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Anaximander and the Architects

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Abstract

This essay is divided into several sections. In (B) I set out the problem of making a diagram or model of Anaximander's cosmos, then in (C) I outline the relevant fragments and testimony - for Anaximander's picture of the cosmos and its formation — from which a diagram or model might be constructed. Next, in (D) I invite the reader to reflect on the differences between plan and elevation perspectives: two ways of Imagining. In (D.1), evidence for plan and elevation perspectives in ancient Egyptian architecture is examined, and the contributing influence is considered; in (D.2) evidence for plan and elevation perspectives in archaic Greek architecture, focusing on the Ionian evidence, is then taken up. In (E), possible plan and elevation renderings of Anaximander's cosmos are displayed. And then, in (F), some reflections on the consequences of this project are briefly considered.

This study, as I have envisioned it, is not just about our ability to imagine ancient cosmological models but rather to see that the origins of Greek philosophical rationality cannot be properly understood independent of this cultural embeddedness. My project on Anaximander, of which this is a part, seeks to show that an understanding of western rationality requires us to think through the material world rather than abandon it, and any sense-knowledge of it. The material world, in all its cultural breadth, is indispensable to an understanding of ancient Greek philosophical rationality and to the rationality that we philosophers are seeking to grasp. Thus, the project is not just to understand cosmological models but to show a conception of philosophy in the context of model-making and the imagination it presupposes. For in the absence of adequate astronomical instruments or theories, Anaximander imagined a geometrically-modeled cosmos. The "rationality" that his model exhibited was one whose warp and woof were the fabric of his Ionian techno-culture.

Notes

Robert Hahn presented "Anaximander and the Architects" to the Society at its meeting with the American Philological Association in New Orleans in 1992. It became a part of his book *Anaximander and the Architects: The Contribution of Egyptian and Greek Architectural Technologies to the Origins of Greek Philosophy*, State University of New York Press, 2001.

For information about the author, see: <http://cola.siu.edu/philosophy/faculty-staff/faculty/hahn.php>

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Anaximander and the Architects: The Contributions of Egyptian and Greek Architectural Technologies to the Origins of Greek Philosophy (Suny Series in Ancient Greek Philosophy) by Robert Hahn. English. February 2004. ISBN: 0761473001. 200 pages. PDF. 1.00 MB. [View text and archaeological evidence to argue that ancient Egyptian and Greek architecture](#)

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