

1. Thales :-

As the founder of the earliest school in the history, Thales of Miletus is generally accounted the founder and father of all philosophy. Thales was born in about 624 B.C. and died in about 550 B.C. (He lived in an ancient city named Miletus, which is at present a fishing village.)

Thales, at any rate, was a contemporary of Solon and Croesus. He was famous in antiquity for his mathematical and astronomical learning and also for his practical sagacity and wisdom. He is included in all the accounts of the seven sages. He was an astrologer and also an engineer.

No writing by Thales were extant even in the time of Aristotle, and it is believed that he wrote nothing. His philosophy if we can call it by that name, consisted, so far as we know, of two propositions. Firstly, that the principle of all things is water, that all comes from water, and to water all returns. And secondly that the earth is a flat disc which floats upon water. The first, which is the chief proposition, means that water is the one primal kind of existence

and that everything else in the universe is merely a modification of water. Two questions will naturally occur to us. Why did Thales choose water as the first principle? And by what process does water in his opinion, come to be changed into other things, how was the universe formed out of water? We cannot answer either of these questions with certainty. According to Aristotle, Thales probably derived his opinion from observing that the nutriment of all things is moist, and that even actual heat is generated therefrom, and that animal life is sustained by water. And from the fact that the seeds of all things possess a moist nature, and that water is a first principle of all things that are humid.

But the sum and substance of the teaching of Thales is often being questioned like: why on account of such a crude and undeveloped idea, he should be given the title of the father of philosophy. Why should philosophy be said to begin here in particular? Now, the significance of Thales is not that his

water philosophy has any value in itself, but that this was the first recorded attempt to explain the universe on materialistic and scientific principles, without the aid of myths and anthropomorphic gods. Moreover, Thales propounded the problem, and determined the direction and character, of all pre-Socratic philosophy. The fundamental thought of the period was that under the multiplicity of the world there must be a single ultimate principle. According to Thales, this ultimate principle or reality is water.

~~Thales~~ Thales and other Ionia philosophers were all materialists and they are also sometimes called Hylicists, from the Greek word 'hulé' which means matter. The first period of pre-socratic philosophy is essentially cosmological in character and it was Thales who determined the character. His importance is that he was the first to propound the question, not that he gave any rational reply to it.