A general overview of our topic:

Some Terminology:
- Chaos: being without order (from the Greek *khaos* meaning abyss or void)
- Cosmos: ordered being (from the Greek *kosmos* meaning an orderly arrangement; also, adornment – cf. ‘cosmetic’, which shares this root)
- *Logos* (pl. *logoi*): literally, “the word” – an account or theory or concept or idea or reason (from the Greek *logos* of the same meaning)
- Thus, cosmology: the word of ordered being – i.e., the study or pursuit of the principles defining order in the universe (if any)
- *Arche* (pl. *archia*): principle – i.e., a relatively general or powerful idea, especially as expressing or conferring order in or on a thing

Human being is perhaps most remarkable for the logical form of order it brings to the universe. Humans use *words* – *logoi* – to shape their world. Without words, the world we confront is largely “mute” – without meaning, i.e., a chaos.

Other beings exert some form of order on the universe: ants, for example, excavate elaborate passages under ground in which to live; mammals of various sorts mark territory with scent. All life forms bring some kind of order to the universe. There may be other principles of order at play in our universe, deriving from no living thing. (E.g., physical law.)

Human being is remarkable for both the power and nature of its characteristic organizational methods, which are generally linguistic and rational – in a word, “logical”, which literally means of or pertaining to the word (*logos*).

What is distinctive about the Pre-Socratic philosophical era is the striking advance in the power of *logoi* employed in cosmology. The Pre-Socratics developed a *rational* and *naturalistic* method of cosmology, a method of thought that marks the beginning of the Western intellectual tradition. Science, or more broadly, philosophy, in other words, begins here. These developments gained fullest expression in the works of the great philosophers, Plato and Aristotle.

Prior to this period, in the West, cosmology was primarily anthropomorphic and supernaturalistic and, notably, only *implicit* in the culture’s religious thought, not that form of thought’s primary purpose. Hesiod’s *Theogony* provides an apt illustration of this form of thought, which tends also to be dogmatic and arbitrary, where cosmology is concerned.

A primary question, faced by both the ancient Greeks and us, is the extent to which our universe is a cosmos as opposed to a chaos. A range of theoretical possibilities is defined by the limits of complete chaos, on the one hand, and complete, maximal order, on the other.