

HZT4U: Philosophy

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Contents

Lecture 1: Natural Philosophy and Logic

Chapter 1

Natural Philosophy

Homework TODO:

- Dinner Table Philosophy - Due February 10
- Natural Philosophers Presentation - Due February 6
- Reduce Feb 5 note for Philosophers

1.1 Ancient Philosophers of Knowledge

1.1.1 Sophists

Where natural philosophers looked at the world, sophists focused on people.

- Athenian teachers who prioritized persuasion over truth.
- Truth was whatever one could argue convincingly.
- Politically motivated to persuade rather than seek truth.
- Used logical fallacies to influence others.

An example of a modern day sophist would be Donald Trump, who often persuades without much truth. (E.g. tariffs)

1.1.2 Socrates

- Opposed Sophists, seeking truth through questioning.
- Developed the Socratic Method—asking questions to find truth.
- Used dialectics (critical discussion).
- Wrote nothing; known through Plato's works.
- Executed for "corrupting the youth."

1.1.3 Plato

- Student of Socrates, believed knowledge is innate.
- Observations are opinions; true knowledge comes from reasoning.
- Theory of Forms—everything we see is an imperfect replica.
- Used dialectics to uncover deeper truths.

1.1.4 Aristotle

- Student of Plato, but believed knowledge comes from observation.
- Senses are reliable; knowledge is learned, not innate.
- Everything has a purpose (teleology).
- Human purpose is to live virtuously (Golden Mean).

Lecture 2: Pre-Socratic Philosophers

1.2 Ancient Philosophers of Knowledge

1.2.1 Thales

- Greek philosopher, considered the first in Western philosophy.
- Believed everything originated from water, as it was the fundamental substance of all things.
- Though incorrect by modern standards (due to atomic theory), his ideas were revolutionary at the time.
- Pioneered early scientific thinking by seeking natural explanations for the world.

1.2.2 Anaximander

- Greek philosopher and a student of Thales.
- Part of Thales' school and expanded on his teacher's ideas.
- Considered the father of modern cosmology, with interests in mathematics and astronomy.
- Questioned what things were truly made of, arguing that water was not the fundamental element but rather a secondary state of matter.
- Proposed the concept of the "Apeiron" (the infinite or boundless) as the source of all things.

1.2.3 Pythagoras

- Born on a Greek island but later moved to what is now Italy.
- A mathematician and philosopher who founded a secretive school of thought.
- Believed that everything in nature could be reduced to mathematical principles.
- His ideas influenced later mathematical and philosophical thought, though the claim that the world is purely mathematical is debated.
- Mathematics can describe the world, but what seems rational to one person might be irrational to another.

1.2.4 Parmenides

- Greek philosopher who focused on the nature of existence.
- Argued that change is an illusion; reality is unchanging and eternal.
- Believed that knowledge must come from reason, not the senses.
- His ideas laid the foundation for metaphysical thought in Western philosophy.

1.2.5 Zeno

- Greek philosopher from southern Italy, a student of Parmenides.
- Famous for his paradoxes, which challenged the nature of motion and change.
- Argued that motion is logically impossible, despite being observed.
- His paradoxes, like Achilles and the Tortoise, influenced mathematical and philosophical discussions on infinity.

1.2.6 Heraclitus

- Greek philosopher who believed everything is in constant change.
- "You cannot step into the same river twice"—everything is in flux.
- Thought that even if objects appeared unchanged, they were constantly evolving over time.
- Distinguished between everyday experience (which seems stable) and deeper change (which happens scientifically and philosophically).
- His views contrast with Parmenides, who claimed reality is unchanging.