

Translation

EL PAIS CULTURAL (Uruguay) / No 831 – 7 October 2005

LIBROS DEL MUNDO – BOOKS OF THE WORLD

Laszlo Erdelyi

PYTHAGORAS and PARMENIDES. The first use of a weapon of mass destruction occurred in the year 510 B.C. between the pre-classical Greeks of the cities of Croton and Sybaris, in the south of Italy. The fanatic and anti-democratic Crotonians, under the control of the famous Pythagoras, attacked and destroyed the Sybarites, known for being one of the richest communities, magnificent, democratic (and lovers of good food) people of the world. Soon the Crotonians redirected the course of the river to totally flood the city of Sybaris, killing almost the entire population.

This is one of the most vibrant points of the book by Arnold Hermann on the philosophy of Pythagoras and Parmenides, entitled *The Illustrated To Think Like God* (Parmenides Publishing), a beautifully illustrated book that brings closer to the general public the debates that happened 2500 years ago among the ancient Greeks, those who gave the start to the discipline called Philosophy. Because these Greeks were intelligent and short-tempered, confronting myths and superstition, they went out into the streets to develop the science of logic, to popularize the use of reason. The idea was to cause the superior organs, the brain, to elaborate something more than foolish ideas. Now, the reader may ask himself what the flood has to do with philosophy.

Since more than ten years Hermann has investigated the connections between Pythagoras and Parmenides, dealing with the highest scholars and getting himself dusty with all the related archeological excavations. He wants to know how and why philosophy was born, the idea of men who like to think like God and to replace him step by step, trying to resolve questions about things such as death, life, human existence and other trifles.

After all he wrote three versions of the same book, two for scholars and the one here which addresses itself to the general public. With masterful skill

for writing simply about the complex, the book explains through his historical and biographical context why Pythagoras believed that the nature of all things was hidden in numerical relations while he went to the war in a brutal way. It also illustrates why Xenophanes believed that true knowledge was out of reach for mortals and why the great Parmenides made the light, questioning this affirmation by Xenophanes, saying that true philosophy must base itself in on tests rather than on exclamations, an approach that made him into the father of theoretical science.

In all this there were wars, deaths, treasons, ambitions, the human life in all its expression. There were also the famous philosophical debates soaked in this reality, not separate from it. Because the classical and pre-classical Greeks were also beings of flesh and bone.

END