

**Guide to Lecture 9: The Milesians**

**A) Types of Explanations**

- a) Some features of modern materialism
- b) Narrative/mythical explanations
- c) Origin explanations
- d) Constituency explanations
- e) Platonic explanations
- f) Aristotle's causes as combining previous types

**B) Thales (ca. 624-545 BC)**

- a) Stories showing Egyptian-Babylonian background: eclipse, foreseeing market prices, geometry, navigation.
- b) "All things are/are from water."
  - i) Genesis and Egyptian mythical connection
  - ii) Is Thales a "naturalist"?
  - iii) Water, change: the One and the Many
- c) "All things are full of gods." Perhaps draws on Egyptian notions of active powers in water.
- d) The destruction and reconstitution of the world by Water and Fire
  - i) The Thema Mundi and the beginning of the world
  - ii) Cancer and other watery features of the rising sign in the Thema Mundi
  - iii) Translation from Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* III.1.9

**C) Anaximander (ca. 610-545)**

- a) Connection with Babylonian thought; wrote in prose
- b) **The Indefinite:** all things come from the Indefinite

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- i) Indefinite cannot be a contrary; but the Indefinite is one side of a contrary; a glance forward to Pythagoras and Plato
  - ii) Theological connection: the Qabalistic *En-Sof* (“without limit”). We cannot use normal thought or speech to think about the *En-Sof*. God as that which only silence can express.
  - iii) Astrological connection: aspects and the equinoctial points give determinacy to the indeterminate character of planetary circles; the chart as showing how you are manifested from the Indefinite.
- c) **Determinacy and Justice.**
- i) The relation, change, overpowering of the elements expresses *injustice*; but things will pay *reparation* over time; the world runs according to a *law*.
  - ii) The world is a scene of injustice; could leave to a radical contempt for the world as evil; astrologically, life as paying of a debt.
- d) **Plurality of worlds; humans evolve from more primitive creatures.**

### **D) Anaximenes (ca. 580-500 BC)**

- a) **All things are air.** Air is physical like water but more abstract.
- b) **Condensation and rarefaction.** Things come to be what they are by the condensation and rarefaction of air.

### **E) Conclusion.**

- a) Wisdom connects to astronomy, astrology, geometry, number
- b) Ultimate principle must be somehow indefinite but has an organizing quality
- c) No organizing principles now closely connected to reason or mind