history that quickly followed.

GOLDEN AGE OF ATHENS

With the victory at Plataea the threat of Persian invasion ended, but the feeling that the Persians might try again did not. In preparation for this possibility the Greek city-states decided to act in unity. In 478 B.C. the Delian League was formed, with Athens as its leader. (It is significant that Sparta, which had been the leader of the earlier Peloponnesian League, did not join this new confederation, being reluctant--for reasons previously noted--to commit its now depleted forces so far from home.) The members of the new league were to meet each year to make policy decisions and were to contribute money and ships according to their abilities, with the treasury to be kept at the shrine on Delos. Aristioles, an Athenian, was placed in charge of assessing dues of each city-state, and Cimon, also an Athenian, was placed in command of the fleet. Both acted with admirable restraint, and the fleet was successful during the next ten years in freeing all of the Greek city-states in Asia Minor.

The Athenians, however, soon saw an opportunity to turn the confederacy to its own commercial advantage. Members of the Delian League were not allowed to withdraw, and additional city-states were forced to join. In pursuit of personal goals Athens used territories gained by the league to establish new colonies, and Athenian commercial interests soared. This imperialism reached its height during the administration of Pericles, who became leader of Athens in 461 B.C. In 454 B.C. Athens capped its policy by moving the league's treasury from Delos to Athens.

Although the connections between commercial activity, imperial expansion, and intellectual production are complex and seldom direct, it is clear that Athens' rapidly soaring wealth did much to contribute to the Golden Age. The thirty years of Pericles' leadership was a time of enthusiastic patronage of the arts. Attracted by Athenian power and wealth, sculptors, poets, architects, and others gathered in the city, and trades such as metal-working, shipbuilding, and pottery making flourished. Athenian exports, protected by a strong fleet, spread throughout the Aegean, and Athens was able to dominate much of the commerce of its day. In the heyday of its power, Athens could truly claim to be "the education of Hellas."

Although such figures are based on conjecture, the population of Athens at this time is estimated at about 400,000, which included a slave population of over 100,000. Prosperity gave Athens an opportunity to offer a Greek-style "Great Society" to its citizens--garbage pick-up, free theatre tickets, and night watchmen were recent innovations. In return, the city demanded active participation by its citizens, who were expected to attend meetings of the assembly and to serve on the jury or in public office if called upon. The government of Athens operated as a democracy (for some) with three main bodies: the popular assembly, the

Council of Five Hundred, and the popular court--the *Heliaea*. The assembly was the final authority of the state; it could make laws and even depose leaders. Popular government decided issues of food distribution, administration of finance, and foreign policy; and the citizen of Athens could well believe that he occupied a favored place in the eyes of the gods. But was the Great Society a Good Society?

The subject states benefited from Athenian domination in many ways and shared in the fruits of increased commerce and prosperity (almost a case of "What's good for General Motors" etc.). But envy and hatred of Athens grew because it usurped a most valuable privilege, political independence. In a very real sense, the benevolent despotism of Athens yielded material benefits to those who acquiesed to domination, but fear and a desire to end their limited autonomy caused a number of city-states to revolt. In 431 B.C. Sparta and Corinth, joined by a number of city-states led an attack on Athens. The prolonged series of civil wars that followed is known as the Peloponnesian War. Our chief source for this chain of events is Thucydides, who writes:

> *The Peloponnesian War was a protracted struggle and attended by calamities such as Hellas had never known within a like period of time. Never were so many cities captured and depopulated. . . . Never were exile and slaughter more frequent, whether in the war or brought about by civil strife. . . . The real unavowed cause I believe to have been the growth of Athenian power, which terrified the [other city-states] . . . and forced them into war.*

For ten years Athens refused to engage the strong Spartan army and moved the population of Attica inside the city walls. In the meantime the Athenian fleet harassed the shores of the Peloponnesus. But a serious problem arose when a plague decimated the population of Athens; Pericles himself died of the plague in 429 B.C.

In 421 B.C. a truce was signed between Sparta and Athens, and an uneasy peace lasted until 415 B.C. At that time Athens was persuaded by Alcibiades to send an expeditionary force against Syracuse in Sicily. The endeavor ended in disaster and caused the Spartan leader, Lysander, to ally himself with Persia. At last Persia's time had arrived! In 404 B.C. Athens surrendered, was forced to destroy its fleet, and suffered the loss of all foreign possessions. As a final insult, it was placed under the control of Sparta.

The Peloponnesian War left a legacy of hatred as well as other problems. Trade was badly disrupted by the war; class struggles became serious; and democratic governments were often replaced by oligarchies. (We living through the 1960's do not need to be reminded that war has a tendency to accelerate social trends.) Resentment against Sparta grew, and in 371 B.C. the Theban leader, Epaminondas, defeated Sparta in a single battle. Continuous warfare seriously weakened Greece, and this fact was not wasted on Philip II, the king of Macedon.

In a short period of time, and taking advantage of the disunity among the Greek city-states, Philip insinuated himself into the political life of Greece. Aided by a well-equipped and disciplined army, the father of Alexander the Great was able to impose, from beyond and above, that unity which the Greeks had been unable to attain for themselves. The final blow was delivered at the battle of Chaeronea in 338 B.C. when the forces led by Athens were soundly defeated. With this event the focus of attention shifts away from Greece, and the glory of the Golden Age became a disembodied spirit destined to wander like a dream lost in the light of a new day.

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PHILOSOPHY - RELIGION

The emergence of philosophy from the earlier stages of mythology and religion occurs in the person and views of a man by the name of Thales, who lived about 600 B.C. The identification of Thales as the father of Western philosophy does not mean that people had not philosophized before his time, but rather that philosophy was from here on separated from the other forms of thought and established as an independent rational thought form. The transition is marked by the fact that Thales moved from the inner principle of soul as the explanation of the causes of natural events, through the development of this principle later into the idea of gods as natural immanent powers, and still later into gods as separate beings in charge of natural powers, to the principle of matter (a non-soul, non-power, non-god reality) as the explanation of the causes of natural events.

The older view (that held before Thales) essentially involved the idea of two kinds of reality--matter and anima (soul, "an inner power which animates or moves")--and thus we call it *dualism*, a two-thing-ism; while Thales' view is called *monism*, a one-thing-ism, because it held that there was only one kind of thing in the universe. This view held the attention and the allegiance of men from Thales to Plato, who introduced a new view around 400 B.C. While their views differed widely in numerous points, they all agreed that this one thing was matter, and that all things in nature and human beings were some form or quantity or motion of matter.

Thales held that all forms of matter were really different forms of water. It was a natural enough idea for a man making a new beginning. After all, water may be either fluid, vapor, or solid, and it changes from one to the other visibly: it springs up out of the ground and disappears into it; the air seems to become cloud and rain and wet fog, and standing water disappears into the air; nothing lives without it, everything dies without it.

It is quite important to observe that Thales presumed, as those before him did, that there was a single principle underlying all change. The difference was that he believed that the single principle causing all change was matter and not spirit, or soul, or anima--all roughly synonymous terms here. Both Thales and his predecessors also agreed that matter was the single underlying reality of all apparent differences in the natural world. Thales simply rejected the spiritual principle of cause for a material principle of cause. But this "simply" marks the end of one world and the birth of another. It was a crucial step forward in the history of both philosophy and science.

Anaximander (c. 611-547 B.C.) criticized Thales' view on the grounds

that one thing could not become many things, especially opposites like hot and cold, wet and dry, and so on. Yet he too held that there must be just one thing; after all it was not a multi-verse but a uni-verse. He proposed that because of the problem of change, the one thing would have to be of an indefinite rather than a definite nature. This one thing he called the Boundless--one thing, but nothing in particular. It became particular things like water, he said, by a principle of "bound," or limit, which was a sort of circular motion, an eddy in the Boundless. The whole thing, he believed, was governed by a natural necessity, and as all things were spun out of the Boundless, so all things returned to it. It was this process that developed the evolution of natural species with the human creature beginning as a fish. It was this process that explained all change, including growth and decay, all thought and feeling, all natural phenomena and all volition and so on.

Anaximenes (c. 550 B.C.) agreed that reality was one thing but thought it was air rather than water. After all, it did appear to the senses that combustible matter changed to fire, which was much more "airy" than wood for example, and fire seemed to dissolve into air. Water as rain and fog and snow also seemed to be distilled out of air and disappear into it. He rejected Anaximander's view because the Boundless really had no meaning in our experience and only made the problem of how one thing becomes many more obscure and vague. But the problem of change remained, and Anaximenes addressed himself to the problem of "becoming." How did one thing become another? How did water, iron, other earth chemicals, sunlight, and air become, each with its separate identity, something like grass? He seems to have approached the later Greek idea, which was the same as our modern idea in primitive form, that changes in "quality" were due to changes in quantity. In the modern view we say that if we add or subtract electrons, etc. to or from atoms, we change the quality of it. It seemed obvious that there was a great deal more hot air released from burning wood than there was wood, so that perhaps wood was compressed air, and the difference in quality between wood and fire was a difference in the quantity or number of air atoms in each.

Heraclitus (c. 500 B.C.) also agreed that there must be only one thing but thought it must be fire. He probably chose fire because, for instance, it is the difference of heat in water that determines whether it is solid (ice) or liquid or vapor. But what interested Heraclitus most was not the one-thingness of fire but the cosmic order of change. Heraclitus observed that hot air, fire, and smoke rose, and that ashes and cold air fell, which suggested to him that all things changed because of a natural principle of change which involved the upward and downward motions of fire atoms. This upward and downward motion was a sort of strife between opposites and thus all things came and went, and the principle of this eternal natural motion causing all change he called "logos." In religion he seems to have held that this logos which produced all things was itself god.

Parmenides (c. 500 B.C.) saw the central problem of change as a sensory illusion that trapped the mind into the same illusion. To prove this, Parmenides argued as follows: Whatever is, is uncreated, that is, eternal.

If it were not, it would have been created out of nothing, which is impossible because nothing is..nothing, and cannot become something; or it was created out of something different from itself, which could not be if there were only one thing; and if it were created out of something other than itself, we are back to the same problem of how one thing becomes another, other than itself. Furthermore, whatever is, is indestructible because if there is only one thing, then it cannot disappear into nothing but only into something else, which brings us back to the same problem of how one thing becomes another--which seems to be logically impossible. Therefore, the one thing is eternal because uncreated and indestructible. Therefore, there is no change, and all appearance of change is illusory.

Zeno, Parmenides' pupil, argued further that motion, change, was impossible because if Achilles were to give a turtle a head start in a race he could never, in fact, overtake the turtle because space was infinitely divisible; so that to overtake the turtle, Achilles would first have to cover half the distance, and then the first half of that half, and then the first half of that, and so on ad infinitum, and thus never arrive at, let alone traverse, any second half of any distance.

This is obviously in conflict with common sense, and the monists were, of course, well aware of it. The choice seemed to be between the testimony of the senses and reason, and they chose to stay with reason because our senses certainly can easily be shown to be mistaken in many matters and because, while reason can be shown at times also to be in error, it is also by reason that we correct both the faulty report of the senses and the faults of reason itself. Besides this, good reasoning carries with it a kind of compulsion that is very difficult to deny. They came to believe, what is still believed when we use reason in mathematics and logic to discover what physical reality is like and how it works, that whatever exists is knowable by the mind and that whatever is rational is real, if we can just learn to reason about it properly; and that reason, in the long run, is more dependable than sensation. It is this dependence on reason as the key to our knowledge of reality that comes to be known as "rationalism."

Because the conclusions of Parmenides and Zeno were quite unacceptable, people were forced to abandon the presupposition upon which the reasoning was founded--the presupposition that there was only one thing. This must have been a mistake, they thought. Thus men turned to pluralism--the view that there is more than one thing.

Empedocles (c. 490-435 B.C.) thought he saw a way out of the difficulty. If it were true that there was no such thing as "nothing," then there was no emptiness, no "space" anywhere, and if there were only one thing literally, then there could be no motion, to be sure. But suppose the "fulness without space or emptiness" were many and not one, then the many could move by changing places. He, therefore, proposed the idea that there were really four kinds of reality rather than one--earth, air, fire, and water--each of them eternal and unchanging in themselves. Motion then was possible, and it was caused, he suggested, by love or attraction, which

drew things together, and by strife, which drove things apart. (Compare this with our idea of positive and negative poles of electricity.) So maybe we had four things and two forces, and the objects of our daily experience were mixtures of these things. He thought that perhaps there was no principle governing how these two forces worked, so that any combination might occur and all things then were what they were by accident.

God, he said, was a cosmic mind having no parts, like the Homeric gods, but "flashing through the whole world with rapid thoughts." How God related to this cosmic natural process, he did not say, so far as we know.

Anaxagoras (c. 500-428 B.C.) began where Empedocles left off, but he saw that the difficulty of the monists--how one thing became many--was still there for the pluralists--how four things became many, the multitude of things we saw and touched. His solution was to posit an infinite variety of "seeds," all qualitatively different--flesh, bone, hair, turnip, granite, spinach, etc.--which mixed together to make things, and we recognized them by the quality of whatever seeds were dominant in any one thing. In place of Empedocles' love and strife as the principle of order and motion, Anaxagoras substituted "mind," which was perhaps borrowed from Empedocles' idea of God as mind flashing through the whole world. But apparently mind was thought of as another kind of matter, capable of causing a kind of whirlpool that separated and combined the other stuffs from the mix of the seeds.

While all this was going on, there had emerged in the seventh century what are called the mystery religions, which we discussed in an earlier unit. The chief reason for their emergence, we saw, was the failure of the Homeric religion. The gods had become reduced to human-like characters who could do little for people and who were removed from being themselves the nature-forces that had been the gods of earlier people. In the Homeric gods the dynamic realities of nature and people's sense of being deeply and intimately involved with these powers were gone. On the other hand, the new philosophies that we have been discussing were also undermining the religious view and experience and, in any case, the masses were incapable of understanding them. And beyond all this was the general disintegration of the culture, especially its moral decay.

Pythagoras (c. 600 B.C., a contemporary of Thales) and his disciples had been quite interested in the mystery religions and became greatly concerned about the development of the spiritual life. The Pythagoreans are important for their study of mathematics and their making mathematical order a key to the nature of reality. They are also important because they believed that mathematical science was related to the development of the life of the spirit, because they related mathematics to the ordering principle of mind. Implicit in this is the idea that if mathematics were a rational function and if all reality were organized in terms of mathematical order, then it would seem to suggest that the ordering principle of reality was a cosmic mind. If the physical universe were mathematical, it was intelligible and, perhaps, intelligent.

This view led to important advances in astronomy and cosmology, where

the Pythagoreans held that the earth was a sphere and that the earth, the other planets, and the sun all revolved on axes and orbited around a central fire. But, otherwise, they had trouble applying their theory of the combination of the Unlimited (Boundless) and Limit, somewhat like Anaximander and Anaximenes.

The Sophists were the opposites of the Pythagoreans. They were skeptics and teachers of skepticism. The new rich who had developed out of the expanded economic frontiers of the Greek colonies were now able to afford education for their sons, and the new democratic values of the vulgar made public oratory--the expertise of the Sophists--a necessary skill. The old virtues of courage, loyalty, honor, and moderation gave way to the new techniques of success. The confusion of values in economics and politics was enlarged by the obvious diversity of law and custom that the Greeks discovered in their travels and by the conflicts in numerous scientific-philosophical theories that were being offered. All such matters compounded to produce a widely held belief that all things were relative, that no truth was objectively determinable. It was these new publics and these new views which made a place for the Sophist-teachers and which they exemplified.

It was the kind of confusion which led to Protagoras' (c. 480-411 B.C.) famous view that "Man is the measure of all things," by which he meant the individual person. The babel of voices and the unsolved philosophical problems indeed seemed to leave people little choice but to accept the subjectivity of the senses as the ultimate criterion of truth and reality. Everything seemed to be as Heraclitus had said, in an eternal flux. Every object was constantly changing as things grew and decayed. Even the momentary changes that were infinitesimal were real. The observer and the organs of observation also were constantly changing. Nothing, then, was ever actually the same and, hence, it could never be actually perceived as the same. Reality, then, was only the single moment of reality, and truth was held to be only the single moment of observation--and only the single and individual experience of observation. Protagoras thought that the implication of this was that people should abide by law and custom because they gave the individual a cohesion which made society possible.

The trouble with this view was--and still is--not merely that it left people with no possibility of objective truth or reality, but it really called in question the authority of law and custom. By the same view that led Protagoras to hold to law and custom because to do so was expedient, other people were led to disregard them because they were only expediences, and there was in the view, then, no real "right" or "justice." The rule of life for all people, therefore, was to serve their own interests with as much vigor and skill as they were capable of or cared to exert. Their truth, it was believed, was the only truth they could know and be loyal to. (This view is classically set forth in Plato's *Georgias* in the mouth of Callicles and in his *Republic* in the argument of Thrasymachus.)

Returning to the question of substance and change in the universe, we find that the view that there were several or many different substances

came finally to take classic form in what is called atomism. Chief among the ancient atomists were Democritus (c. 460-360 B.C.) and Lucretius (95-52 B.C.). By the time of Democritus it had been pretty well established and accepted that there was a fundamental difference between sensory knowledge and common sense beliefs on the one hand and knowledge attained by reason on the other hand. Knowledge achieved by reason--that is, by logic--had the advantage of achieving a kind of objectivity, free from the traps of sensation, and so of yielding genuine knowledge of the real world.

Democritus held that the universe was made up of material atoms in space, whirling in a great vortex that mechanically caused all things to be what they were. As all things were mechanically determined, everything was what it was by necessity, that is, without any possibility of its being anything else or any other way. Atoms, he said, were of all sizes and infinite in number, solid (indivisible), impassive (without sensation), and unalterable.

According to Democritus, the rational mind was also made up of atoms. (The word *atom* literally meant "not capable of being cut.") While these atoms varied infinitely in shape and size, he said, they were all of the same quality, and differences of quality that appeared to the senses came about by the differences in the combinations and motions of the atoms. He thus overcame the problem of motion by holding, in effect, that space as well as matter was a "something" and so escaped the logic of Parmenides and Zeno.

Democritus gave the following classic formulation of the view of materialistic atomism, which still has force for our modern materialism, though of course not having the sophistication of modern science:

1. All change in quality is due to change in quantity.
2. All change in quantity is due to motion in space.
3. All motion in space is due to antecedent, mechanical, physical motion.

Some three hundred years after Democritus, Lucretius, a poet of the first century B.C., spelled out the principles of this view in his classic poem "On the Nature of Things." As stated by Lucretius the principles were:

1. Nothing ever comes from nothing, not even by divine power.
2. Nothing is ever reduced into nothing.
3. If it were not so, things would suddenly appear out of nothing and disappear into nothing. Figs would appear on thistles and grapes on thorns; noses would appear on knees and fingers on the back of the head.
4. There is a void in things; i.e., there is empty space. Things obviously move and to move, they must have space.
5. Space is infinite. If it were bounded, it would have to be bounded by something, and that something would have to occupy more space and so on. No limit can be thought.

6. Atoms exist, infinite in number, very small and indivisible. Such plurality is necessary because without it there could be no motion. There must be an infinite number because space is infinite, and any finite number of atoms would get lost and the chances of their combining to form things would be infinitely small; whereas, obviously, things do exist and in great numbers. Atoms must be very small because we feel the wind and smell the fragrance of flowers but cannot see either, They are indivisible simply because it is unthinkable that they should be infinitely divisible, which was what Zeno really proved even while he thought he was proving motion impossible.

On such ideas atomists were in substantial agreement, but how the motion got started in the first place was quite a different matter. Democritus seems to have held that motion was also as eternal as the atoms, perhaps for the reason that it seemed impossible to explain it as ever having had a beginning or being caused. In the case of a cause of motion, the question would remain: How did the cause, cause motion? If it were in motion itself and so caused motion, how did its motion originate? If it were not in motion, how could it cause other motion?

Epicurus (342-270 B.C.) still felt it necessary to explain motion. It was obvious to common sense that anything not otherwise interfered with or restrained fell straight down by virtue of its own "weight." This, said Epicurus, was the original nature of all motion. Atoms became "things," he thought, by colliding with each other as they fell, or some of them seemed to possess a spontaneity by which they would swerve from their downward fall in a straight line, and so collide with other atoms causing still other collisions, and so on. Such swerving atoms Epicurus introduced also to explain our feeling of freedom in choice and action.

As to how things came to have qualities such as color, smell, temperature, etc., Epicurus (and all the rest of the atomists) had difficulty explaining. Atoms, he said, had no qualities in themselves. If they did, the qualities would remain constant, which they did not. Qualities were then accidents of collections of atoms without being first in the atoms. How this could happen he would not explain. The explanation, such as it was, seems to have been drawn from common sense rather than reason. The color of any one thing changes as the light changes, and as the seasons change, and some objects have one fragrance and others a different one, and some have none.

Democritus and others, on the other hand, had earlier made the distinction between things in themselves and things as perceived by us and pointed out that sensory qualities, such as color and fragrance, were functions of our nervous systems and not of things in themselves. Important as this distinction was, we should observe that it really only moved the problem from outside of us to inside us, where the Sophists said it was. The problem remained: How did sensations of color, etc. arise if there were no difference between the atoms in themselves and the atoms in our nerves and sensory organs and if there were no sense quality in the

atoms themselves? While difficulties like this one remained, philosophy was, however, committed to the possibility of objective knowledge by the use of reason.

All of the foregoing unavoidably required some attention to the problem of the nature of thought. If everything were material (non-thinking) atoms and their motions in space, how then did thought arise? How did atoms, bumping into each other and forming various configurations (even in such forms as the eye and the brain) become anything more than bumping atoms?

Lucretius held that the only difference between sensation and thought was that the atoms which caused sensation did so by impact on the sense organs, while the atoms which caused thought were finer and penetrated the body directly to the brain. Thought in this case was, then, merely the motions of the atoms of the brain caused by the motions of the invading atoms.

The chief difficulty with the theory surely is that it seems to explain nothing about thought at all (or sensation either) but only about atoms and their motions. Furthermore, if this is all thought is, why did they have to reason it out? And why did not anyone before Lucretius observe that it was so? The atomists might answer that it was never "thought" before because just those motions never occurred before. But this would appear strange because so many "sensory motions" and "thought motions" had been happening to millions of people through many thousands of years that we would expect the "thought" to have occurred before, espccially when it would have been the most immediate thought (motion) to the brain itself.

But, anyway, the thoughts that are sensory perceptions--perceptions, for instance, of motion (perceiving the cat run up the tree)--are not, surely, the perceptions of spatial motions by other spatial motions; we cannot give any meaning to the idea of a spatial motion "perceiving" a spatial motion. Thought surely is also, in some cases, the perception of logical relations rather than space motions. We may argue, e.g., as Lucretius is obviously arguing, that

All motion is material motion.
All thought is motion.
Therefore, all thought is material motion.

The argument is valid--if one accepts the premises as being true--but it is seen to be valid not by the observation of any physical motion but by the perception by the mind that the logical relationsof the terms to each other are such that if the premises are true, the conclusion would have to be true also. But because the mind's perception is here demonstrated to be a perception of logical relations of ideas and not a perception of matter or material motion, then at least one of these premises must be false, the "validity" of the conclusion irrelevant, and the argument as a whole unsound.

Still another phenomenon in nature which puzzled the ancients, as it still puzzles us somewhat, was the power of some bodies to move themselves, often to predetermined ends, i.e., to purposes and goals. This power we call "will" or "purpose." According to the atomists, this will was also the motion of atoms and there was no purpose, they said, of any kind in the universe--human or divine. On the surface of it, this view might seem plausible because will and purpose do commonly involve motion. But the difficulty was--and is--that this view of material mechanism required that the atom-motions, being purely physical, also be quite mechanical, and so they had to be precisely what they were and nothing else; i.e., there was no freedom or choice.

But people do, in fact, act on the belief that they are free to stand up or to sit down, to raise their hands or not to raise them, to speak or to keep silent as they choose, and that having chosen to do one thing, they still could have chosen to do the other. The atomist would reply that these experiences were nothing more than our experiences of the motions of the atoms and that the "choice" and the feeling of "freedom" were illusory. Democritus held to this view, but Epicurus turned to his theory of spontaneously swerving atoms, independent of all prior motions and causes and subject only to the will, thus again favoring the common sense view.

In the area of ethics and moral values, the Sophists held that all that was possible was the subjective awareness of the individual's own feelings and thoughts and that there was no way apart from this to know whether they were objectively right or wrong, good or bad, wise or foolish; my ideas, feelings, and values were right in the sense that they were mine. But they were held to be right in a much harder, more substantial and rational sense by some of the atomists. If we grant the premise that all reality is only matter in motion and that all motion is purely mechanical so that all motions in the universe are from time immemorial predetermined to be just what they are at any moment, it will follow with necessity that every moment of the motions of the universe is "right" in the sense that it cannot be any other than it is and thus, certainly, cannot be "wrong." But the difficulty with this argument is that when we speak of moral right and wrong, we are speaking of situations where there are alternative possibilities for action, one of which is willed into being, and such possibilities do not hold in a world like that of the atomists. All we really can say then, strictly speaking, in such a case is that the feelings, thoughts, and values of any individual experience at any moment are what they are and cannot be any other, and, therefore, there really is no right or wrong in the ordinary sense in which these words are used in our language. In this sense the atomists' view is quite different from the Sophists' view, because in such a mechanical system, the causes are objectively determined and are not subjective as the Sophists had held.

A further difficulty with the atomists' position, however, is that it puts reality in apparent contradiction with itself. According to the view, if the value experience of one individual objectively causes him to hold that lying or stealing is wrong, and the value experience of