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The Western tradition of philosophy began in Greece with a cluster of thinkers often called the Presocratics whose influence has been in-calculable. They include the early Ionian cosmologists, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, the Eleatics (Parmenides, Melissus, and Zeno), Empedocles, Anaxagoras, the atomists and the sophists. All these thinkers are discussed in this volume both as individuals and collectively in chapters on rational theology, epistemology, psychology, rhetoric and relativism, justice, and poetics. A chapter on causality extends the focus to include historians and medical writers.

Assuming no knowledge of Greek or prior knowledge of the subject, this volume will provide new readers with the most convenient and accessible guide to early Greek philosophy available. Advanced students and specialists will find a conspectus of recent developments in the interpretation of early Greek thought.

A. A. Long is Professor of Classics and Irving Stone Professor of Literature at the University of California, Berkeley.
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The Cambridge Companion to
EARLY GREEK PHILOSOPHY

Edited by
A. A. Long
University of California, Berkeley
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PREFACE

This book seeks to provide a fresh and wide-ranging survey of early Greek philosophy, covering the thinkers often called Presocratics. Chapters are divided between studies of individual thinkers or movements, including the sophists, and studies of topics to which they collectively contributed. No knowledge of Greek is assumed, and the book includes extensive translations of primary texts, which are the authors’ own, unless otherwise indicated. There is a detailed bibliography, organized in accordance with each of the main chapters, and references in footnotes to scholarly literature and to other details are mainly designed to assist the general reader rather than to engage in fine-tuning. Abbreviations of references to ancient authors and their works are explained at the beginning. Also included at the beginning are a map, showing the philosophers’ native and adopted cities, a time-line of their (usually) approximate dates, and an alphabetical survey of their lives and writings.

For those who are approaching early Greek philosophy for the first time, a few words of advice on using this book may be helpful. In Chapter 1, I offer an overview of the field that Chapters 3–16 explore in detail. Because the evidence is so fragmentary and often transmitted by second- or third-hand summaries, rather than giving the thinkers’ own words, a general familiarity with the later Greek (and occasionally Roman) authors who are our sources is indispensable. Those new to the subject are therefore strongly advised to read Chapter 2, Jaap Mansfeld’s study of the sources, before proceeding with any of the subsequent studies, and his chapter is the place to go for guidance on ancient references in the main text and footnotes. The rest of the book is designed to be readable in sequence, but each chapter is self-contained and makes no presuppositions about the
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order in which it should be read. Those whose first interest is in the sophists could turn immediately to Chapters 14 and 15. The topic chapters are equally approachable in any order, but readers unfamiliar with the philosophers discussed in Chapters 3–9 may prefer to read these chronologically organized studies of individuals and movements before embarking on most of the topic chapters. However, the final chapter, Glenn Most’s study of “poetics,” though it deals with a topic, covers ground that is highly relevant to the book as a whole; it may be read both as a conclusion and also as a complement to my introductory chapter.

The contributors to this book were given a completely free hand, within the limits of space, to present their subject as they saw fit. They were asked neither to be orthodox (as if orthodoxy could obtain in this or any other history) nor to strive for originality, but to be genuinely companionable. Nothing, of course, can substitute for any serious student’s unmediated encounter with the primary texts, but this book, we hope, will guide its users to issues of central interest without either over-simplification or a barrage of scholarly clutter. We shall be pleased if our readers find many of the ideas presented here difficult: early Greek philosophy would not be studied so intensively if it were easy, and the more one studies it the harder it gets. We shall be disappointed if our expositions are found difficult, and if excitement at the material does not grow in proportion to the difficulties experienced in thinking about it. If you find yourself debating with Heraclitus or Parmenides or Zeno, or with what our authors say about these and other matters, that is just as it should be. There will never be a final or even a wholly comprehensive interpretation of early Greek philosophy, and within this book (as I have sometimes indicated) different assessments of many major issues can be found. It is always possible to approach the material from fresh perspectives, and from time to time what we thought we knew is jolted by remarkable discoveries, such as the Derveni papyrus and most recently by a papyrus containing new lines of Empedocles.¹

¹ For the Derveni papyrus, see Most in this volume p. 341, and Laks and Most [537]. Publication of the new Empedocles material by Martin and Primavesi [380] is imminent.
PREFACE

Fresh scholarly work on early Greek philosophy is constantly appearing. The bibliography of this book, large though it is, has had to be quite selective, and it includes items that are too recent to have been thoroughly assessed and assimilated. These include Peter Kingsley's challenging work on Empedocles and the Pythagorean tradition [105], which advances very new ideas connecting early Greek philosophy to magic, and traces their transmission into Egypt, Islam, and medieval mysticism and alchemy. While this Companion was in its final stages, Patricia Curd's substantial book, The Legacy of Parmenides [290], appeared, and also a further book by Kingsley, In the Dark Places of Wisdom [Inverness, California, 1999], which reinterprets Parmenides in the light of inscriptions discovered at Velia in southern Italy. Studies such as these encourage us to expect that early Greek philosophy will be as effective at stimulating thought and reinterpretation in the next century as it has been during the past hundred years.

This book has been longer in the making than I anticipated when I accepted the invitation from Terry Moore, the series editor for Cambridge University Press, to be its editor. To him and to all my contributors I offer thanks for their patience and admirable cooperation. I am especially grateful to Keimpe Algra, the author of Chapter 3, who undertook this work at short notice after an earlier contributor was unable to proceed. The modern study of early Greek philosophy has long been an attractively international undertaking. I am particularly pleased that the book's authors comprise five nationalities and are affiliated with universities from six countries.

Throughout the editorial process, I have been ably assisted by James Ker, graduate student in Classics at Berkeley. He has been an invaluable help to me in drafting the bibliography and other supporting material, in formatting the chapters, and in chasing up references. Apart from all this, I have benefited from his enthusiasm, his fertile suggestions, and his readiness to put himself in the position of someone using the book. I am also very grateful to Andrew Wilson of TechBooks, Fairfax, Virginia for his careful and courteous management of the typographical process.

2 For a helpful survey of recent scholarly trends, see Mourelatos [155] xxi–xxvii.
3 For details of these inscriptions, see Coxon [270] 39–40.
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My own study of early Greek philosophy began at University College London under David Furley’s splendid guidance. Looking back at that time forty years later, I see that Heraclitus, Parmenides and the other early Greek philosophers were the main reason I fell in love with ancient philosophy and with philosophy in general. This book will achieve its purpose if it encourages others to experience such an attraction.

A. A. Long
Berkeley, January 1999
SOURCE ABBREVIATIONS

Fragments are cited from the collection of Diels/Kranz [1]; for example, “DK 28 B6.4-7” refers to lines 4–7 of fragment B6 of Parmenides, whose author-number in DK is 28. [On the A-/B-distinction, see Mansfeld pp. 24–5.]

For modern works cited with a number in square brackets (e.g., “Barnes [14]”), a full reference is given in the Bibliography. A list of journal abbreviations is provided on p. 364.

Anc. med. [Hippocrates], On ancient medicine
APo Aristotle, Posterior Analytics
Ap. Plato, Apology
Cat. Aristotle, Categories
Crat. Plato, Cratylus
De an. Aristotle, On the soul (De anima)
DK Diels/Kranz, Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker [1]
D.L. Diogenes Laertius
FHSG Fortenbaugh/Huby/Sharples/
Gutas, Theophrastus of Eresus. Sources for his Life, Writings, Thought and Influence [37]
GA Aristotle, Generation of animals
GC Aristotle, On coming to be and passing away (De generatione et corruptione)
Gorg. Plato, Gorgias
Il. Homer, Iliad

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**SOURCE ABBREVIATIONS**

- **In phys., In Parm. etc.** *Commentary on Aristotle’s Physics,* *Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides,* etc.


- **M.** Sextus Empiricus, *Against the professors* *(Adversus mathematicos)*

- **Metaph.** Aristotle, *Metaphysics; Theophrastus, Metaphysics*

- **Meteor.** Aristotle, *Meteorology*

- **Mem.** Xenophon, *Memorabilia*

- **MXG** [Aristotle], *On Melissus, Xenophanes, Gorgias*

- **Nat. hom.** [Hippocrates], *On the nature of man (De natura hominis)*

- **NE** Aristotle, *Nicomachean ethics*

- **Od.** Homer, *Odyssey*

- **Parm.** Plato, *Parmenides*

- **PH** Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* *(Pyrrhoneae hypotyposes)*

- **Phys.** Aristotle, *Physics; Eudemus, Physics*

- **Prot.** Plato, *Protagoras*

- **Ref.** Hippolytus, *Refutation of all heresies*

- **Rep.** Plato, *Republic*

- **Rhet.** Aristotle, *Rhetoric*

- **SE** Aristotle, *Sophistical refutations* *(Sophistici elenchii)*

- **Sens.** Theophrastus, *On the senses (De sensibus)*

- **Soph.** Plato, *Sophist*

- **Theog.** Hesiod, *Theogony*

- **Tht.** Plato, *Theaetetus*

- **VS** Philostratus, *Lives of the sophists (Vitae sophistarum)*
LIVES AND WRITINGS OF THE EARLY GREEK PHILOSOPHERS

ANAXAGORAS

Born c. 500 B.C. at Clazomenae on the Ionian coast, author of a cosmology that rejects any ultimate elements and has Nous (mind) as its activating principle. Anaxagoras was the first philosopher to settle at Athens, where he spent some twenty years (under the patronage of Pericles) until his prosecution or persecution for impiety. He then left Athens probably for Lampsacus, and died c. 428 B.C. For a recent reconstruction of his career, see Mansfeld [395].

Sources
D.L. II.6-15; the Suda; Plato, Ap. 26d, Phaedrus 270a; Plutarch, Pericles 6, 16, 32; others in DK 59 A.

Works
A “single treatise” [D. L. I.16] known later as Physics and extending over two books. Sixteen passages from its “first book” (including the opening words “All things were together”) are quoted by Simplicius, and all but one passage appears in his commentary on Aristotle’s Physics; other writers preserve a few further lines. Other books attributed to him on squaring the circle, on scene painting and perspective, and on problems [DK 59 A38-40] were almost certainly spurious.

ANAXIMANDER

Born c. 610 B.C. in Miletus; the earliest thinker for whom a detailed cosmology is attested. Anaximander is credited with inventing the xvii
LIVES AND WRITINGS

gnomon, with establishing the first Greek sundial at Sparta, with being the first to draw a map of the known world, and with constructing an astronomical model of the heavens. Died c. 546 B.C.

Sources
D. L. II.1-2; the Suda; others in DK 12 A.

Works
Anaximander was one of the first Greeks to compose a book in prose. In it, in addition to discussing cosmogony and cosmology, he speculated on the origins of human life. The Suda lists as his works: *On nature*, *Description of the earth*, *The fixed stars*, *Sphere*, and “a few more.” These specifications, though appropriate to his known studies, are probably anachronistic descriptions of an originally untitled treatise. For the one complete sentence that survives of this, see Algra in this volume, p. 56.

ANAXIMENES

Born in Miletus; younger contemporary of Anaximander, and continuator of Milesian cosmology; fl. c. 546-526 B.C.

Sources
D. L. II.3; the Suda; others in DK 13 A.

Works
Diogenes Laertius remarks that Anaximenes wrote in “a simple and economical style” (II.3). For examples of his vivid phraseology, see Most in this volume, p. 351.

ANTIPHON

Athenian sophist of the fifth century B.C., who distinguished between natural justice and legal/conventional justice, probably identical (as proposed in this volume, see Caizzi, p. 329 n.9) with Antiphon of Rhamnus, the Attic orator (c. 480–411 B.C.) who helped to plan the oligarchic revolution of 411 and was subsequently put to death.
Sources
(1) For Antiphon, under the identity “sophist”: Xenophon, Mem. I.6.1-5, 10-15; others in DK 87 A; (2) For him under the identity “orator”: Thucydides VIII.68, Philostratus, VS I.15.

Works
For Antiphon (1): On truth [partially extant, see Caizzi in this volume, ch. 15], and the following lost works: On concord, Politicus, On the interpretation of dreams. There is also evidence of his interest in mathematics and astronomy, see DK 87 B13. From Antiphon (2) various speeches survive, including a set of Tetralogies, which are rhetorical exercises for the prosecution and defence of a model case [see Vegetti in this volume, p. 275].

DEMOCRITUS
Born c. 460 B.C. at Abdera in Thrace, follower of Leucippus, and the principal author of the atomistic theory. Democritus was certainly familiar with Eleatic philosophy and possibly acquainted with Anaxagoras. He travelled widely, probably to Egypt and perhaps as far as India, and was known in the Roman world as “the laughing philosopher.” Date of death unknown.

Sources
D.L. IX. 34-49 [includes a catalogue of writings]; the Suda; others in DK 68 A.

Works
More than sixty titles are attested in D.L. IX. 46-48, mostly arranged under the following headings [classification attributed to Thrasyllus, librarian at Alexandria early 1st century A.D.]: ethical, physical, mathematical, musical [including poetry], and technical. A representative sample of titles: On good humour, On the planets, On colours, Causes concerning sounds, On irrational lines and solids, On poetry, and On painting. No book survives. Most of the attested fragments are ethical maxims, preserved in the anthology of Stobaeus, who records some 130 under Democritus’ name. A further 86 short aphorisms are listed in two MSS of Stobaeus as The golden sayings of Democrites the philosopher. Transmission of these is
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independent of Stobaeus himself (see DK vol. 2, 154), and it has been widely assumed that Democritus is really Democritus. Plato never mentions him by name. Our best source for his atomism is Aristotle.

DIOGENES

Born at the Milesian colony Apollonia on the Black Sea, c. 460 B.C., Diogenes spent time at Athens, where he was mocked by Aristophanes in his comedy Clouds for making divine air the world’s first and only principle. Diogenes is important both for his return to a single principle, and also for treating it as intelligent and purposeful, probably under the influence of Anaxagoras’ Nous. His researches included human physiology and cognition. Date of death unknown.

Sources
D. L. IX. 57; Theophrastus, Sens. 39–45; and others in DK 64 A.

Works
A treatise On nature, of which some ten fragments survive, most of them cited by Simplicius from his commentary on Aristotle’s Physics.

EMPEDOCLES

Born c. 492 B.C. at Acragas, Sicily, into a prominent family; pioneered the immensely influential theory of four primary elements – earth, air, fire, water; probably associated with local Pythagoreans, whose religious and ethical doctrines, together with the arguments of Parmenides, decisively influenced him. Empedocles supported the transition from tyranny to democracy at Acragas. He soon became a legendary figure, credited with wonder-working and with ending his life by leaping into the crater of Etna. The anecdotal tradition must be partly based upon the more bizarre statements he makes about himself in his poetry (see Most in this volume, p. 355), but he clearly was a charismatic figure, and the tradition of his being a physician and an accomplished orator may be genuine. His verses were
translated into Latin, and served as a model for Lucretius’ great didactic poem, De rerum natura. Empedocles died c. 432 B.C.

Sources
DK 31 B112-14; D.L. VIII.51-77; the Suda; Aristotle, Metaph. I.3 984a11; others in DK 31A.

Works
Empedocles composed didactic poetry in hexameters, said to run to 5,000 lines (D.L. VIII.77) and to be divided between a work On nature and another entitled Purifications (Katharmoi). Most of the surviving verses (roughly 1,000 lines) are generally assigned to the first of these, but some scholars [see Osborne [364] and Inwood [357]] think that he wrote only one poem known by both titles. This issue may be clarified by the recent find of a papyrus containing previously unknown lines [see Martin and Primavesi [380]]. Empedocles is also said to have written a short poem on medicine, an Expedition of Xerxes, epigrams, and tragedies.

GORGIAS

Born c. 480 B.C. at Leontini in Sicily and widely reputed to have become a centenarian, a celebrated sophist, especially as teacher of rhetoric. Gorgias visited Athens in 427 as an ambassador. His literary style, favouring symmetrically balanced and often rhyming phrases, was exceptionally innovative and influential.

Sources
Gorgias is the named subject of a major dialogue by Plato. Other sources: Philostratus, VS I.1, I.9.1-6; the Suda; Diodorus Siculus XII.53.1-5; others in DK 82 A.

Works
Two speeches survive in their entirety – the Encomium of Helen and the Defence of Palamedes – as well as a fragment of his Funeral speech. Summaries of his philosophical treatise On not being are preserved in the pseudo-Aristotelian On Melissus, Xenophanes, Gorgias and by Sextus Empiricus M. 7.65ff. (= B3).
LIVES AND WRITINGS

HERACLITUS

His birth at Ephesus is generally dated to about 540 B.C., making him a generation older than Parmenides. Though this is probably correct, it is far from certain. More than one scholar (see Hölscher [153] 161) has made them contemporaries, seeing Heraclitus responding to Parmenides rather than the other way round, as is generally supposed. His notoriously obscure philosophy was popularly summed up in the formulation: “All things flow.” Most of the biographical information about his misanthropic character and arrogance has been derived from his own statements. However, the tradition that he surrendered his right to hereditary kingship to his brother (D.L. IX.6) is credible. He probably died in the period 480–470 B.C.

Sources
DL IX. 1-17; the Suda; Strabo XIV 632-3, 642; others in DK 22A.

Works
More than 100 short apothegms are quoted, particularly by writers of the Christian era. Some of these are inauthentic, and the exact Heraclitean content of others is often difficult to determine. Under the authority of Stoics, whose philosophy he strongly influenced, Heraclitus acquired the status of sage in later antiquity, and numerous imitations of his cryptic statements were composed (see Mondolfo and Tarán [235]). From Aristotle onward, (Rhetoric III.5 1407b13) reference is made to Heraclitus “writings” or “book,” which he is said to have deposited in the temple of Artemis at Ephesus (D.L. IX.5). There is no reason to think (as has been suggested by Kirk [233]) that he was a purely oral composer, but the form of his writings appears to have been deliberately epigrammatic, cryptic, and without the connectives of normal prose.

HIPPIAS

Born in the first half of the 5th century B.C., at Elis in the Peloponnesian, Hippias, the most versatile of all the sophists, was renowned for his mnemonic ability. He was a “universal man,” who did original
LIVES AND WRITINGS

research in mathematics, astronomy, grammar, music, and history and composed in various poetic forms. He was also the earliest figure to have collected and classified the opinions of earlier writers, thus pioneering the doxographical tradition [see Mansfeld in this volume, p. 26]. Died probably in the early years of the 4th century B.C.

Sources
Hippias is the named subject of two Platonic dialogues, neither of which gives an adequate idea of his significance. He also figures in Plato's Protagoras. See also Philostratus, VS I.II.1-8; Xenophon, Mem. IV.4; and others in DK 86 A.

Works
 Virtually nothing of Hippias' writings survives, and even the few surviving titles do scant justice to his polymathic investigations.

LEUCIPPUS

Born in the first half of the 5th century B.C., at Miletus or Abdera, Leucippus was "the first to posit atoms as principles" [D.L. IX.30]. No details of his life are known for certain, but it is assumed that he wrote later than Parmenides and probably later than Zeno, whose pupil he is alleged to have been. Date of death unknown.

Sources
D.L. IX.30-33 and others in DK 67 A.

Works
The great world-system [a treatise cited in the Democritean catalogue] was attributed to Leucippus by Theophrastus [D.L. IX.45]. Another work On mind is cited as the source of his one surviving quotation [DK 67 B2], for which see Taylor in this volume, p. 185.

MELISSUS

Born in the early 5th century B.C. at Samos; a supporter and elaborator in prose of Parmenides' philosophical poem. Statesman and
admiral of Samos, he defeated the Athenians in a naval battle between 441–40 B.C. Date of death unknown.

Sources
D.L. IX.24; the Suda; Plutarch, Pericles 26-28, Themistocles 2.

Works
A book entitled, according to Simplicius (DK 30 A4), On nature or on what is. Eight passages are quoted by Simplicius, all but one in his commentary on Aristotle’s Physics. Further evidence about Melissus is provided in the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise On Melissus, Xenophanes, Gorgias (DK 30 A5).

Parmenides
Born c. 515 B.C. at Elea in southern Italy; the originator of Eleatic philosophy, which contrasts the truths deducible about reality, including its oneness, with the deceptive multiplicity and change-ability of appearances. A wealthy man of noble birth, Parmenides possibly had some association in his youth with Xenophanes and certainly with Ameinias, a Pythagorean whom he honoured by building a shrine to him. Parmenides is said to have acted as legislator for Elea (Speusippus, fr. 1) and to have visited Athens when he was about sixty-five years old (Plato, Parm. 127b) – but Plato’s chronology is suspect: see Mansfeld [32] 64–68. Died c. 449–440 B.C.

Sources
D.L. IX.21–23; the Suda; Plato, Parm. 127a-c; others in Coxon [270].

Works
Hexameter poem of which 154 lines survive, the longest continuous section through a single quotation by Simplicius in his commentary on Aristotle’s Physics (144.26). The work had three parts: a poem of 32 lines (all but the last two quoted by Sextus Empiricus, M. VII.111ff.), the Way of Truth (72 lines survive, perhaps nine-tenths of the original); and the Way of Seeming (44 complete lines attested, 6 in a Latin version by Caecilius Aurelianus). On the argumentative relation of these parts to one another, see Sedley in this volume, pp. 123–25. Whole poem entitled On nature in later antiquity.
PHILOLAUS

Born c. 470 B.C., in Croton [or Tarentum] in southern Italy; the earliest Pythagorean philosopher from whom any writings survive. In Plato's Phaedo (63c) the Theban interlocutors Cebes and Simmias claim that Philolaus had spent time teaching in their city, so he was approximately contemporary with Socrates.

Sources
D.L. VIII.84-5, Plato Phaedo 61e; others in DK 44 A.

Works
A single book, of which some ten of the twenty-six attested fragments are probably genuine [DK 44 B1-6, 6a, 7, 13, 17]. Much of the other material belongs to the tradition of pseudo-Pythagorean writings, composed in later antiquity [see Thesleff [199]].

PRODICUS

Born in the first half of the 5th century B.C. on the Cycladic island of Ceos; a sophist especially notable for his linguistic studies and also for his fictional "Choice of Heracles," in which the hero is asked to choose between virtue and vice, represented as two contrasting women [Xenophon, Mem. II.1.21-34]. Prodicus derived the origin of Greek divinities, and religion in general, from early peoples' personification of things on which life depends, such as bread [Demeter] and wine [Dionysus]; also credited, like Protagoras, with positing the impossibility of contradiction [see Kerferd [433] 89–90]. Died probably in the early years of the 4th century B.C.

Sources
Xenophon [cited above]; Plato, especially Prot. 337a-c, Euthydemus 277e; Philostratus, VS V.12; and others in DK 84 A.

Works
Seasons, a work of encomia (from which the excerpt on Heracles is drawn); a treatise On the nature of man; probably a work On the correctness of names, and other unattested writings.
XXVI  LIVES AND WRITINGS

PROTAGORAS

Born c. 485 B.C. at Abdera; probably the first Greek to call himself a sophist, and the one whose influential career epitomises this profession; most famous for his relativism and agnosticism. On visits to Athens, Protagoras became a close friend of Pericles and was invited to draft legislation for the new Athenian colony at Thurii in Sicily. The tradition that he stood trial at Athens and was condemned for impiety is almost certainly fiction. Died c. 415 B.C.

Sources
Protagoras is the named subject of a major dialogue by Plato, and he also figures importantly in Plato's Theaetetus. Other sources: D.L. IX.50-56; Philostratus, VS I.10; Plato, Prot. passim; many others in DK 80 A.

Works
Diogenes Laertius gives a catalogue of Protagoras' works (IX.55), some of which are probably spurious or subdivisions of single works. His authentic treatises included On truth, also called The downthrowers (which opened with, "Man is the measure of all things"; B1), Speeches pro and contra (Antilogiai), and On the gods (which began, "Concerning the gods I can know neither that they exist, nor that they do not exist, nor what they are like in form"; B4). Approximately twelve brief fragments survive. For his contributions to literary criticism and linguistics, see D.L. IX.52-4; DK 80 A27-30.

PYTHAGORAS

Born c. 570 B.C. at Samos; migrated to Croton in southern Italy c. 530 where he is said to have "laid down a constitution for the Italian Greeks" (D.L. VIII.3) and established a sect distinguished by its ritual observances, dedication to "purity" of life, and some kind of communal living. Pythagoras was idealised as a "divine man" with wisdom gained from Egypt and further east and with supernatural powers, such as the ability to recall his previous incarnations. Subject of hagiographical biography by neo-Platonists. It is uncertain how far, if at all, he initiated the mathematical and musical studies with which Pythagoreanism came to be associated. Died c. 490 B.C.
THALES

Born c. 624 B.C. at Miletus, first “inquirer into nature” according to Aristotle (Metaph. I.3 984a2) and idealised elsewhere as one of the seven sages and as a paragon, like them, of political wisdom. Herodotus praised Thales for advising the Ionian states to unite in the face of the Persian threat [I.170]. He is also characterised as the one sage to have gone beyond the practical [Plutarch, Solon 3.5], as in the anecdote that he fell into a ditch while gazing at the heavens, reported by Plato [Thet. 174a-b] in a context where he is presented as the paradigm philosopher. Thales is said to have predicted a solar eclipse (probably 585 B.C.) and is credited with expertise in engineering, geometry, and astronomy, possibly acquired from travel in Egypt. Died c. 546 B.C.

Sources
D.L. I.22-44; Herodotus I.74-75, 170; others in DK 11 A.

Works
Diogenes Laertius’ sources report that Thales left nothing in writing and that a Nautical astronomy attributed to him is spurious [I.23].

XENOPHANES

Born c. 570 B.C. at Colophon on the Ionian mainland. After the Persian conquest of Lydia in 545, Xenophanes lived an itinerant life, which included stays in Sicilian cities. By his own testimony [DK 21 B8], he was still alive at the age of ninety-two. His surviving verses treat of cosmology and theology, criticize conventional values, adumbrate cultural relativism and scepticism, and also include traditional themes of sympotic poetry. In later antiquity he was regarded as the founder of Eleatic philosophy and teacher of Parmenides, but while he almost certainly influenced Parmenides, this tradition should not be accepted completely at face value.
XXVIII LIVES AND WRITINGS

Sources
DK 21 B1-3, B8; D.L. IX.18-21; Clement of Alexandria, Stromateis I.64; Plato, Soph. 242d; Aristotle, Metaph. I.5 986b18, and in the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise On Melissus, Xenophanes, Gorgias (DK 30 A5); others in DK 21 A.

Works
About 120 verses have been preserved. More than half are elegiacs, and one elegiac poem [B1] may be complete. Others, apart from one iambic trimeter [B14.1], are hexameters. Some of these are quoted from the Silloi [satirical verses] or Parodies and by late antiquity at least five books of Silloi were credited to him [B21a]; Proclus says that they were directed “against all philosophers and poets” [DK 21A 22; cf. D.L. IX.18]. The other extant lines may also come from this work, although certain fragments may belong to a poem entitled On nature in the Hellenistic period. Xenophanes is also said to have written 2,000 verses on the foundations of Colophon and Elea [D.L. IX.20].

ZENO

Born c. 490 B.C. at Elea in southern Italy, where he studied with Parmenides [Plato, Parm. 127a-b]. Zeno is the author of paradoxes on the impossibility of motion and plurality. These are generally treated as a defence of Eleatic monism [but see McKirahan in this volume, p. 134]. Stories of his visiting Athens, as “a very handsome forty year-old,” with the elderly Parmenides and encountering the young Socrates there [Plato op. cit.] may be fiction, as the chronology of the supposed meeting must be [see Mansfeld [32] 64-68]. The length of his life is impossible to determine, but his work was almost certainly familiar to Democritus and probably to Anaxagoras as well.

Sources
D.L. IX.25-29; the Suda; others in DK 29 A.

Works
Zeno may have written only one work, the “writings” he is described by Plato as reading to the young Socrates [Parm. 127c].
CHRONOLOGY

This list of early Greek philosophers represents roughly who was contemporary with whom, and a second list of prominent individuals mentioned in this book is appended. Most of the dates are only approximate, and could extend forward or backward by ten to twenty years. Homer is traditionally dated to the 8th century B.C., Hesiod to the 8th or early 7th.

650  600  550  500  450  400  350  300
Thales
Anaximander
Anaximenes
Xenophanes
Pythagoras
Heraclitus
Parmenides
Anaxagoras
Empedocles
Zeno
Protagoras
Gorgias
Hippias
Melissus
Antiphon
Philolaus
Leucippus
Prodicas
Democritus
Diogenes of Apollonia

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XXX CHRONOLOGY

Others
Pherecydes ....?  
Hecataeus ....?
Herodotus
Socrates
Hippocrates ....?
Thucydides
Plato
Archytas ....?
Aristotle
Theophrastus

650  600  550  500  450  400  350  300