

# PHL 203

# Theories of Reality

Prof. Borrowdale

# Week One

Log into Moodle by THURSDAY 3pm or you may be dropped

Pick up the text: **Theories of Reality, 5th Edition**

Edit your profile in Moodle

Read the syllabus

Read the “What is Truth?” Handout

Read Ch. 1

# Course Requirements

First Midterm Exam	30%
Second Midterm Exam	35%
Final Exam	35%

Multiple choice T/F

Taken in testing lab over a week (4 days for the Final)

# What is Truth?

See Handout in Moodle and Whiteboard  
Notes

# The History of Philosophy

## The Natural Philosophers

### Before Philosophy

- Mythos – Religion
- Ethnos – Culture

### Natural Philosophers/Pre-Socratics

- First "Scientists"
- Sought rational explanations for the workings of nature

# Mythos (Religious Explanation)



Why do the  
seasons  
change?

The Myth of  
Persephone

# Persephone Kidnapped by Hades



Joseph Heintz der Ältere, 1564-1609: Der Raub der Proserpina. Photo ©Maicar Förlag-GML

# Persephone Kidnapped (Bernini)





# Persephone Kidnapped

## Greek Vase Painting



# Persephone Kidnapped by Hades (Greek Relief Sculpture)



# Hades Makes His Getaway



# The Persephone Myth



- Hades kidnaps Persephone
- Takes her to the underworld
- Makes her his wife

# The Persephone Myth



G.L. Bernini 1621-22: Pluto raubt Proserpine. Photo ©Maicar Förlag-GML

- Demeter, the Earth Mother, searches for her daughter, discovers her fate
- She falls into deep depression

# The Persephone Myth



- Demeter neglects her work
- Plants die, nothing grows
- Her tears fill the earth
- Zeus has to intervene

# The Persephone Myth



- Zeus decrees Persephone spend part of the year with her mother
- Some versions involve technicality of Demeter eating pomegranate seeds

# Anaximander

## Rational Explanation

- No stories about gods
- Natural, impersonal forces
- Cold & Wet vs Hot & Dry forces seeking equilibrium
- Not factually correct but on the right track
- The right KIND of explanation



# Anaximander

Human evolution from more primitive form

Theories based on observation and rational inference

# Democritus

Atomism (atomos = unsplittable)

Materialism

Mechanistic world view

Element of Probability in Nature

# Anaxagoras

“The Sun is a rock and the earth a moon.”

Celestial bodies are not divine

They are made of the same stuff as terrestrial objects

# The Sophists (lit. “wise men”)

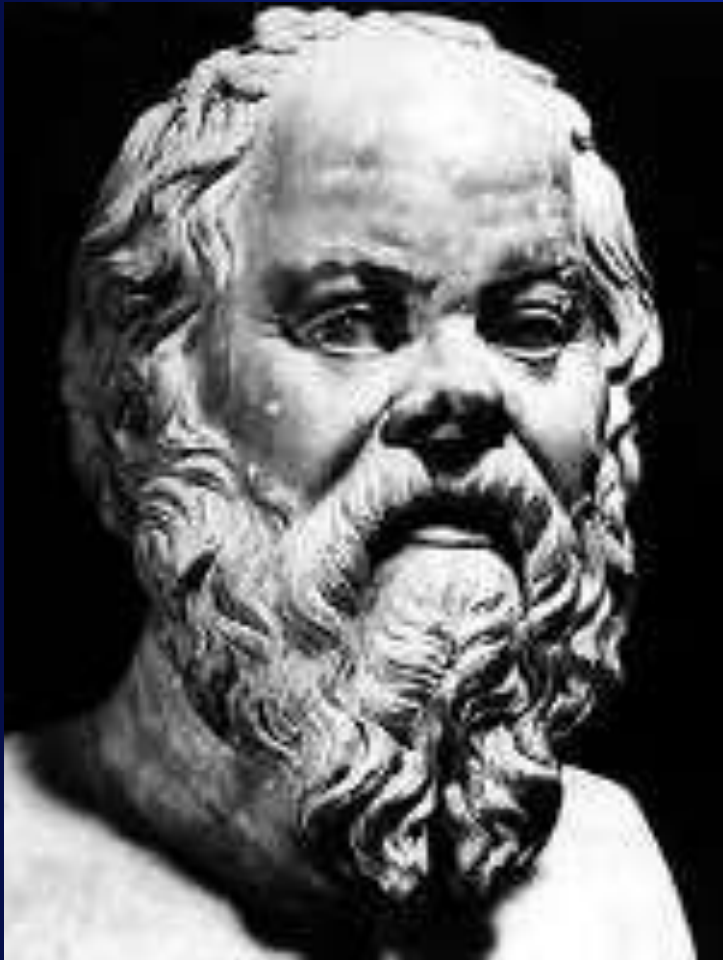
Teachers of argument and rhetoric for a fee

Reputation for trickery, subterfuge, low morals, opportunism

Said to “make the weaker argument defeat the stronger”

Prospered in Athenian lawsuit and politics obsessed culture

# Socrates



Combined the  
rational theory-  
building of  
natural  
philosophy with  
argumentative  
techniques of  
the Sophists

Father of  
Philosophy

# Socrates



Socrates wanted to understand the world *as a whole*, not just astronomy, biology, physics, etc.

Especially interested in virtue & knowledge

# Socrates

Put on Trial as an old man by 3  
ambitious young men

Prosecutors self-appointed: Antyus,  
Meletus, Lycon

The Apology (“Defense”)

- By Socrates student Plato
- Biased account

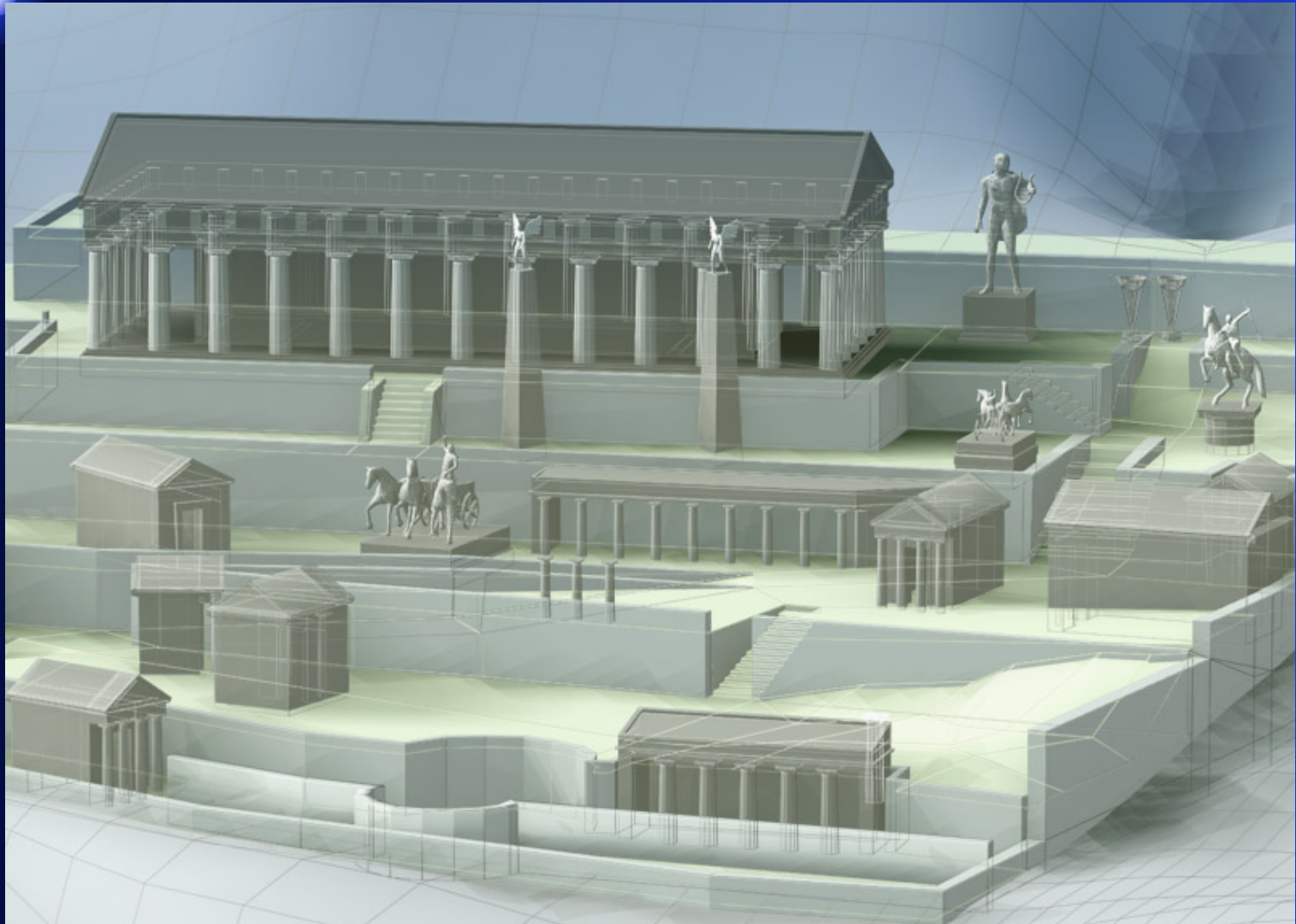
# Socrates

## Charges against Socrates

1. Irreligious Scientist
2. Subversive Sophist
3. Corrupting the Youth (main charge)
4. Religious Heretic



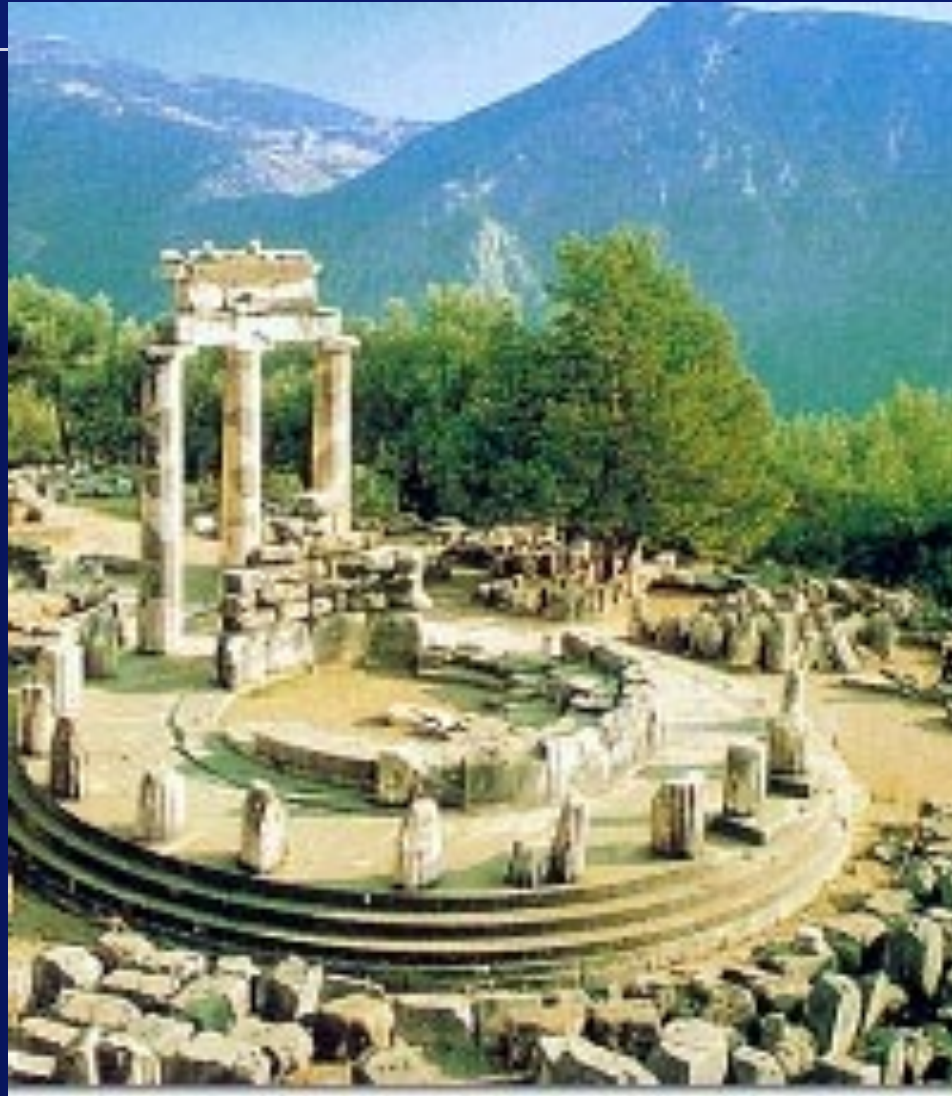
# Artist Conception of Delphi Complex in Socrates' Time



# Delphi Today



# Delphi Today



# The Oracle at Delphi



- “Pythian Priestess” of Apollo would speak under his inspiration
- Ancient Fortune-telling
- Visions caused by natural gas seeps

# Message from the Oracle



- Socrates friend Chaerephon asks the Oracle if there is anyone wiser than Socrates
- The Oracle answers “No one is wiser.”

# Message from the Oracle

Reaction to the Oracle's message

Quest for a wiser man leads to  
“corruption” of the youth and bad  
reputation

Socrates was on a mission from  
Apollo, had good intentions

# Heresy Charge

Doesn't answer directly

Little known about Socrates' positive religious views

Skeptical about traditional religion as were many intellectuals

Reductio ad absurdum argument

Reveals contradiction in charges

# Socrates Found Guilty

Old man, prefers death to banishment  
Practically dares the jury to give him  
the death penalty

Refuses to escape when given the  
chance

- Procedural justice vs. justice of outcome
- Social contract



# The Death of Socrates



# Socrates Sentenced to Death by Poisoning (Hemlock)

Death is either

- An endless sleep or
- A transition to a better life

Neither is bad, so fear of death is irrational.

False dilemma?

Is an endless sleep bad after all?

Argument picked up later by Epicurus

# Socrates' Legacy

Dialogues of Plato

Plato's Academy

Aristotle

The Examined Life

Epistemic Humility

The Quest for Truth

Socratic Method

Basic Branches of Philosophy

# Branches of Philosophy

Epistemology

Metaphysics

Ethics

Political & Social Philosophy

Logic

Aesthetics

History of Philosophy

Many subcategories