

Session 9 – Report – July 12, 2022.

Discussion on the Pre-Socratic philosophers, though short, focused on the chronological development of their ideas in a climate where most people believed that not only was the cosmos created by supernatural forces but also that their own daily lives were controlled by the capricious whims of immortal gods. To voice contrary opinions could be very dangerous, so the birth of such ideas leading to the search for natural reasons was a huge step.

Because the earliest known philosophers started virtually from scratch and had not the advantage of the scientific method to test assumptions, conclusions based on observation and reasoning differed but there was a central question – what was matter made of? Water was one ‘element’ proposed, being the only material observed existing in three forms, but all ideas were basically reasoned guesses - even the ‘atom’ theory of Democritus – and none could claim superiority over the others.

Due to its importance in evaluating the flood of information and misinformation which is our daily lot the subject of **logical reasoning** continued to hold centre stage and no doubt will remain with us in coming sessions. The advertising industry, for example, in its attempts to persuade us to buy things we don’t need or which can’t possibly meet the claims made on their behalf, use many tricks to pervert the course of better judgement; to be able to detect these is a desirable skill.

Another discussion area was **how to handle ideas and beliefs different to your own**, especially those which are so ‘left-field’ as to be, from your point of view, totally unacceptable. One way suggested, and not necessarily an easy one to follow, is to go ‘stand in the other person’s shoes’ – that is, consider the situation from the other’s viewpoint, taking into account as best you can the other’s background experiences and forces in play which could, in all probability, be behind the views in question.

A benefit in so doing is not necessarily that you may be persuaded that the other’s views become acceptable but rather that, in widening your understanding of why things are as they are, you put yourself in a better position to determine the personal philosophy most suited to your perceived needs.

Session 10, July 26, pre-notes are to follow later this week.

Keith Ashfold - Convenor