

Philosophy of Antiquity. Part 1



Genesis

The cradle of Western philosophy is the Greek colonies on the Mediterranean coast: in Ionia (Asia Minor), and in southern Italy. The flourishing trade with all the then known world brought the Greek colonial cities not only prosperity, but also the knowledge of other peoples: in mathematics, astronomy, geography, chronology (calendar).

Acquaintance with other cultures awakens curiosity and broadens the spiritual horizon of the Greeks.





Key topics of ancient philosophy

- Attempts to resolve the problem of the origin (arche) and the first principle (logos) of the world and, in connection with this, the search for its unified basis;
- Topics related to the concept of «aletheia» (verity) and the desire to substantiate the capability of true knowledge;
- Interest in the nature of man and his moral purpose: the structure of the soul and the nature of virtue. In individual ethics - the problem of reaching eudaimonia (glory).

Periodization

- **Presocratics (from VII-VI to V-IV centuries BC):** natural philosophy of the Milesian school, Heraclitus, Eleatics, Pythagoreans, atomists.

Sophists are usually also classified as pre-Socratics, but the sphere of their interests includes people and society.

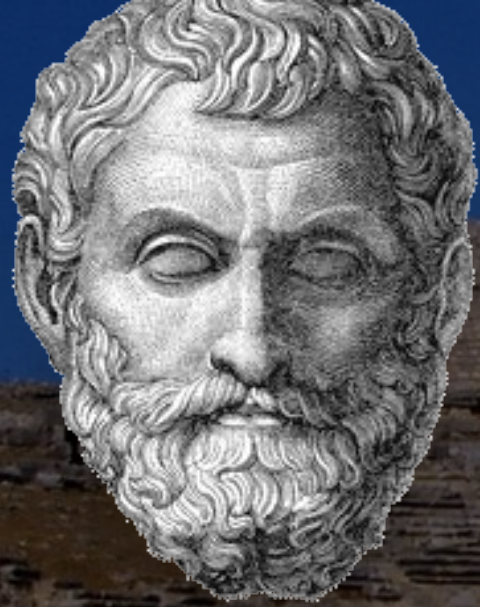
The activities of the sophists are also characterized as Greek enlightenment.

- **Classic (mid 5th century - mid 4th century BC):** Creation of Socrates, his student Plato and student of Plato - Aristotle.

Socrates, whose teachings arose in contrast to sophistry, is considered the founder of ethics. Plato continues to deal with the problems that worried Socrates and solves them within the framework of his metaphysical concept of ideas and of the soul. Aristotle is considered the founder of a system-based and scientifically grounded philosophy.

- **Hellenistic period (end of IV century BC - II century AD):** on the historical basis of social changes (the emergence and disintegration of the kingdom of Alexander the Great, the rise of Rome as a world power), two leading teachings appear: Stoic and Epicurean, transferring their interest to the sphere of ethics.





Thales of Miletus

About 625 - 547 BC

Thales is the first in any course in the history of ancient Greek philosophy.

He is often called the father of philosophy or the father of geometry, the first astronomer and the first physicist.

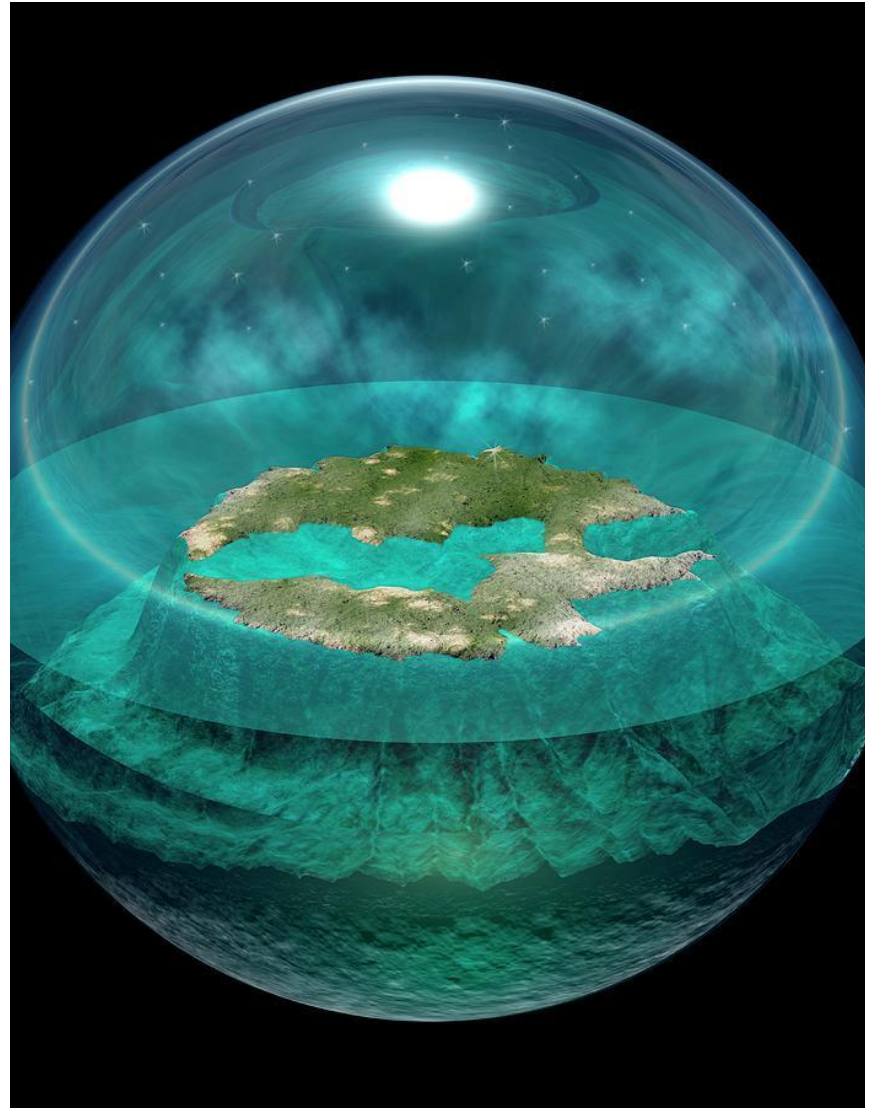
- *Thales was the first to understand that eclipses of the Sun occur as a result of its covering by the Moon*
- *He was the first to prove that diameter cuts a circle in half*
- *He was the first to formulate that in every isosceles triangle the angles at the base are equal*
- *He measured the height of the Egyptian pyramids by their shadow*

Thales of Miletus

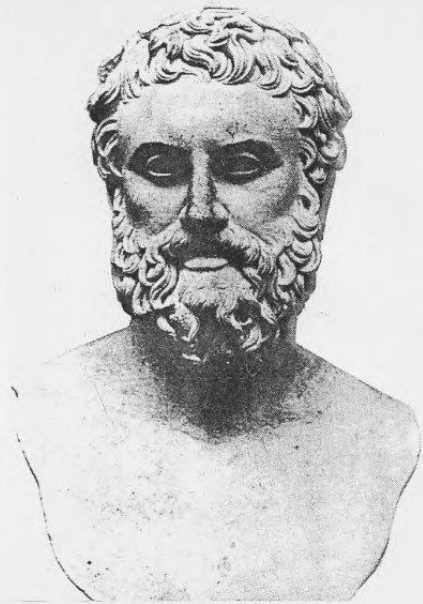
The founder of the Milesian school of natural philosophy, Thales, tried to detect behind the diversity of phenomena and things in nature a certain unified basis, the *Origin*.

As the fundamental principle (*Arche*), from which All emerges, and into which All ultimately turns, Thales takes the material element - *Water*.

The philosophy of Thales is the first attempt to see the origin of all things and phenomena in nature itself, to take the material element as the primary basis, but not the supernatural divine forces.



Heraclitus of Ephesus



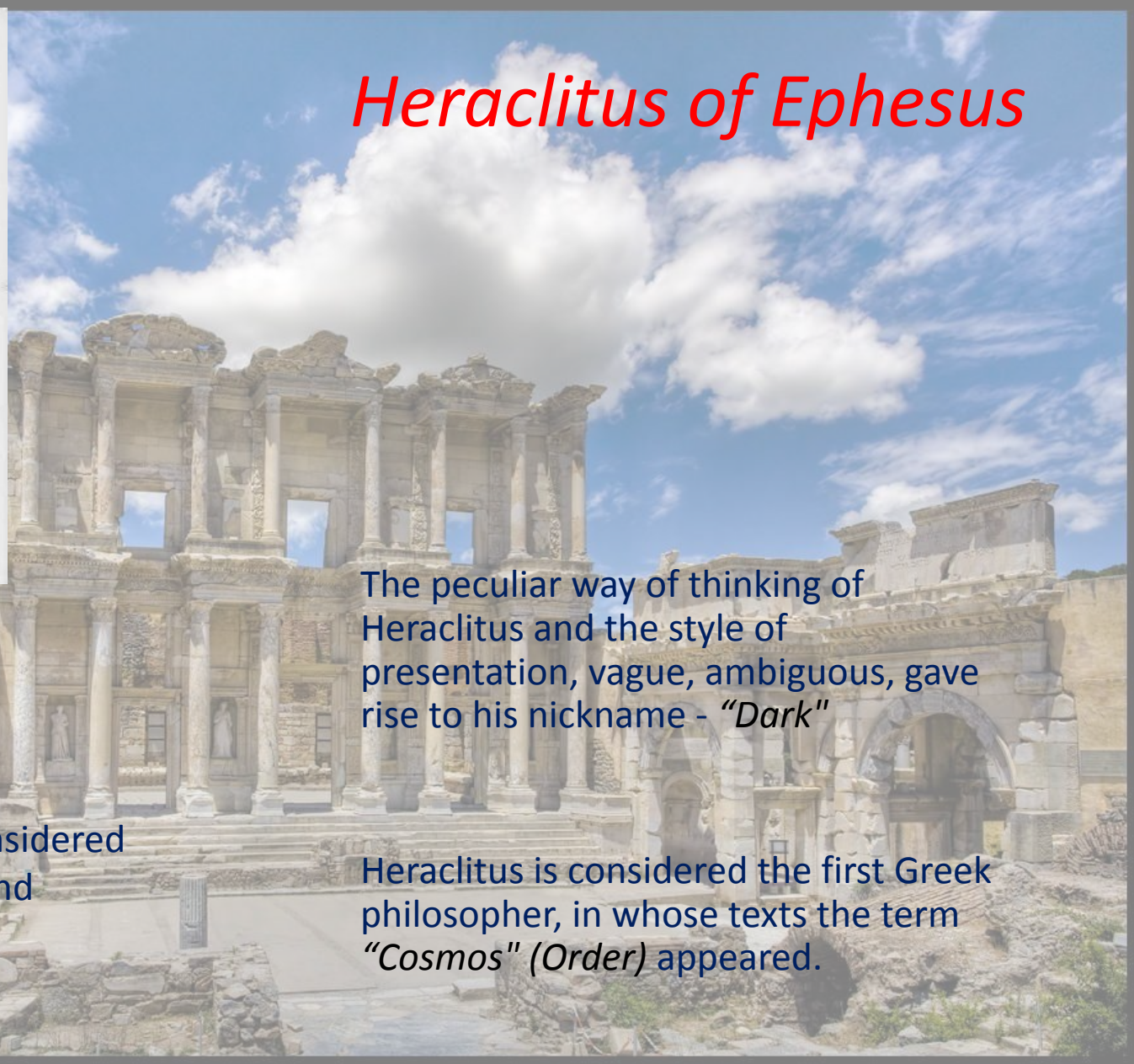
Heraclitus (Budapest Museum of Fine Arts)

about 550 - 480 BC

Heraclitus is rightfully considered the greatest materialist and dialectician of Hellas.

The peculiar way of thinking of Heraclitus and the style of presentation, vague, ambiguous, gave rise to his nickname - "Dark"

Heraclitus is considered the first Greek philosopher, in whose texts the term "Cosmos" (Order) appeared.



Heraclitus of Ephesus

Continuing the traditions of the philosophical school of his native Ionia, Heraclitus takes Fire as the material principle of All that exists - the lightest and most agile element.

By condensation, according to Heraclitus, All things appear from Fire - Water, Air, Earth, and any body and substance, and by exhaustion they return into Fire.

Heraclitus summarized his doctrine of the world as an eternal transformation of Fire in the famous dictum:

«This cosmos, one for all, was not created by any of the gods or any of people, but it has always existed, exists and will exist as an eternally living Fire, flaring up in full measure and in full measure fading away».

Such views on the Universe were highly appreciated by one of the creators of modern physics, Werner Heisenberg. According to the scientist, «if we replace the word «Fire» with the word «Energy», then almost exactly the statements of Heraclitus can be considered statements of modern science.

Energy can be converted into motion, heat, light, and electrical voltage. Energy can be considered the cause of all changes in the world».



Heraclitus of Ephesus

The ingenious idea of perpetual motion in Heraclitus is embodied in the image of an ever-flowing river. This postulate of the universal variability of the world - the most important thesis of dialectics - is reflected in the famous formulas: «*You cannot enter the same river twice*» and «*Everything flows, and nothing stays put*».

The reason for eternal movement and becoming is revealed in the teachings of Heraclitus about the unity, struggle and harmony of opposites.

Everything that happens in the world is the result of the tension of mutual opposites: struggle and harmony.

That is why Heraclitus claims, that «*War is the father of All, the king of All*».

All interconversions in the world are determined by the Logos, reasonable necessity, universal law.

The comprehension of this is *Wisdom*.





about 570 BC - about 500 BC

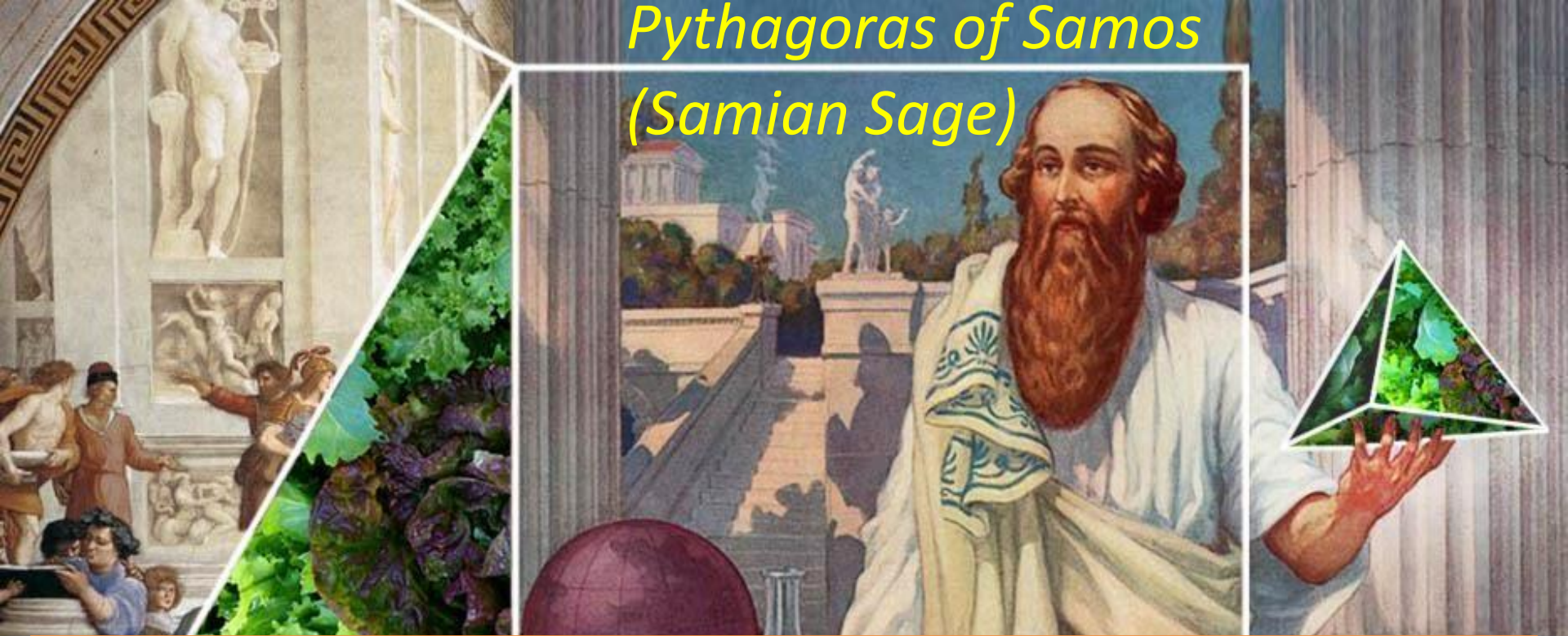


Pythagoras of Samos (Samian Sage)

The versatile practice of Pythagoras - scientific, religious-ethical, philosophical - made his personality extremely popular. During his lifetime, he became a legend that has constantly evolved over the centuries.

«I do not know of another person who would be as influential in the field of thinking as Pythagoras. I say this because what appears to be Platonism turns out, upon close analysis, to be in essence Pythagoreanism». This is how the English mathematician and philosopher Bertrand Russell wrote about Pythagoras.

Pythagoras of Samos (Samian Sage)



Philosophy was for Pythagoras not just an abstract love of wisdom, but also a special system of life rules. The love of wisdom was supposed to embrace not only the mind, but also the entire being of the philosopher, subjecting him to himself and making him an aristocrat of the spirit.

Tradition attributes the invention of the term «*Philosophy*» to Pythagoras, who saw himself not as the owner of Truth (Sage), but only as a person striving for it as an unattainable ideal.

The Pythagoreans were equally concerned about both physical and spiritual development. It is believed that it was among the Pythagoreans that the term «*Kalokagathia*» was born, implying the harmony of aesthetic (beautiful) and ethical (good) principles.

This term is affirmed in ancient ethics and acquires special significance in the classical period of antiquity. The Greek ideal of man («*Kalokagathia*») includes the perfection of both bodily constitution and spiritual and moral makeup, that is, simultaneously with beauty and strength, it carries justice, chastity, courage and rationality.

Pythagoras of Samos (Samian Sage)

It is believed that mathematics, as a modern deductive science, begins with Pythagoras. It was Pythagoras who was the first to replace the old priestly questions «*How?*» on modern scientific questions «*Why?*»

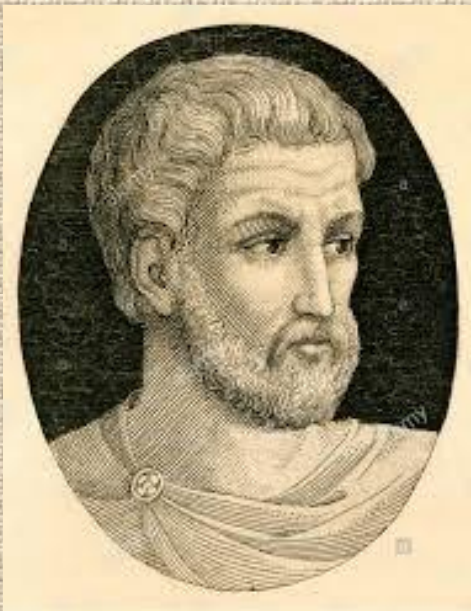
The proof of the famous theorem is associated with the name of Pythagoras: the square of the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the legs.

Three brilliant hypotheses are also associated with the name of Pythagoras: about the *sphericity* of the Earth; about the *circular shape* of the trajectories of the planets; the hypothesis, that the Earth is not the center of the Universe, but, along with other planets, makes a *circular motion*.

Pythagoras considered the *Circle* to be the most perfect line, and the *Sphere* as the most perfect body, and he could not see the trajectories of the planets and their shape in any other way. The world was created according to the laws of Beauty - faith in this postulate led Pythagoras to correct astronomical guesses.



Pythagoras of Samos (Samian Sage)



Pythagoras was the first to advise students to move from the study of the «*corporeal*», that is, physical objects that are never in the same state, to the study of the «*incorporeal*», that is, to the study of abstract mathematical objects that provide Man eternal immortal truths.

Therefore, mathematics in Pythagoras becomes an instrument for the world cognition. It is followed by philosophy, for philosophy is nothing more than the extension of special (mathematical) knowledge to the field of worldview.

This is how the famous Pythagorean thesis «*everything is number*» is born - the credo of the entire philosophy of Pythagoras.

Thus, the Pythagoreans began to understand the fundamental principle of all things not as a natural form, but as a form of thought definition. This was the first step from the spontaneous materialism of the Ionian school to the objective idealism of Plato.

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Sophists

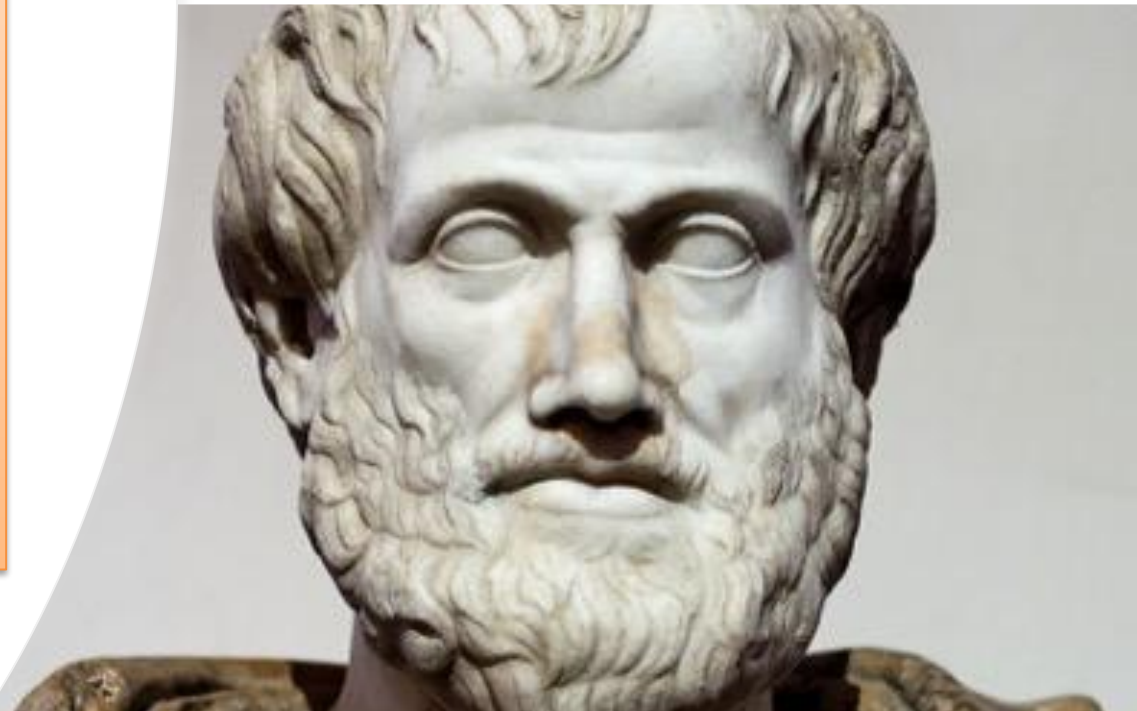
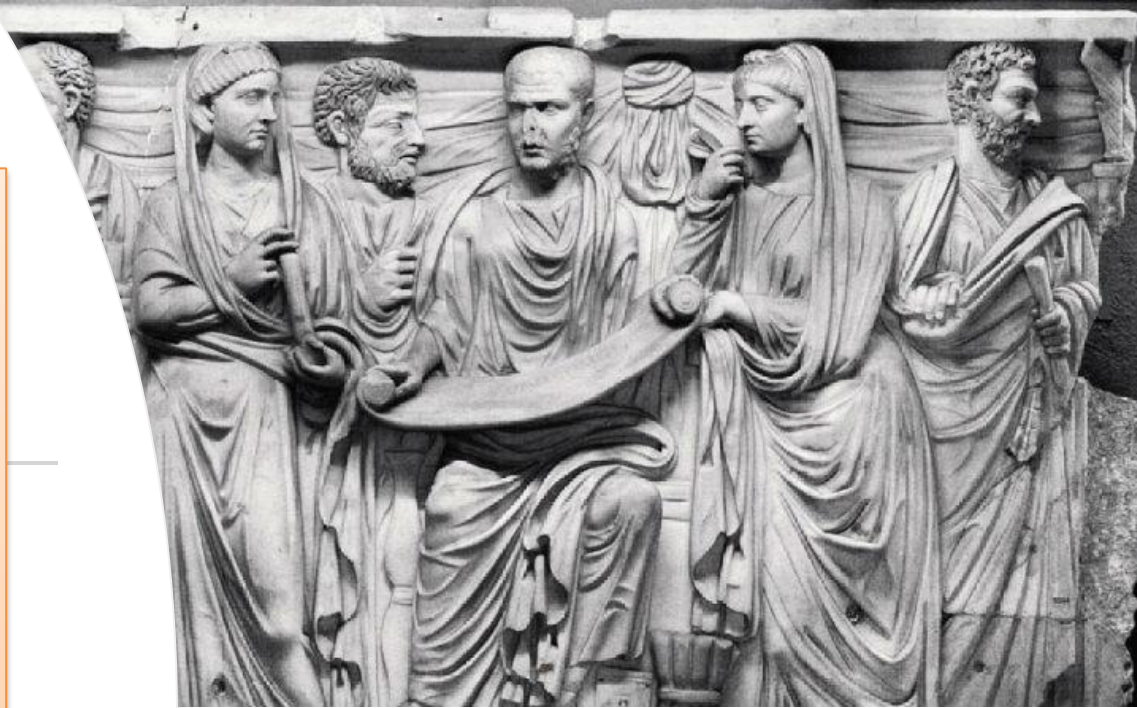
Along with the growth of the prosperity of ancient Greece in the era after the Persian wars, the need for education also increased. In addition, democracy, as a form of state structure, increasingly demands from a citizen the ability to gracefully express his thoughts, the ability to convincingly present (as a rule, in court) any possible state of affairs.

People who taught sciences and eloquence in the 5th century BC are collectively called *sophists*. There is an idea that in this way the founder of this direction of philosophy *Protagoras* began to call himself and his students.

The ancient Greek word "*sophistes*" means a sage, a master; with the spread of sophistic activity, it acquires the meaning of a teacher of eloquence (*rhetoric*) and the art of argument (*eristics*).

Protagoras

about 480 BC - about 410 BC



Sophists

The original principle of the philosophy of the sophists - *relativism* - is manifested:

□ ***In legal representations :***

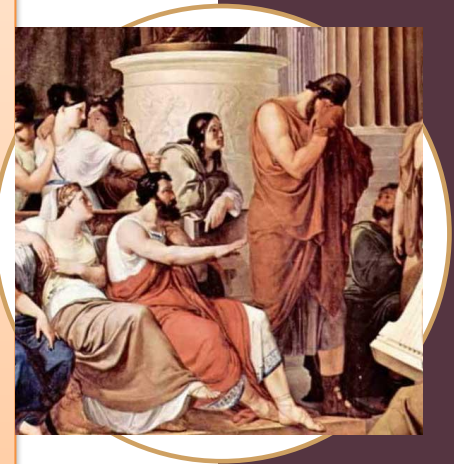
Positive law has no force by nature, but arises from the interests of the legislator;

□ ***In moral philosophy:***

Moral values for the sophists also do not exist by nature, but arise on the basis of contracts; therefore, at different times and among different peoples, they have different strength;

□ ***In cognition theory:***

About each thing in the process of its cognition, two opposite changes are possible; one and the same thesis in one situation will be True, in another it will be False.





Sophists

The famous saying of Protagoras reads:

«Man is the measure of all things, of the reality of those which are, and of the unreality of those which are not».

The thesis *«homo mensura»* - is the core of sophistic thinking: a person determines *Being*, and everything else is rejected (*skepticism*), and all being is not objective, but subjective and fluid (*relativism*).