

## Milesian School

1     The first school of philosophy in Greek rose in Miletus, one of the most flourished cities in Ionian. Its  
2     importance lies in the fact that Milesian philosophers put philosophical questions squarely and answered  
3     them without reference to mythical being.

## 4     **1     Thales**

5     Thales (624 BC-548 BC) is the first philosopher of Greece and is known as one of the Seven Wise Men of  
6     Greece, with his saying Water is best. Since Thales himself has no works remained, our knowledge about  
7     him is limited to secondary sources and mostly conjectural. According to Aristotle, Thales philosophical  
8     views can be concluded to three points: (1)All things are full filled with gods; (2)The earth is a disc  
9     floating on water; (3)Water is the material cause of all objects.

## 10    **2     Anaximander**

11    It is said that Anaximander (611 BC-546 BC) was Thales pupil. His advance compared with Thales  
12    lies in a tendency towards abstraction and endeavours to explain the process of becoming. Here is his  
13    argument about the problem of substance: The essence of objects can not be any concrete substance, for  
14    these materials, like water, must be self-explained. So concrete elements must not be the material cause  
15    of things. The essence of things is an eternal, imperishable substance, which he calls the *Infinite*. It is an  
16    infinite, intermediate and qualitatively undifferentiated matter. It should be noted that the view of the  
17    *Infinite*, although shows a tendency to abstraction, is still focus on material cause. From the *Infinite* all  
18    things are separated and to it all things return.

19    Different matters are separated from the Infinite due to its eternal motion. First it is hot, then cold,  
20    which is surrounded by hot. The cold becomes moisture, then air, after being heated by the hot. The air  
21    expands and breaks the sphere of hot. As a result, the hot streams and forms heavenly bodies surrounded  
22    by air. The are forced to move around the cyclindrical earth, which is the central of the universe. The  
23    most remote heavenly body is the sun, then the moon, then the stars and planets. As for living beings  
24    on earth, they arise from moisture. Some of them come out of the water upon land and finally adapt  
25    themselves to new environment. Man, like other creatures, derives through such process.

26    Anaximander also proposed theory about the recurrence of world. Things are originated from the  
27    *Infinite* by separation, *i.e.* the origin of things is a process by which the *Infinite* is robbed, so it is an  
28    injustice. As a result, everything must finally return to the *Infinite*, following the order of justice. Things  
29    are the same to the whole universe. It originates from the the *Infinite* and finally returns to it, then the  
30    universe is formed again. Thus, there is an eternal and cyclical recurrence of the universe.

### 31   **3   Anaximenes**

32   The last philosopher of Milesian school is Anaximenes (588 BC-524 BC), who holds the view that air  
33   is the essence of objects and things arise by the process of rarefaction and condensation. When air is  
34   rarefied, it becomes fire; when condensed, air becomes, in turn, wind, cloud, water, earth, and stone.  
35   Thus, changes are explained by motion of air and qualitative differences among elements are reduced to  
36   quantitative term, *i.e.* the degree of rarefaction or condensation. This is the first example of reducing  
37   qualitative differences to quantitative term.