* In the center Plato (#1), holding the Timaeus and pointing to the heavens, speaks with Aristotle
* (#2), holding the Ethics and gesturing towards the earth. They are framed by the triumphal arch above as well as by barrel vaults and sky; they are also surrounded by the largest number of people
* (#3-10, 52-56). In addition,
* #11 is ascending the stairs, leaving the geometers and astronomers below, while
* #12 points out Plato and Aristotle to him. Figure
* #13 is intently writing while a friend
* (#14) looks on in interest. At the far right, others are coming in, the younger two
* (#17 and 18) looking curiously at those below. The old man
* (#16) is eagerly moving in a different direction, apparently towards Plato and Aristotle. Above the thoughtful old man
* (#15) who gestures downward like Aristotle, is the statue of Athena, goddess of wisdom, crafts, and war. She is dressed in military garb and on her shield is the terrifying face of the Gorgon. Below her is a relief of Virtue elevated upon clouds, holding one hand at her breast, the seat of valor, while extending the other toward the earth with the scepter of her empire.
* In the lower right-hand corner are the groups surrounding Euclid (#23)
* and the crowned figure of Ptolemy (#21).
* Euclid has the features of Raphael’s great mentor Donato Bramante who, as architect of St. Peter’s (suggested by the vaulted ceilings of this noble edifice), was a master of geometric principles as seen in the design of his buildings.
* The four students around Euclid depict four stages of learning:
* #26 is intent but at the level of literal learning, and
* #27, with his pointing finger and encouraging pat seems to be an apprentice teacher;
* #25 is turning to his companion with the excitement of dawning comprehension,
* but #24 is already anticipating the outcome. These figures are all focused upon a slate with a diagram, drawing attention to the faculty of sight, which is also used by the astronomers who hold globes in their hands:
* Ptolemy holds an earthly globe and Zoroaster holds a globe of the starry universe.
* Raphael has placed himself (#19)
* among these champions of sight, and next to him is his teacher Perugino (#20). Isolated on the steps in the middle,
* Diogenes the Cynic (#28) is absorbed in his reading, with a beggar’s cup in front.
* Below and to his left is the somewhat glum and antisocial Heraclitus (#29), who has the face of Michelangelo.
* Socrates (#49), bald and snub-nosed, has the rapt attention of an unknown youth
* (#48), Xenophon
* (#47), Eschines,
* and the famous Alcibiades (#49) who is attired in armor embellished in gold.
* Behind him is another figure (#44) who is gesturing to servants (#41-43) hurrying in at the far left.
* Below is Epicurus (#37), crowned with the ivy leaves of Bacchus and surrounded by the very young and the very old--supposedly the only ones who seriously attended to his teachings.
* Pythagoras (#33) is also a center of rapt attention,
* with Empedocles (#34),
* Epicharmus (#35),
* Archytas (#32) and others looking on with great interest.
* #30 is either Parmenides or the musician Nicomachus.
* #31 alone is not drawn in; this handsome young man is simply looking out towards us.
* The sculpture at upper left is Apollo, god of poetry, music, and health. He has a lyre in one hand and the other rests upon a trunk around which coils the serpent (the Greek symbol of health). This god of beauty and harmony stands above two reliefs depicting the unrnoderated passions of wrath and concupiscence.