



The Eastern foundations : Near Eastern influence on the Ionian Presocratics and the transmission of Eastern religious ideas to Ionia
by Steven Camac

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History
Montana State University
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Abstract:

In the Ionian town of Miletus, at the beginning of the sixth century B. C. E., Thales emerged as Greece's first philosopher. After Thales came Anaximander and Anaximenes of Miletus, Xenophanes of Colophon, and Heraclitus of Ephesus. As a group, these philosophers are the Ionian Presocratics.

In *Early Greek Thought and the Orient*, M. L. West showed similarities between early Greek philosophy and Near Eastern religious ideas. But West's work is not widely accepted. It also raised more questions than it answered. How were Near Eastern ideas transmitted to Ionia? How do they fit into Near Eastern concepts? How was Ionia different from the rest of the Greek world? Strong Near Eastern influence on Ionian Presocratic philosophy must have come from consistent contact with the Near East. Similarities in the ideas of different cultures are not evidence of a transmission of ideas: all that this shows are parallels. To go beyond parallels requires pinpointing the routes of transfer.

The Archaic ivory carver is singled out as a medium of transfer for religious ideas. Ivory carvers had a knowledge of both Near Eastern and Greek religion. As ivory carvers traveled throughout the religious centers of the Aegean, they spread Near Eastern religious ideas to Greece.

The transfer of the Phoenician alphabet to Greece demonstrates a transfer of ideas. The transfer of the alphabet shows both that there was an intimate level of contact between Greeks and Phoenicians, and that the two peoples communicated complex knowledge effectively. Ionia's cultural and political context exposed it to Near Eastern ideas. The author argues that Ionia adopted Anatolian religion, making it religiously part of the Near East. Ionia's elite families inter-married with the Lydian aristocracy thus closely connecting Ionia to Lydia. Also, political conquest by Lydia and Persia opened Ionia to Anatolian and Iranian culture.

Near Eastern influence on Ionian Presocratics demonstrates that Greeks and people of the Near East communicated complex ideas. Transmission of Near Eastern ideas to Greece provides compelling proof that the foundations of Ionian Presocratic philosophy are Near Eastern.

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ABSTRACT

In the Ionian town of Miletus, at the beginning of the sixth century B. C. E., Thales emerged as Greece's first philosopher. After Thales came Anaximander and Anaximenes of Miletus, Xenophanes of Colophon, and Heraclitus of Ephesus. As a group, these philosophers are the Ionian Presocratics.

In Early Greek Thought and the Orient, M. L. West showed similarities between early Greek philosophy and Near Eastern religious ideas. But West's work is not widely accepted. It also raised more questions than it answered. How were Near Eastern ideas transmitted to Ionia? How do they fit into Near Eastern concepts? How was Ionia different from the rest of the Greek world?

Strong Near Eastern influence on Ionian Presocratic philosophy must have come from consistent contact with the Near East. Similarities in the ideas of different cultures are not evidence of a transmission of ideas: all that this shows are parallels. To go beyond parallels requires pinpointing the routes of transfer.

The Archaic ivory carver is singled out as a medium of transfer for religious ideas. Ivory carvers had a knowledge of both Near Eastern and Greek religion. As ivory carvers traveled throughout the religious centers of the Aegean, they spread Near Eastern religious ideas to Greece.

The transfer of the Phoenician alphabet to Greece demonstrates a transfer of ideas. The transfer of the alphabet shows both that there was an intimate level of contact between Greeks and Phoenicians, and that the two peoples communicated complex knowledge effectively.

Ionia's cultural and political context exposed it to Near Eastern ideas. The author argues that Ionia adopted Anatolian religion, making it religiously part of the Near East. Ionia's elite families inter-married with the Lydian aristocracy thus closely connecting Ionia to Lydia. Also, political conquest by Lydia and Persia opened Ionia to Anatolian and Iranian culture.

Near Eastern influence on Ionian Presocratics demonstrates that Greeks and people of the Near East communicated complex ideas. Transmission of Near Eastern ideas to Greece provides compelling proof that the foundations of Ionian Presocratic philosophy are Near Eastern.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the sixth century B. C. E.,¹ Thales emerged as the first known Greek philosopher. Thales is important because he symbolizes the beginning of Greek science. He lived in the Ionian town of Miletus, on the Aegean coast of Anatolia. After Thales came Anaximander and Anaximenes of Miletus, Xenophanes of Colophon, and Heraclitus of Ephesus. As a group, these philosophers are known as the Ionian Presocratics, and the founders of Greek philosophy. The birth of Greek philosophy was one of Western civilization's most important events. At the core of a Western identity is the philosophical method: questioning and searching for reason in the human and physical world.

In Early Greek Thought and the Orient (1971), M. L. West showed that there are similarities between early Greek philosophy and Near Eastern religious ideas.² But West's work has not been widely accepted. In The Presocratic Philosophers (1983), for example, G. S. Kirk says that while Thales' ideas could have come from the Near East, there are no similarities between the ideas of the other Ionian Presocratics and Eastern

¹Hereafter all dates are B. C. E. (Before the Common Era).

²M. L. West, Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.).

Near Eastern ideas transmitted to Ionia? How do they fit into Near Eastern concepts? How was Ionia different from the rest of the Greek world? This work will attempt to answer these questions.

Presocratic sources, however, are scattered and cryptic. Most of them are fragmentary, coming from passages in later Classical writers. But even with our limited sources, it is possible to identify a common thread running through the ideas of Ionian Presocratic thought -- an attempt to give structure and order to the universe. And when Near Eastern religions contemporary to the philosophers are examined, it becomes apparent that the Ionian Presocratics gave the universe a Near Eastern order and structure. Moreover, Ionian Presocratic philosophy fits into a Near Eastern conception of the universe. Chapter 1 will argue that Near Eastern religious influence best explains the birth of Greek philosophy in Ionia.

The strong Near Eastern influence on Ionian Presocratic philosophy could only have come from consistent contact with the Near East. However, similarities in the ideas of different cultures are, alone, not evidence of a transmission of ideas. Otherwise, all Chapter 1 would show are parallels. To go beyond "parallelomania,"⁴ what needs to be shown is the transference of ideas. This, in turn, requires pinpointing the routes of transfer.

What were the mediums of transfer of Near Eastern ideas to Ionia? Walter

⁴L. H. Fieldman, "Homer and the Near East: The Rise of the Greek Genius" Biblical Archaeologist 59:1 (March, 1996.), 15.

Burkert has suggested Near Eastern migrant workers as possible agents of transfer.⁵ Assyrian conquest of the Levant in the 8th and 7th century pushed traders and craftsmen to look to the Aegean for new commercial opportunities. The reemergence of Greek civilization was a new untapped market for Near Eastern traders. In Chapter 2, the Archaic ivory carver, a migrant and itinerant worker, is singled out as a medium of transfer for religious ideas. It will be argued that the ivory carvers of the Aegean were Levantine, that they had knowledge of both Near Eastern and Greek religion, and that the use of ivory figures in Greek religious worship indicates that religious transfer and translation took place.

Chapter 3 looks at the transfer of the Phoenician alphabet to Greece. The transfer of the alphabet shows both that there was an intimate level of contact between Greeks and Phoenicians, and that the two peoples were able to communicate effectively.

Chapters 2 and 3 show the importance of Levantine traders as transmitters of knowledge. Ionia, however, was as connected to the Near East by land as it was by the Aegean. Chapter 4 shows that Ionia adopted Anatolian religion, making it religiously part of the Near East, that it was closely connected to Lydia through inter-marriage and political conquest, and that because of both the Median Empire's movement west and the Persian conquest of Lydia, Ionia was open to Iranian religion.

Ionia's exposure and interaction with Near Eastern cultures was more intimate than other Greek societies. To describe Ionia as a frontier between Greece and the Near East is correct. What is incorrect is to perceive Ionia as a purely Greek frontier. Archaic

⁵Walter Burkert, The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence in the Early Archaic Age (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992.).

Ionia was a polyglot culture -- a mixture of Near Eastern and Greek culture. The reason Ionia's mixed culture has been overlooked is that it has not generally been viewed in the cultural context of the Aegean and the Near East. Throughout this work Ionia is examined with an eye on its cultural surroundings. When such a perspective is taken, Near Eastern influence becomes more readily apparent. Thus, it is the purpose of this work to demonstrate that Near Eastern religious ideas influenced the Ionian Presocratic philosophers, Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, and Heraclitus, and, more importantly, to show how the ideas were transferred and translated into a Greek cultural context.

CHAPTER 2

THE EASTERN ORIGINS

Classical Greece viewed Ionia as luxurious, weak, and a political failure. Ionia's diminished reputation began when it was conquered by Lydia in 614. Then, it failed to resist Cyrus the Great in 547, and could not gain its freedom in 499 (Ionian Revolt).¹ Politically, Ionians became part of the Near East, and, for this, the Greeks could not forgive them. Ionia, however, always had more ties to the Near East than mainland Greece. The Aegean exposed Ionia to trade from the east, and, inland, Ionia neighbored Lydia, which was politically and culturally a Near Eastern civilization. Ionian commercial and political interaction with the Near East gave it access to Eastern religious ideas. Greek philosophy's Ionian birth, at the end of the seventh and the beginning of the sixth century, was stimulated by Near Eastern religion. Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, and Heraclitus all had Near Eastern influence in their philosophy. Moreover, their ideas fit into a Near Eastern conception of the universe.

Recent scholarship has brushed aside the similarities between Ionian Presocratic philosophy and Near Eastern ideas. Near Eastern ideas, it is said, did not have the rational order and were too primitive to have any profound effect on the Ionian intellectuals.²

¹Carl Roebuck, *Ionian Trade and Colonization* (Ares: Chicago, 1983), 1.

²See Jonathan Barnes, ed., *Early Greek Thought* (London: Penguin, 1987.); Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (London: Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, 1946-1975/1961-1975.); W. K. C. Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge:

However, this attitude by historians of philosophy demonstrates that, generally, the obvious depth to Near Eastern civilization has been overlooked. Also, scholars of ancient Greece have not taken Ionia's cultural context into account. Instead, Western scholarship has taken a Greco-centric view of Ionia. Typically, maps of the Greek world only show the western part of Asia Minor, as if to blot out Ionia's geographical connection to the East. Also, from the Lydian conquest (578) of Ionia until its liberation from Persia in the 460's,³ Ionia was politically part of the Near East. And before the political conquests of Lydia and Persia, Ionia was a frontier between the Greek world and the Near Eastern culture of the Lydians. For example, Ionia had been trading with the Lydians since 700.

Moreover, the Greeks knew that Near Eastern civilizations were ancient. Near Eastern religions were as ancient as the cultures that they came from. They also had tradition and order. This tradition and order of Eastern religions, I will argue, had a profound effect on the Ionian Presocratic philosophers, for Near Eastern religion was the foundation from which Greek and Western philosophy grew.

Thales

At the beginning of the sixth century Thales emerged as Greece's first known philosopher.⁴ He lived in the prosperous Ionian harbor town of Miletus, on the Aegean

Cambridge University Press, 1983.); Terence Irwin, Classical Thought (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.).

³Herodotus 9, 90.

⁴Aristotle Met. A3 983b6.

coast of Anatolia. The dates of Thales' birth and death are not known for certain.⁵ We do know, from Thales' dating of the eclipse on May 28 585 B.C.E., that he was active at the end of the seventh and well into the sixth century.⁶ Thales studied different aspects of the universe; he was an astronomer, a geometer, and a philosopher. He believed that the universe was made up of a single principal stuff, water,⁷ and that soul was intermingled in the universe.⁸

Thales' belief that everything was made from water attempted to give the universe order. In the Near East, water was seen as the vital source of creation and life. Water was the essence of life in the Egyptian "Creation By Atum." In this creation myth life arises out of Nun, the waters of chaos:

I am Atum when I was alone in Nun; I am Re in his first appearance, when he began to rule that which he made.⁹

We are then told that the creator Atum is water, the creator of life:

I am the great god who came into being by himself. Who is he? The great god who came into being by Himself is water; he is Nun, the father of the gods.¹⁰

Atum created himself and life; he was also water (Nun). The Egyptians believed

⁵G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, The Presocratic Philosophies: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts, 2nd. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.), 76.

⁶Herodotus 1, 74.

⁷Aristotle Met. A3, 983b.

⁸Aristotle De An. A5, 411a.

⁹James B. Pritchard, ed., Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, 3rd edition, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.), 3.

¹⁰Ibid. 4.

everything was created from water, a concept that parallels Thales' belief that water was the principal substance of the universe.

In the Akkadian creation myth, fresh water and sea water, Apsu and Tiamat, join together in the creation of the gods:

When on high heaven had not been named, Firm ground below had not been called by name, Naught but primordial Apsu, their begetter, (And) Mummu-Tiamat, she bore them all, their waters commingling as a single body; No reed hut had been matted, no marsh land had Appeared, When no gods, whatever had been brought into being, Uncalled by name, their destinies understood -- Then it was that the gods were formed within them.¹¹

Apsu's and Tiamat's union created the gods who went on to create the world. Again, water was the essence of life. Water also had a primordial nature, "Naught but primordial Apsu, their begetter." Water was the origin of all things, including the gods. For Thales, water was also primordial -- the origin of all things.

In Iranian cosmology, water was held to have one source, the sea Vourukasha.¹² The earth was like a round disk floating on the sea: "He came on the water which was arranged below the earth . . ." ¹³ This concept was identical to Thales' idea that the world floats on water:

Others say that the earth rests on water. For which reason this is the most ancient account we have received, which they say was given by Thales the Milesian, that it stays in place through floating like a log or some other such thing (for none of these rests by the nature of air, but water) -- as though the same argument did not apply to water supporting the earth as to

¹¹Ibid. 1-8, 60-1.

¹²Yashts. 13, 65. "Then when the waters flow out from the sea Vourukasha."

¹³Bundadish 6, 14.

the earth itself.¹⁴

The belief that the world floats on water was seen throughout the Near East. In Egypt it was believed the earth rested upon primordial Nun.¹⁵ Babylonians believed the primordial water under the earth was the god Apsu.¹⁶ The Hebrews believed that the earth was put above water, "Yahweh stretched out the earth above the water."¹⁷ The belief that the earth floated on water spanned the Near East, from Iran to Egypt.¹⁸

The heavens, we are told, also interested Thales. Herodotus gives us an account of how Thales predicted an eclipse during the sixth year of battle between the Medes and Lydians on May 28, 585 B.C.E.¹⁹ Diogenes Laertius, Dercyllides, and Callimachus also tell of Thales' knowledge of solstices and eclipses.²⁰ As Neugebauer argues, Thales'

¹⁴Aristotle *de caelo*. B13, 294a28; *Met.* A3, 993b6. "Thales, the founder of this type of philosophy [one principal substance], says that it is water (and therefore declared that the earth is on water)"

¹⁵Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 3-5.

¹⁶Ibid. 61.

¹⁷Psalms 136, 6; 24, 2. "Founded it upon the seas, and establish it upon the floods."; Gen xlix. 25 "the deep that lieth under"; Deut xxxiii. 13 "the deep that coucheth beneath."

¹⁸The idea is seen also in Greece. Greeks believed that the river Okeanos flowed around the earth. It was also known as the broad outer sea, and was the source of all gods and all things. The river Okeanos shows that early Greece was culturally part of an Aegean culture. It shows that there was Near Eastern influence on the Greek world before Homer and the eighth century.

¹⁹Herodotus I, 74.

²⁰Diogenes Laertius I, 23. "Some think he [Thales] was the first to study the heavenly bodies and to foretell eclipses of the sun and solstices, as Eudemus says in his history of astronomy; for which reason both Heraclitus and Democritus bear witness for him."; Dercyllides *ap.* Theon. *Smryn.* "Eudemus relates in the astronomy that Oenopides first discovered the obliquity of the zodiac and the cycle of the Great Year, and Thales the eclipse of the sun and the variable period of the solstices."; Callimachus I, 52.

knowledge of eclipses could only have come from Babylonia.²¹ Babylonian priests were studying astronomy for many centuries before Thales' prediction, and had studied eclipses since at least 721 (most probably much earlier). By the sixth century Babylonian priests had a good feel for the cycle of the stars and moon. Although Babylonians could not predict the exact day of an eclipse, they could predict the year of eclipses.²²

There is also a Phoenician influence in Thales' astronomical knowledge.

Callimachus tells us:

...for victory belonged to Thales, who was clever in judgement, not least because he was said to have measured out the little stars of the wain, by which the Phoenicians sail.²³

The little stars of the wain are the Little Bear. The Phoenicians used the Little Bear as a navigational aid for their long sea voyages. From Callimachus' statement it appears that Thales told the Milesian sailors about the Little Bear, allowing them to navigate more accurately on longer voyages. Greek sailors used the Great Bear, a less accurate navigational point.²⁴

In summary, Thales' concept of water as the basic stuff of the universe fits in with a uniform Near Eastern belief that water was the primordial element of the cosmos. His

²¹Otto Neugebauer, Astronomy and History: Selected Essays (Springer-Verlag, 1983.), 232-247.

²²Charles H. Kahn, Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.), 76, n. 2. There is also a theory that Thales gained knowledge of astronomy from Egypt. Egyptian priests also kept astronomical records, but they did not study them for the length of time that the Babylonians priests had.

²³Callimachus I, 52.

²⁴Ora Negbi, "Early Phoenician Presence in the Mediterranean Islands: A Reappraisal" American Journal of Archaeology 96 (1992): 614.

astronomical knowledge shows that Thales presumably had access to Babylonian charts and records. Thales' astrological connection with Phoenicians suggests that he, and Miletus, were exposed to Phoenicians and their maritime knowledge. Sources on Thales are limited, which makes him somewhat of an enigma. But what we do have suggests close ties to Near Eastern thought.

Anaximander

Anaximander was the first recorded Greek philosopher who attempted to give a detailed explanation of man's experience. Theophrastus calls Anaximander the student and successor of Thales.²⁵ He was born in 610/9 B.C.E. and died in 546/5.²⁶

Anaximander continued Thales' search for an order to the universe. He did not, however, believe in Thales' idea that water was the basic stuff of the universe. For Anaximander, the universe's principal element was Apeiron: a boundless, infinite and indeterminate element. Apeiron engendered the finite and determinate primitive substance of earth and water, fire and air, and night and day. Opposites were constantly at war: cosmic equilibrium was achieved through the regeneration that the struggle produced.

For Aristotle, the main properties of Apeiron derived from it being an absolute beginning:

As a beginning, it must also be something that has not become and cannot pass away. For that which has become must necessarily come to an end,

²⁵Simplicius In Phys. 24, 13. "... Anaximander, son of Praxiades, a Milesian, the successor and pupil of Thales."; Hippolytus Ref. 1, 6. 1. "Now Anaximander was the disciple of Thales."; Plutarch Strom. 2. "Anaximander, who was the companion of Thales . . ."

²⁶G. Kirk, J. E. Raven, and M. Schofield, The Presocratic Philosophers, 101.

and all passing away likewise has no end. Thus, as we have said, it is itself without beginning, but is rather -- so it is thought -- the beginning of everything else. And it encompasses all things and governs all things, as those persons declare who posit no other causes besides the Apeiron, such as mind or love [here he is talking about Anaxagoras and Empedocles]. And this, they say is the Divine. For it is immortal and indestructible as Anaximander and most of the natural philosophers maintain.²⁷

Apeiron's absolute beginning made it divine, because it was the cause of all things.

Anaximander's Apeiron was the one divine entity controlling and guiding all things.

Apeiron could not be seen or felt; it was undefinable, but it was everywhere, in everything.

Simplicius' quotation from Anaximander's only surviving work shows how the clash of opposites produced life:

Anaximander . . . declared the boundless to be the principle element of existing things, having been the first to introduce this very term of 'principle'; he says that it is neither water nor any other of the so-called elements, but some different, boundless nature, from which all the heavens arise and the kosmoi within them; 'Into those things from which existing things have their coming into being, their passing away, too, takes place, according to what must be; for they make reparation to one another for their injustice according to the ordinance of time,' as he puts it in rather poetical terms.²⁸

Anaximander saw a daily exchange in the universe: night gives way to day; the change of the seasons; youth eroded by age; and growth by decay. Arguing in a similar fashion,

Hippocrates uses the universe as an example for the body. It is an explanation which sums up the workings of Anaximander's equilibrium of opposites:

All of them are present in the body, but as the seasons revolve they become now greater now less, in turn, according to the nature of each. The year has a share of all things -- the hot, the cold, the dry, and the wet -- for no one of these things which exists in the world order would last for any

²⁷Aristotle *Phys.* iii. 4, 203b6.

²⁸Simplicius *Physics.* 24, 13.

length of time were it not for all the rest. On the contrary, if a single thing were to fail, all would disappear; for all things come into existence from the same necessity and are sustained by one another.²⁹

In addition, Anaximander's Apeiron has strong parallels with the Indo-Iranian principle of rta/aša.³⁰ Mary Boyce states:

This term (rta/aša), it is now generally accepted, represents a concept which cannot be precisely rendered in another tongue. It stands, it seems, for order in the widest sense: cosmic order, by which night gives way to day and the seasons change; the order of sacrifice, by which this natural rhythm is strengthened and maintained; social order, by which men live together in harmony and prosperity; and a moral order of truth.³¹

Aša (aša) was the moral order of divine godness (Ahura Mazda). Night would not give way to day if divine evil (Angra Mainya) ruled the universe. In the first meeting between Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainya there was the clash of opposites:

Truly there are two primal Spirits, twins renowned to be in conflict. In thought and word, in act they are two: the better and the bad. And those who act well have chosen rightly between these two, not so the evildoers. And when these spirits came together they created life and not life, and that there should be at last the worst existence for the followers of the Drug (choas), but for the followers of aša, the best dwelling.³²

In Zoroastrianism, there was a battle to maintain order, a battle between good and evil.

Order allows the universe to operate in the same way that Apeiron allows the universe to function, to maintain equilibrium, cosmic order.

Apeiron was also the creator of all things -- the absolute beginning: Apeiron was

²⁹Hippocrates Nat. Hom. 7.

³⁰In Zoroastrianism there is aša/Aša: Aša is a divine being, one of the Bounteous Immortals, and personifies the qualities of aša: order, justice and righteousness.

³¹Mary Boyce, The History of Zoroastrianism: Volume one, The Early Period (Lieden: E. J. Brill, 1975.) 27.

³²Yasna. 30, 3-4.

the one divine entity of the universe. Ahurá Mazda was also the beginning and creator of all things:

Then I recognized you as Bounteous (Spənta/creator), when I saw you as primal at the birth of life. Then I recognize you as the beginning and the end. . . when I comprehended you with my eyes as the real Creator of order (aša), by thy acts lord of existence.³³

There are similarities in their roles and functions, but also in what they were as entities:

Apeiron was the one divine entity of the universe; Ahura Mazda was the one god of the universe.

Anaximander's cosmogony and cosmology were strikingly similar to Near Eastern concepts. In Anaximander's cosmogony, similarities are seen:

He says that that which is productive from the eternal of hot and cold was separated off at the coming-to-be of this world, and that a kind of sphere of flame from this was formed round the air surrounding the earth, like bark round a tree. When this was broken off and shut in certain circles, the sun and the moon and the stars were formed.³⁴

A sphere of flame encased the earth, "like bark round a tree." The Zoroastrian sky is made of stone and encases the earth.³⁵ Moreover, in Genesis and Ezekiel's vision of the throne of God, the sky is described as a dome:

And God said let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters. So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky.³⁶

Over the heads of the living creatures (Cherubs) there was something like a

³³Yasna. 31, 8.

³⁴Ps.-Plutarch Strom. 2.

³⁵Greater Bundahis. Ia, 6.

³⁶Genesis 1, 6-8.

dome shining like crystal spread out above their heads.³⁷

Also in Genesis, earth is at the center of the universe. Anaximander's cosmogony also placed earth at the center of the universe, as it was the coldest thing in the universe, while the heavenly bodies were the hottest and at the outer limit.

Anaximander believed the world to be concave: "In form it is concave like a drum of a column."³⁸ Also, Near Eastern mythical schemes, the world was surrounded by a ring of mountains, which gave it a concave appearance. Babylonians had a map which showed seven great mountains arranged around the world, encircled by the Bitter River.³⁹ In the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh, during the journey to the Cedar Forest, Gilgamesh crosses the 'seven mountains to track down Humbaba.'⁴⁰ The earth is also surrounded by mountains in Zoroastrian cosmology:

As the first mountain there stood upon earth high Hara, which encircles entirely the eastern and western lands.⁴¹

Before Anaximander, Greeks treated the heavenly bodies as detached self-contained entities.⁴² Aetius relates that Anaximander believed the heavenly bodies were carried by circles and spheres; these circles and spheres were enclosed with air.

Anaximander also put the heavenly bodies into their own spheres:

Anaximander [says that the heavenly bodies] are carried by the circles and

³⁷Ezekiel 1, 21.

³⁸Hippolytus Ref. I. 6, 3.

³⁹Cuneiform Texts in the British Museum, (Publications of the British Museum, 1906.), xxiii, pl. 48.

⁴⁰The Epic of Gilgamesh, trans., N. K. Sanders (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960.), 76.

⁴¹Yashts. 19, 1.

⁴²Kahn, Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology, 88-89.

spheres on which each goes.

The heavenly bodies come into being as a circle of fire separated off from the fire in the world and enclosed by air.⁴³

Aetius also tells us that Anaximander believed the sun and moon were like chariot wheels filled with fire, and that the heavenly bodies were wheel shaped:

Anaximander says that the sun is like a chariot wheel . . . the rim of which is hollow and filled with fire. At a certain point on it the fire shows through an opening, as through the nozzles of a bellow.⁴⁴

The moon is a ring eighteen times as large as the earth. It is like a chariot wheel the rim of which is hollow and full of fire, like the ring of the sun, and it is placed obliquely [to the plane of the earth] like the other.⁴⁵

The heavenly bodies are wheel shaped masses of compressed air filled with fire.⁴⁶

Ezekiel saw the throne of God in the sky supported by four Cherubim. Each Cherub was attached to a wheel, and whenever the Cherubs went up from the earth so did the wheels.

Also, in between the wheels there was fire:

In the middle of the living creatures (Cherubs) there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and fro among the living creatures; the fire was bright, and the lightning issued from the fire. The living creatures darted to and fro like a flash of lightening. As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the earth beside the living creatures, one for each of the four of them. As for the appearance of the wheels and their construction: their appearance was like a gleaming of beryl; and the four had the same form, their construction being something like a wheel within a wheel. When they moved, they moved in any one direction without veering as they moved. Their rims were tall and awesome, for the rims of all four were full of eyes all around. When the

⁴³Aetuis II. 16, 5; II. 20, I.

⁴⁴Aetuis. II. 20, 1.

⁴⁵Aetuis. II. 25, 2.

⁴⁶Aetuis. II. 13, 7.

living creatures moved, the wheels moved, the wheels moved beside them; and when the living creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose.⁴⁷

Eziekiel's vision of God's throne is constructed of spheres within spheres, an arrangement which was similar to Anaximander's cosmos of circles and spheres. Moreover, both Eziekiel's God and Anaximander's Apeiron are the one divine entity of the universe, and they were the creator and cause of all things.

Anaximander's ordering of the Heavenly bodies was distinctly Zoroastrian. He placed the stars and planets nearest the earth, then the moon, and the sun furthest away: "He (Anaximander) placed the sun highest of all, below the moon, and below these the stars and planets." In the Avestan and Pahlavi texts it was ordered stars, moon, sun, and beginningless light:

When they sever the consciousness of men it goes out to the nearest fire, then out to the stars, then out to the sun.⁴⁸

As it is said in revelation: . . . from the light which is endless it (the divine glory) fled on, on to that of the sun; from that of the sun, it fled on, on to the moon; from that of the moon it fled on, on to those stars, it fled on to the fire. . .⁴⁹

Syrian notions about the origins of life also influenced Anaximander. He believed that life arose out of water and that man came from fish or fish-like creatures.⁵⁰ Plutarch tells us that Syrians believed fish were of a similar race as humans, and that this was a more sensible idea than Anaximander's:

⁴⁷Eziekiel. 1, 13-20.

⁴⁸Damdat Nask in Sayast La-Sayast 12, 5.

⁴⁹Pahlavi. Denkart, 7. 2, 3.

⁵⁰Aetius V. 19, 4.; Ps.-Plutarch Strom. 2.; Cerorinus de die nat. 4,7.; Hippolytus Ref. I, 6, 6.

Therefore they (Syrians) actually revere the fish as being of similar race and nurturing. In this they philosophize more suitably than Anaximander; for he declares, not that fishes and men came into being in the same parents, but that originally men came into being inside fishes, and that having been nurtured there -- like sharks -- and having become adequate to look after themselves, they then came forth and took the land.⁵¹

The Syrian Goddess states that Syrians held fish to be sacred, and that they would not touch them.⁵²

Anaximander's main influences were from Iran and the Levant. Aša's (aša) cosmic battle to maintain order can be seen in the Apeiron's equilibrium of opposites. Apeiron and aša were both concepts of order; an order that allowed the universe to function. Apeiron was also the creator and beginning of all things in the same manner as Ahura Mazda and Yahweh. Anaximander's order of the heavenly bodies was identical to a Zoroastrian one. Ezekiel's vision of God's throne, with its spheres and fire, also has a vivid likeness to Anaximander's heavenly bodies.

Anaximenes of Miletus

Diogenes Laertius quotes Apollodorus in telling us that Anaximenes was active at the time Sardis was captured by the Persians, and that he died in the 63rd Olympiad (528-25).⁵³ Like Anaximander, Anaximenes believed the source of existing things to be

⁵¹Plutarch Symp., VIII. 780E.

⁵²Ps.-Lucian. The Syrian Goddess, (De Dea Syria), translated & edited by Attridge, H. W. & Oden, R.A. (Scholars Press, 1976.), 22.

⁵³Diogenes Laertius II, 3.

infinite, yet for him Air was the originative stuff and basic form of matter.⁵⁴ Air changed by a system of condensation and rarefaction. When Air was at its most diffuse it was invisible. Yet, when it became more tightly packed, it was harder to resist. As Air became visible, it became heavier and more solid. Air could also be rarified; when it was made finer it became fire.⁵⁵ Also, Anaximenes was the first Greek to use detailed observation to support a physical theory. He theorized that anything cold was condensed, and anything loose and relaxed was hot. The Milesian was said to have learned this from the breath blown out of his mouth.⁵⁶ Anaximenes' philosophy of condensation and

⁵⁴Aristotle Met. A3, 984a5. "Anaximenes and Diogenes make air, rather than water, the material principle above the other simpler bodies." Theophrastus ap. Simplicium in Phys. "Anaximenes son of Eurystratus, of Miletus, a companion of Anaximander, also says, like him, that the underlying nature is one and infinite, but not undefined as Anaximander said but definite, for he identifies it as air . . ."; Hippolytus Ref. I, 7, I. "Anaximenes . . . said that infinite air was the principle, from which the things that are becoming, and that are, and that shall be, and gods and things divine, all come into being, and the rest from its products."

⁵⁵Hippolytus Ref. I, 7, ii. "The form of air is of this kind: whenever it is most equable it is invisible to sight, but, it is revealed by cold and hot and the damp and by movement. It is always in motion; for things that change do not change unless there is movement.

Through becoming denser or finer it has different appearances; for when it is dissolved into what is finer it becomes fire, while winds, again, are air that is becoming condensed, and cloud is produced from air by felting. When it is condensed still more, water is produced; with a further degree of condensation earth is produced; and when condensed as far as possible, stones. The result is that most influential components of generation are opposites, hot and cold."; Simplicius Phys. 24, 30. ". . . for he identifies it as air; and it differs in substantial nature by rarity and density. Being made finer it becomes fire, being made thicker it becomes wind, then, cloud, then (when thickened still more) water, then earth, then stones; and the rest come into being from these. He, too, makes motion eternal, and says change, also, comes about through it."

⁵⁶Plutarch de prim. frig. 7, 947f. ". . . or as Anaximenes thought of old, let us see neither the cold nor the hot as belonging to substance, but as common dispositions of matter that supervene on changes; for he says that matter which is compressed and condensed is cold, while that which is fine and 'relaxed' (using this very word) is hot. Therefore, he said, the dictum is not an unreasonable one, that man releases both warmth and cold from his

rarefaction was backed up with observation, physical theory, making him the first Greek to strive to give a material and physical explanation to the universe.

Anaximenes gave quantitative explanation to the universe, but at the core of his philosophy was divine Air. Air was a god.⁵⁷ the cause of change, the essence of life. Soul, the essence of life, was also Air: "Just as our soul (being Air) controls us, so breath and air encompass the whole world order."⁵⁸ Air was the soul of the cosmos and of life: without Air there was not life. Anaximenes' concept of Air, as the essence of life in humans and the universe, has parallels with Indo-Iranian ideas about the wind god Vāyu. Vāyu was the first cosmic life-principle. He was the life breath of the universe and living things.⁵⁹

Anaximenes' Air was not only the cause of life, but also creator of the cosmos:

... and all things are produced by a kind of condensation, and again rarefaction, of this [sc. Air]. Motion, indeed, exists from everlasting; he says that when the air felt there first of all comes into being the earth, quite flat -- therefore it rides on air; and the sun and moon and remaining heavenly bodies have their source of generation from the earth.⁶⁰

Anaximenes . . . said that infinite air was the principle, from which the things that are becoming, and that are, and shall be, and gods and things divine, all come into being, and the rest from its products.⁶¹

Throughout the Near East the idea of one creator was common: in Egypt it was either

mouth: for the breath is chilled by being compressed and condensed with the lips, but when his mouth is loosened the breath escapes and becomes warm through its rarity. This theory Aristotle claims to be due to the man's [sc. Anaximenes'] ignorance. . ."

⁵⁷Cicero *de natura decorum*. 1, 10, 26. "Anaximenes determined that air is a god. . ."; Aetius 1, 7, 13. "Anaximenes [says that] the air [is a god]. . ."

⁵⁸Aetius I, 3, 4.

⁵⁹Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism: Vol.1.*, 80.

⁶⁰Ps.-Plutarch *Strom.* 3.

⁶¹Hippolytus *Ref. IX.* 7, I.

Atum, Amon, or Aton;⁶² in the Levant, it was the Hebrew Yahweh (Lord), or Elohim (God);⁶³ in Iran, Ahura Mazda was “the creator of life,” and the “Creator of all things.”⁶⁴ All these gods were the originative essence of the universe in the same manner as Anaximenes’ Air.

While Anaximenes’ creator was a widely shared Near Eastern concept, his cosmology was a mix of eastern ideas. His heavenly bodies moved around the earth like a “felt hat turns around our head,” and the sun moved around a mountain:

He [Anaximenes] says that the heavenly bodies do not move under the earth, as others have supposed, but round it, just as if a felt cap turns around our head; and that the sun is hidden not by being under the earth, but through being covered by the higher parts of the earth [mountains] and through its increased distance from us.⁶⁵

Similarly, Iranians believed the heavenly bodies moved in a plane parallel to the earth, so they orbited around the Peak of Hara,⁶⁶ just as Anaximenes’ world was surrounded by mountains that hid the sun at the end of the day. Babylonians, Sumerians, and Iranians all believed that the world was surrounded by mountains.⁶⁷ It appears, then, that Anaximenes took the Iranian concept of the heavenly bodies orbiting a central mountain and blended it

⁶²Pritchard, 3-4; 370-1; 368-9.

⁶³Genesis 1, 1-31.

⁶⁴Yasna. 44. 7.

⁶⁵Hippolytus Ref. I, 7, 6.

⁶⁶Yashts. 12, 25.

⁶⁷British Cuneiform Texts in the British Museum. xxiii, Plate 48.; Epic of Gilgamesh, 76.; Yashts 19, 1.

with the broader scheme of Near Eastern earth encircling mountains.

Anaximenes attaches the stars to a crystal sky: "they [the stars] are fixed in the crystalline [vault of the heavens] like ornamental nail heads."⁶⁸ This is a scheme which was both Zoroastrian and Hebrew. Ahura Mazda created the sky first,⁶⁹ it was a perfectly round empty shell made of stone.⁷⁰ Zoroaster describes the sky as being made of rock crystal.⁷¹ In Genesis the sky was a "dome", and in Ezekiel the sky was also a dome "shining like crystal above our heads."⁷²

Basic Near Eastern cosmogonies and cosmologies influenced Anaximenes. The creator god, the crystal like sky, and the orbit of the sun and heavenly bodies were Near Eastern concepts. Hebrew and Iranian influences are again the most prominent.

Xenophanes of Colophon

Xenophanes was twenty-four when he left Colophon. But it is not clear if the Persian invasion of Ionia (546/5 B.C.E.), or an expulsion, caused him to move to Sicily.⁷³

⁶⁸Aetius II. 14, 13.

⁶⁹Greater Bundahis I. 54.

⁷⁰Greater Bundahis I a. 6. Asmān is the god of sky, and was the ancient Iranian word for stone.

⁷¹Yasna. 30. 5.

⁷²Genesis 1, 6-8.; Ezekiel 1, 21.

⁷³Diogenes Laertius IX, 18. "Xenophanes, son of Dexios or, according to Apollodrus, of Orthomenes, of Colophon . . . he, being expelled from his native land, passed his time in Zancle in Sicily and Catana . . . He wrote in epic meter, also elegiacs and iambics, against Hesiod and Homer, reproving them for what they said about the gods. But he himself also recited his own original poems. He is said to have held contrary opinions to Thales and Pythagoras, and to have rebuked Epimenides too. He had an extremely long life as

We can be sure that he was active from the middle to the end of the sixth century. Though he lived the majority of his life in Sicily, his thought has its foundations in the Ionian tradition. Xenophanes concerned himself with the gods: natural phenomena, and the origin of all things. Much of Xenophanes' work was not philosophical. Later thinkers did not know what to make of Xenophanes. He did not seem to be a natural philosopher. Aristotle calls Xenophanes' thought "primitive",⁷⁴ and Theophrastus excluded Xenophanes from his great work because he belonged to a different category of thinker.⁷⁵

Xenophanes' belief in one universal God rebelled against the religious tradition of Archaic Greece. He rejected the gods and religion of Homer and Hesiod: "Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods everything that is a shame and reproach among men, stealing and committing adultery and deceiving each other."⁷⁶ Greek gods portrayed negative human emotional and ethical qualities. He replaced the Greek pantheon with one god: "One god, greatest among gods and men, in no way similar to mortals either in body or in thought."⁷⁷

His thought maybe explained through a comparison with Near Eastern religions. In Iran, there was the one good primeval god, Ahura Mazda, the Lord of Wisdom and the

he himself somewhere says: 'Already there are seven and sixty years tossing my thought up and down the land of Greece; and from my birth there were another twenty five to add to these, if I know how to speak truly about these things'. . . And he was at his prime in the 60th Olympiad."

⁷⁴Aristotle Met. A 5, 986b 18.

⁷⁵Simplicus Physics. 22, 22.

⁷⁶Sextus adv. math. IX, 193.

⁷⁷Clement Strom. V. 190, I.

Father of Order (aša).⁷⁸ Ahura Mazda was the only god worthy of worship. And there was the Hebrew Yahweh: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me."⁷⁹ In Ezekiel, God was all seeing: "I will judge you according to your ways, I will punish you for your abominations. My eye will not spare you, I will not have pity." Ahura Mazda, too, judged humans, he heard their words and thoughts.⁸⁰ Xenophanes' god was also all knowing and seeing: "All of him sees, all thinks, and all hears."⁸¹ Xenophanes' God also changed the physical world with his will:

Always he remains in one place, moving not at all; nor is it fitting for him to go different places at different times, but without toil he shakes all things by the thought of his mind.⁸²

Ahura Mazda brought about creation with his thoughts: "You, O Mazda created for us in the beginning by your thought material objects and consciences."⁸³

Xenophanes believed people saw gods in the image of themselves (as an ethnic group):

But mortals consider that the gods are born, and that they have clothes and speech and bodies like their own.⁸⁴

The Ethiopians say that their gods are snub nosed and black, the Thracians

⁷⁸Yasna 44.

⁷⁹Exodus 2-4.

⁸⁰Yasna 31, 13.

⁸¹Sextus adv. math. IX, 144.

⁸²Simplicius in Phys. 23, 11 + 23, 20.

⁸³Yasna 31, 11.

⁸⁴Clement Strom. V, 109, 2.

that theirs have light blue eyes and red hair.⁸⁵

These ideas suggest Xenophanes had contact with non-Greek religions, which were, it would be fair to presume, eastern. His conception of one all powerful god that judged the humans actions was non-Greek, and was similar to Iranian and Hebrew notions of an all powerful god that judge humans by their actions.

Heraclitus of Ephesus

Heraclitus lived in the latter part of the sixth century and the early part of the fifth.⁸⁶ He wrote a book, "On Nature," about the universe, politics, and theology.

Heraclitus' work did not fit with the other Ionian Presocratics. He believed the ordered universe was a pre-existing fire that was in constant flux, changing from fire to earth to water, but always keeping the same "proportions as existed before it became earth."⁸⁷ The universe was in a harmony of opposites; if there was not wrong there could not be right.⁸⁸ Heraclitus' Logos was the center piece to his philosophy. The Logos was the unifying formula in the universe.

The Logos unified the universe spiritually and materially. Heraclitus believed the universe was ordered and the same for all: "To those who are awake, there is one ordered

⁸⁵Clement Strom. VII. 22, I.

⁸⁶Diogenes Laertius XI, 1.

⁸⁷Clement Strom. V. 104, 1-3.

⁸⁸Hippolytus Ref. IX. 9, I.

universe common to all.”⁸⁹ Everything came into being in accordance with the universal Logos.⁹⁰ Logos caused the day to turn into night and the seasons to change. Spiritually, Logos had to be comprehended.⁹¹ Comprehension of the Logos meant an understanding that everything, including man, was one with the universe.⁹²

It has already been remarked that in Indo-Iranian belief there was the concept of rta/aša. Rta/aša was a principle of cosmic order that governed the natural world and human society, it caused night to be day, winter to become summer, it allowed society to operate in harmony, and stood for the moral order of society. But men had to submit to its workings, they had to believe and accept rta/aša for it to work in human society. To have rta and aša, to be rtavan and ašavan, was to be a just and upright being.⁹³

Ahura Mazda chose aša at the beginning of creation. Aša was a deity, One of the seven Bounteous Immortals, a personification of aša created by Ahura Mazda.⁹⁴ Aša (aša) was immaterial, it was above humans, but accepting aša meant understanding that humans were part of aša’s cosmic order. Heraclitus’ Logos and the Zoroastrian aša were similar

⁸⁹Plutarch *de superst.* 3, 166c.

⁹⁰Sextus Empiricus *adv. math.* VII, 132-133. “Of the Logos it is as I describe it, men always prove to be uncomprehending, both before they have heard it and when once they have heard it. For although all things happen according to this Logos men are like people of no experience, even when I distinguish each thing according to its constitution and declare how it is; but the rest of men fail to notice what they do after they wake up just as they do when they sleep.”

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Hippolytus *Ref.* IX. 9, I. “When you have listened, not to me but to the Logos, it is wise to agree that all things are one.”

⁹³Boyce, 5, 27.

⁹⁴The order of the universe was aša, while Aša was the deity that personified aša.

in concept and function. Zoroastrians took the subjective concept of order and made it a religious entity and belief. Heraclitus adapted aša and turned it into philosophy.

Logos unified the universe, but it was the dualism of Heraclitus' cosmos that gave it harmony. It was the opposing forces of the cosmos that created a balance:

That which is in opposition is in concert, and from things that differ comes the most beautiful harmony.⁹⁵

They do not understand how that which differs with itself is in agreement: harmony consists of opposing tensions, like that of a bow or a lyre.⁹⁶

They would not know the name of the Right [Dike], if these things (i.e. opposites) did not exist.⁹⁷

There could not be good if there was not bad. Zoroastrianism, too, had strong dualism.

The ultimate opposing forces in the universe were Angra Mainya (not life, evil) and Ahura Mazda (life, good). Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainya existed in the beginning; they were primeval unity. "Plurality and diversity" could only come about because there was the hostile spirit, Angra Mainya.⁹⁸ The Gathas tell of their first encounter between the twins:

Now these two spirits, which are twins, revealed themselves at first in vision. Their two ways of thinking, speaking and acting were better and the bad.-- Between these two (ways) the wise choose rightly, fools not so. And then when these two spirits first met, they created both life and not life, and there should be at the last the worst existence for the followers of the Drug, but for the followers of Aša, the best dwelling.⁹⁹

⁹⁵Kathleen Freeman, Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Complete Translation of the Fragments in Diels 'Fragmente der Vorsokratiker,' (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949.) fr. 8, p. 25.

⁹⁶Hippolytus Ref. IX. 9, I.

⁹⁷Clement Strom. IV. 9, 7.

⁹⁸Boyce, 192.

⁹⁹Yasna 30. 3-5.

The individual must decide between living his life the way of aša and druj, good and evil -- Zoroastrians must chose aša.¹⁰⁰ Men and gods worked in harmony to defeat the forces of evil. Similarly, Heraclitus' dualism was ethical; people had to choose Logos, but most could not perceive or grasp the true meaning of the Logos:

Therefore one must follow the Logos that which is common to all. But although the Logos is universal, the majority live as if they had an understanding peculiar to themselves.¹⁰¹

In Heraclitean and Zoroastrian belief systems, the right choice must be made. Heraclitus believed this choice to be common to all:

Those who speak with sense must rely on what is common to all, as a city must rely on its law, and with much greater reliance. For all the laws of men are nourished by one law, the divine law; for it has as much power as it wishes and is sufficient for all and is still left over.¹⁰²

Actions and thoughts were judged at death:

For better deaths gain better portions according to Heraclitus.¹⁰³

There await men after they are dead things which they do not expect or imagine.¹⁰⁴

Judgement was made according to Logos, and it was a judgement that no one could escape:

¹⁰⁰Yasna 45.

¹⁰¹Sextus Empiricus. adv. math. VII. 33.

¹⁰²Stobaeus Anth. III. 1, 179.

¹⁰³Clement Strom. IV. 49, 3.

¹⁰⁴Kathleen Freeman, trans. Ancilla to the Presocratic Philosophers, Fr. 27, p 26.

How could anyone escape the notice of that which never sets.¹⁰⁵

The most wise-seeming man knows, (that is), preserves, only what seems; furthermore, retribution will seize the fabricators of lies and the false witnesses.¹⁰⁶

In the same way, Zoroastrians were judged according to aša by the eye of Ahura Mazda:

The deeds, open or stealthy, into which search is made, O Wise One, or if for a trifling wrong a man should exact the greatest atonement. Perceiving all this with thine eye, you see this through your shining righteousness.¹⁰⁷

. . . the Soshyant will rise up all the dead. And all mankind will arise, whether just or wicked. . . Then the assembly of Isadvastr will take place. In that assembly, everyone will behold his own good or bad deeds, and the just will stand out among the wicked like white sheep among black. Fire and the yazad Airyman will melt the metal in the hills and the mountains. . . Then all men will pass through the molten metal. And for those who are just it will seem like they are walking through warm milk; and for the wicked they are walking in the flesh through molten metal.¹⁰⁸

Then when retribution comes for these sinners, then, Mazda, Power shall be present for thee with Good Purpose, to declare himself for those, Lord, who shall deliver the Lie into the hands of the Truth.¹⁰⁹

Heraclitus' fire also judged those who did not choose Logos: "Fire, having come upon them, will judge and seize upon (condemn) all living things."¹¹⁰ Fire was an important part of Heraclitus' universe, it was the "archetypal form of matter."¹¹¹ Fire was pre-existing and ever living:

¹⁰⁵Clement *Paedagogus*. II, 99, 5.

¹⁰⁶Freeman, Fr. 28, p 26.

¹⁰⁷Yasna 31. 13.

¹⁰⁸Bundahish. 34. 6-9, 20-23.

¹⁰⁹Yasna 30. 8.

¹¹⁰Freeman, Fr. 66, p 29.

¹¹¹Kirk, 198.

The universe (cosmos), which is the same for all, was not created by anyone of the gods or mankind, but it was and shall be ever living fire, kindled in measure and quenched in measure.¹¹²

Fire was divine, the foundation and essence of life, and with the power of condemnation.

Fire was also an important part of Zoroastrianism. Fire was the god Ātar, the son of Ahura Mazda.¹¹³ Fire was in all living things -- the essence of life. It was the seventh creation which permeates all other six creations giving them life and growth. There were five different forms of fire: the fire in rocks and other natural sources was Berezišavah; Vahrhān fire was Berezišavah that has been sanctified so it can be used at shrines; Vohufryāna comes from animals and man; Urvāzišta was in earth and plants; and Vāzišta was in clouds.¹¹⁴

Heraclitus saw fire as forming the other world masses, sea and earth, and the changes between the masses:

Fire's turning: first the sea, and of the sea half is earth, the half burner [lightening or fire] . . . earth is dispersed as sea, and is measured so as to form the same proportion as existed before it became earth.¹¹⁵

All things are an equal exchange for fire and fire for all things, as goods for gold and gold for goods.¹¹⁶

Fire was in all things through a system of change, but no matter what form it had changed to it always had the proportions of fire. Life occurred because of fire. Like Heraclitus,

¹¹²Clement Strom. V. 104, I.

¹¹³Yasna. 36, 3.

¹¹⁴Bundahis 17, 1-19.

¹¹⁵Clement Strom. V. 104, iii.

¹¹⁶Plutarch de E. 8, 388d.

Zoroastrians believed that fire was the essence of life. For both, it did not matter what form fire was in, it was always fire.

Heraclitus has come down to us as an enigma. He does not fit into early Greek thought. Later Greek philosophers thought of him as stuck up, and not liking common people.¹¹⁷ The strong religious elements in Heraclitus' philosophy made him appear haughty. He believed in one supreme God. But Heraclitus believed that only God could truly understand.¹¹⁸ Humans could never be as wise as God. Heraclitus' god was true wisdom:

That which is wise is one; it is willing and unwilling to be called by the name of Zeus.¹¹⁹

That which is wise is one: to understand the purpose which steers all things through all things.¹²⁰

Ahura Mazda was also constantly invoked as the Lord of Wisdom¹²¹ and knowledge.¹²²

Ahura Mazda could not be deceived, because he saw and knew all things.¹²³

As an Ephesian, Heraclitus was born into a culture that was politically dominated by Iranian culture due to Persian control of Ionia. Thus, Zoroastrian ideas were more accessible than in previous generations. Logos, the harmony of opposites, and fire were

¹¹⁷Diogenes Laertius. XI, 1.

¹¹⁸Freeman, Fr. 78, p 29. "Human nature has no power of understanding, but the divine nature has it."

¹¹⁹Clement Strom. V. 115, 1.

¹²⁰Diogenes Laertius. IX, 1.

¹²¹Yasna 30, 1.

¹²²Yasna 45. 3.

¹²³Yasna 45. 4.

Heraclitus' most important concepts. Similarly, important concepts in Zoroastrianism were aša, a cosmic and ethical dualism, and fire. The similarities between these concepts are striking and offer a better explanation of where Heraclitus got his ideas than to say that he came by them independently.

Conclusion

A Near Eastern concept and structure of the universe substantially influenced Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, and Heraclitus. This scheme of the universe came from Near Eastern religion. Religious ideas from all over the Near East were influential, but the prominent influences were from Zoroastrianism and the Hebrews. These two religious influences show that ideas were transmitted to Ionia via land and sea. Zoroastrianism came across the Anatolian plains, while Hebrew concepts were brought to Ionia by Aegean trade. Moreover, whether from the sea or land, contact with the Near East was not sporadic. For over a hundred years, from Thales to Heraclitus, Near Eastern religion was a steady and important influence. Such steady influence came from an abiding intellectual contact with Near Eastern religious ideas, which will be the topic of the next three chapters.

CHAPTER 3

THE IVORY BRIDGE

As Greece emerged out of the Dark Ages, it was closely tied into a broader Aegean economy and culture. An example is the ivory trade of the Archaic period, when Greeks began to give carved ivory figures as gifts to gods and priests. Ivory figures, carved in a northern Levantine (Syrian) style and using Near Eastern religious symbolism, became an intimate part of Greek religious ritual. This is not really surprising: at the turn of the millennium ivory carving was a Levantine speciality. Ivory carving had been a Near Eastern art form and tradition since the 4th millennium B.C.E. In the Near East, ivory was used to depict religious scenes. Carved ivory had a close relationship with religion in the Near East as well as in Greece. The Greeks' intimate use of ivory carvings in ritual indicates that stylistically they felt comfortable with the figures. Most important, Greeks understood the Near Eastern religious symbolism of the figures. Moreover, the religious nature of the Aegean ivory trade meant that ivory carvers had a religious knowledge of both Near Eastern and Greek culture, allowing them to transfer religious ideas from east to west. The ivory carvings of the Archaic period are thus material evidence of a transmission of ideas from the Near East to Greece.

Ivory carvers traveled from one of the coastal trading towns of the Levant, where they could get easy access to raw ivory, and the religious centers of the Aegean.

Philostratus' tale about Apollonius of Tyana, a sophist of the early Roman Empire, gives us a vivid image of what the ivory carver's craft must have been like. Apollonius was in Thrace trying to find a ship sailing to Ionia. The captain of a ship bound for Ionia could not take him, because his was only a cargo ship. Apollonius asked what he was carrying, and was told the ship carried statues of gods in stone, gold and ivory. Apollonius lost his temper when the captain would not bargain with him. He told the captain:

Are you so ignorant as to drive away philosophers from your ship, men whom the gods have a special fondness for, and above all at a time when you are making business out of the gods? This is not the way they made statues in the olden times. They did not canvas the cities selling them the gods. They used to carry nothing but their own hands, their mason and ivory working tools; provided the raw materials and fashioned the works of art in the temples themselves.¹

Apollonius' description of the ivory trade in the "olden times" exactly fits the Archaic period.

In the Near East ivory was a luxury good, prized for its decorative qualities. Ivory carving was an art form that used the standard motifs and forms of the Orient. Many of these motifs and forms involved Near Eastern religious symbolism. A female figure staring directly ahead, for example, indicates the figure is of a goddess,² a tree with its branches spreading out represents the tree of life,³ a lion is connected to the sun⁴ and a

¹Philostratus Life of Apollonius. V, 20.

²R. D. Barnett, A catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories. (Publications of the British Museum, 1975.), 78.

³Janice L. Crowley, The Aegean and the East: An Investigation into the Transference of Artistic Motifs Between the Aegean, Egypt, and the Near East in the Bronze Age. (Jonsered, 1982.), 43.

⁴Ibid. 82.

bull to the moon.⁵ In Greek culture ivories were also luxury goods, but their symbolic potency was stronger than in the Near East. Ivory figures were part of the religious ritual - they were given as religious gifts.

To understand ivory figures fully we have to examine why they were given and what purpose they served. Ivory figures were gifts presented and displayed at temples and shrines. So, first, we must look at what role gifts played in Greek religion and society. The majority of ivory figures found throughout Archaic Greece are representations of priests and deities. The Greeks used a system of religious reciprocity that was part of a wider cultural practice.

On a bronze statue of Apollo (700), we have an inscription which states:

Mantiklos [the name of the seer] has dedicated me to the far shooting god with the silver bow, from the tenth of his profit; you Phiobos, give pleasing return.⁶

This inscription shows that the relationship between a god and his worshiper was played out through an exchange of gifts. A deity was presented a gift, which was displayed in the sanctuary/temple, so it could be seen. In return, the worshiper sought the deity's favor. Furthermore, the gift was an important part of Archaic Greek society. In the Odyssey Athena visits Telemachus as a friend from his father's time. The disguised Athena tells Telemachus he should choose a nice gift for her because "it will be worth recompense for you."⁷ Gift giving established and maintained relationships, whether it was between men,

⁵Ibid. 72.

⁶L. H. Jeffery, The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece. (Oxford. Rev. ed., 1990.), 90.

⁷Homer Odyssey. I, 187.

or man and a deity. As gifts became more precious, the expectation and obligation between the two parties increased.

Plato also saw reciprocity between god and man. In Euthypro and Symposium Plato's definition of piety is "sacrifice and prayer."⁸ The religious exchange consisted of prayers and sacrifice from the worshiper to the god, who, in return, was expected to guide and view the worshiper favorably. Reciprocity was at the core of Archaic Greek society and religion. This is what Marcel Mauss calls total prestations:

what they exchange is not exclusively goods and wealth, real and personal property, and things of economic value. They exchange rather courtesies, entertainments, ritual, military assistance, women, children, dances, and feasts; and fairs in which the market is but one element and the circulation of wealth but one part of a wide and enduring contract. Finally, although the prestations and counter-prestations take place under a voluntary guise they are in essence strictly obligatory. . .⁹

When Mauss states that "in essence" the gift and the counter gift are "strictly obligatory" he is telling us that such obligations ran deep into the fabric of society. In the society and religion of Archaic Greece such obligations were strictly adhered to.

Yet ivory carved into human figures held a sacred quality that was more symbolically powerful than other gifts. Greeks used ivory to symbolize human flesh. Such symbolism arose because ivory's origins were mysterious and marginal. Greeks did not know the true origins of ivory until the 5th century.¹⁰ In The Odyssey, Homer warns of

⁸Plato Euthypro. 14ce; Symposium. 202e.

⁹Marcel Mauss, "Gifts and Return Gifts." From Bohannon, P. & Glazer, Mark. Eds. High Points in Anthropology. (Mcgraw-Hill, Inc., 1988), 267.

¹⁰R. D. Barnett, Ancient Ivories in the Middle East and Adjacent Areas. Quedem 14. (Jerusalem, 1982.), 43.

