The School of Athens
Raphael

“In contrast to that visible in the allegories of earlier painters, is such that the figures do not pay homage to, or group around the symbols of knowledge; they do not form a parade. They move, act, teach, discuss and become excited”
-Web Gallery of Art

Apollo/Athena
The two Pagan deities represent the rebirth of the classical era as well as the decline of Catholic Church dominance. Apollo (left) is holding what is called a lira de braccio, a modern version of his traditional lyre. This further demonstrates Raphael’s analogical theme found throughout the fresco. Also shows renaissance theme of “Patron of the Arts”

Architecture
Large dome reminiscent of late Romanesque architecture. Believed to be inspired by St. Peter’s cathedral (Bramante) which was a symbol of the composite ideals of Christian and Pagan beliefs.

Linear Perspective
Raphael utilizes Brunelleschi’s principle of linear perspective. In his painting, all of the lines (most prominent in the architecture) converge in the center of the painting.

Subjects at Left
This section of the fresco represents the common ideals of grammar, arithmetic, and music. Notable figures here are: Pythagoras, Epicurius, and Heraclitus.

Subjects at Right
This section of the fresco represents the common concepts of geometry and astronomy. Notable figures here are: Ptolemy and Zoroaster.

Plato’s Gesture
Plato’s finger gestures towards the sky. This is consistent with his overall philosophy that ideas are what are provide us with reality and concrete knowledge. Rather than material objects.

Raphael
Raphael placed himself in his painting. This represents the return of the “man is the measure of all things’ philosophy that was prominent during the classical ages.

Heraclitus
The last figure painted in the fresco, the philosopher is painted with the features of Michelangelo who at the time had just completed his work on the Sistine Chapel. His representation is more of a homage rather than an allegory.

Euclid
The Greek Geometer, is demonstrating a geometric diagram to some students. There is widespread agreement that Raphael was portraying Renaissance architect Bramante who aided Raphael in developing several aspects of the fresco.

Plato
It is possible that Raphael intended for Plato to double as Leonardo Da Vinci.

Aristotle’s Gesture
Aristotle’s finger gestures towards the ground. This is consistent with his overall philosophy that experience is what knowledge arises from. Aristotle was a strong advocate of evidence and concrete ideals.

Subjects at Right
This section of the fresco represents the common concepts of geometry and astronomy. Notable figures here are: Ptolemy and Zoroaster.
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Pythagoras
He represents arithmetic which was an innovative idea during his time. Raphael is trying to express the innovative parallels between the two eras.

Ptolemy
Ptolemy is holding a round globe, a model of his geographical ideas.

Plato
Along with Aristotle, he is central to the many ideals and concepts that unite the Renaissance and the Classical era.

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Diogenes
His insouciant manner of lying on the steps symbolizes his philosophy of rejection of material things.