ANAXAGORAS (C. 500-428 BCE)

Anaxagoras of Clazomenae gave Athens the gift of philosophy—

He stayed on for thirty years and won the gratitude of Pericles.

Many great philosophers would in Athens come and go

But Anaxagoras wins the prize for being the first one in the know.

Euripides derived from him a love for science and humanity—

Without the coming of Anaxagoras to Athens what would we now be?

As long as Pericles was in power Anaxagoras was left alone to think--

But when Pericles fell from favour things went from good to bad within a wink.

He was prosecuted for treason and impiety—

And to save himself from being killed he thought it best to flee.

He fled to Lampsacus on the Hellespont—

Where he lived in honorable exile and never suffered want.

He got in trouble in Athens for saying the Sun was a rock of fire—

That didn't sit well with the priests who wrapped the Sun in divine attire.

He worked out a cosmology where in the beginning all was one and mixed together—

Infinite in number and infinite in smallness—and everything lay under ether and air.

The along came Mind—had he called Nous—and the primeval pebble began to rotate.

Faster and faster grew the rotation until force became so great—

That this Big Bang flung out the sun and moon and stars that rule our fate.

Every thing is not just what it is—it contains little bits of every other thing—

The dominant element makes it what it is—but in an apple are atoms of a wing!

We are but one of an infinite number of other worlds that were formed in the same way—

When Giordano Bruno said the same thing they burnt him at the stake—they thought that was OK.

Astronomers are now looking for intelligent life on other planets in our galaxy—

If Anaxagoras were alive today he'd watch with bated breath the news from SETI.

To say a little more about what set things going at the first—

Anaxagoras says it was Mind or Nous that caused the cosmic burst.