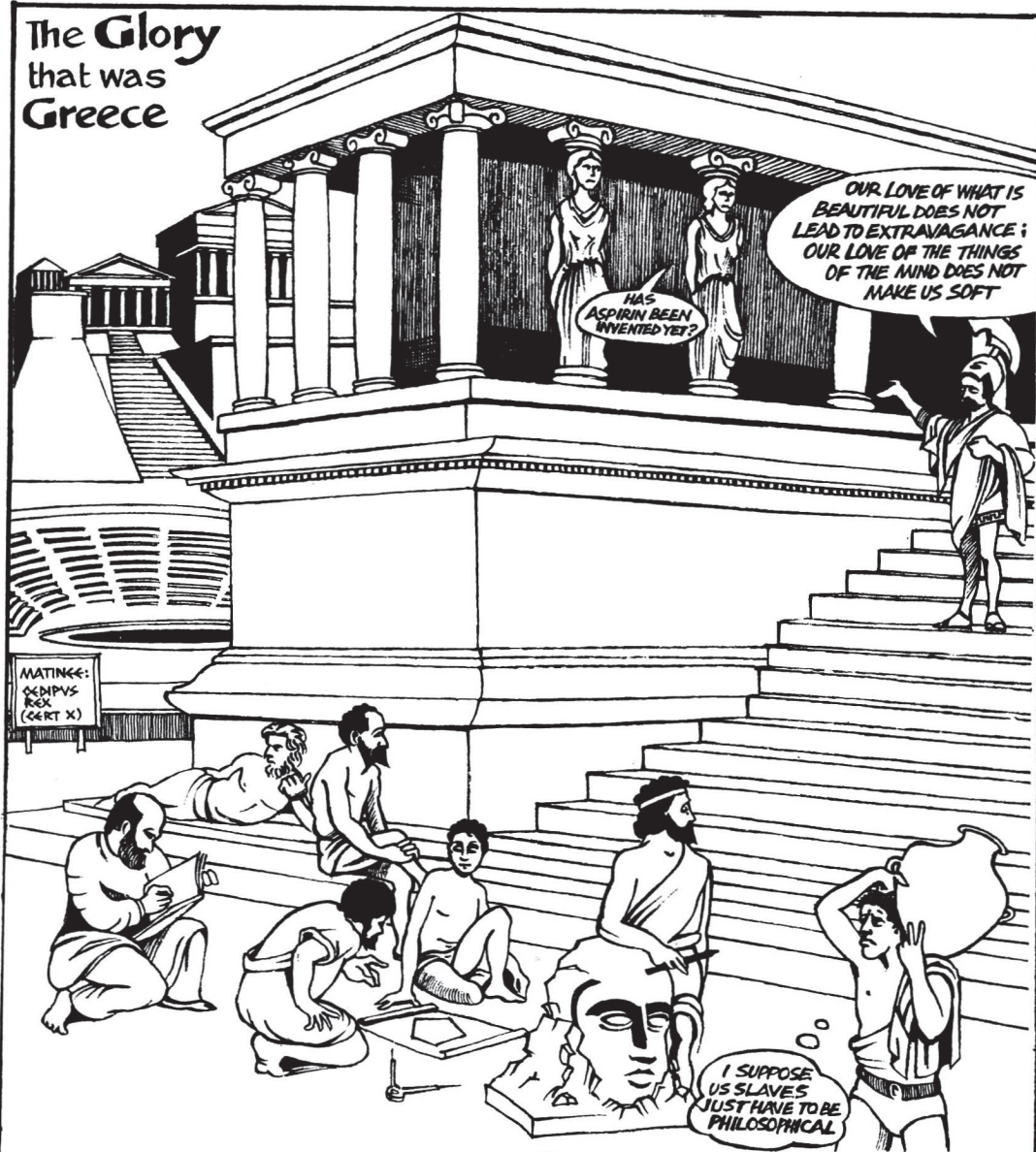
alive around 500 BC, argued that everything was in a state of flux. But he believed, too, in a cosmic justice that maintained equilibrium in the world. This was a complex idea! His choice for the one primary element everyone was seeking: **FIRE**. There was a central fire that never dies...

YOU CANNOT STEP INTO THE SAME RIVER TWICE



AGAIN PREFIGURING MODERN SCIENTIFIC IDEAS

The Glory that was Greece



There was an extraordinary flowering of culture in classical Greece.

Passionate and enquiring, the Greeks produced ideas and artefacts out of all proportion to the general development of the society of the time.

There were statesmen like **Pericles**, tragedians like **Euripides**, sculptors like **Phidias**, historians, musicians, potters, painters, lyric poets like **Sappho**, satirists like **Aristophanes**, architects, mathematicians as well as philosophers.

BUT IT MUST BE REMEMBERED THAT THE NEWLY-INVENTED DEMOCRACIES WERE BASED ON SLAVERY — ONLY ONE-SIXTH OF THE MEMBERS OF A CITY-STATE WERE CITIZENS, ONCE YOU COUNTED OUT SLAVES, CHILDREN, FOREIGNERS (BARBARIANS THE GREEKS CALLED THEM) AND WOMEN (WHO HAD ALMOST NO CIVIL RIGHTS). THIS WAS TO DEFORM THEIR ATTEMPTS TO DEVELOP ETHICAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHIES.

Empedocles

NEXT THE STRANGE EMPEDOCLES OF AGRACAS
EXPERIMENTING WITH A WATER-CLOCK OF BRASS

HE WROTE IN VERSE, DISCOVERED AIR
HE THOUGHT HE WAS GOD — SO THERE
HE ARGUED THAT THERE WERE FOUR ELEMENTS IN ALL
THAT PLANTS HAD SEX, THE EARTH WAS LIKE A BALL
THAT CHANGE TOOK PLACE BY LOVE AND STRIFE
AND HISTORIC CYCLES RAN THROUGH LIFE
WHEN CALLED UPON TO PROVE HIS DEITY
HE SNEERED AT ALL THE WAITING LAITY
GREAT EMPEDOCLES, THAT ARDENT SOUL
LEAPT INTO ETNA, AND WAS ROASTED WHOLE



The Atomists

(c 420 BC)



Leucippus & Democritus

took from their predecessor Parmenides the idea of basic elementary particles, and from Heraclitus, endless movement. They proposed innumerable tiny solid particles — atoms — which could not be cut.

The atoms flew around randomly, and were too small to be seen.

The ever-changing world was explained as a ceaseless rearrangement of the unchanging atoms into different shapes. Not until the chemist Dalton in 1800 AD was there a significant advance on this theory.

10



DEMOCRITUS SAID THE REASON YOU COULD CUT AN APPLE WITH A KNIFE WAS BECAUSE THERE WERE SPACES BETWEEN THE ATOMS. HIS THEORY WAS A FUSION OF SUCH PRACTICAL THINKING AND THE TRADITION OF ABSTRACT THOUGHT ON FUNDAMENTALS