

PHIL 301**1. Vocabulary**

phileo (fill-AY-o) φιλέω

is verb “to love”

↳ philia (fill-EE-ah) φιλία

noun “friendly love” or “fondness” as opposed to eros or erotic love ἔρως

sophia (so-FEE-ah) σοφία

“wisdom”

Thus “philosophy” is the *love* of *wisdom*

kosmos (KAHZ-mows or KAHZ-muss) κόσμος

“cosmos”, “universe”, but also “arrangement”, “order”

phusis (FEW-sis) φύσις

“nature”, “natural”, “universe”, but also “the nature”, “natural qualities”, “essence”

“powers”, “character of something”

↳ phusikoi φυσικοί the “oi” is the plural nominative ending which here signifies “those people”, i.e., “the *nature people*” or as we call them the *natural philosophers*.

arche (ARE-KAY) ἀρχή

“a starting point”, “principle”, “beginning”, “origin”, “first cause”, “the first place or power”, “command”

logos (LAH-gahs or LOW-goes) λόγος

“word”, “speech”, “account”, “reason”, “thought”, “discourse”, “science”

Hence, most of the disciplines you’re studying take their names from the Greek and are *about* or give *an account of* the field

bio (bios) “life” + logos = the study of life or biology

anthro (anthros) “human” + logos = the study of humankind

2. The movement from myth to religion to philosophy

On one view, the purpose of myth, religion, and philosophy is to explain, maintain, and sustain what we consider to be reality. This takes place in any number of ways. We try to make sense of our existence and our relationship with each other and our surroundings, both on the micro and macro views. We strive to account for that which is immediately and intimately present to us as well as that which seems removed and estranged from our everyday lives.

Myth, religion, and philosophy, then, help us deal with both the big things and the little things. They all try to explain “the big picture” as in the nature of the universe and we utilize them in an effort to acquire and preserve success in our individual, family or tribal lives, for instance.

With Greek myth we have stories that explain thunder (Zeus is angry). With its religion we find, among other things, ways to appease Zeus’ anger, for instance, or to otherwise manipulate the gods and maintain social order. With the advent of philosophy we find these Mediterranean thinkers revisiting questions of cosmogony and cosmology. Later, with Socrates, for example, the thrust of this examination is ethical. The movement turned inward, toward the individual and focuses on what it takes to lead an ethical life.

- cosmogony
cosmos + gignomai (which is a sister word for “genesis”, i.e., “origin”, “source”) “come into being”)= an account of how the cosmos came into being, or the *generation* of the universe
- cosmology
cosmos + logos = an account of the universe, an account of how it is now, its features and laws

The early philosophical preoccupation, however, involved a looking away from the self, as it were, and looking outward toward nature (*phusis*). Accordingly, our early Greek philosophers are called *phusikoi* for they were "natural philosophers", philosophers who sought generally non-mythic explanations of nature and about the nature of the cosmos.

3. Assumptions and order of inquiry

The vocabulary list illustrates key assumptions of the *phusikoi* as well as indicating an order of inquiry and its presentation.

- *cosmos* (and I'll switch to the more common spelling:
 - Definition: *universe, arrangement, order.*
 - Key assumption of the *phusikoi*: They believed that despite the universe's chaotic appearance and its constant state of change, what we see around us has order or can be found to have order. The universe is ordered.

- *phusis*
 - Definition: *nature, natural, essence*
 - Key assumption: There is a *nature* to nature. There is an essence about the cosmos that is discoverable. Although we find much that is still mythopoetic in the surviving fragments, we can tell that the *phusikoi* generally thought that nature could be explained by *natural* as opposed to *supernatural* causes.

- *arche*
 - Definition: *principle, starting point, rule, beginning point*
 - Key assumption: There is an underlying (or overarching if you want to put it that way) *explanatory principle* which identifies the true nature (essence) of the universe and of all that we observe and experience.

- *Logos*
 - Definition: *word, account, reason*
 - Key assumption: This explanatory principle can be reasoned out and reasoned about.

To get the bottom line, work your way backwards:

The Presocratics believe that an *account* (*logos*) of the *underlying principle* (*arche*) of the *nature* (*phusis*) of the *universe* can be given.