The origin of philosophical knowledge

As it was said at the first lecture, philosophical views originated in Greece, India and China at the same time in VII-VI centuries BC.

In China the first philosophical views created within Confucianism. Confucianism is a system of ethical teachings founded by Confucius in VI-V c.B.C. The first major philosopher was Lao Tru. Lao Tru is the founder of the philosophy of Taoism. The word “Tao” literally means the “way”. This shows the materialist orientation of the first ph-al school.

The first collection of Indian philosophy is the Vedas. The Vedas are “sacred knowledge”. Ph-al teachings following the Vedas were named orthodox. These are Hinduism, Yoga, Vedanta and others. These schools which didn’t follow sacred books were called unorthodox. The must known of them are Buddism, Charvaka-Lokayata, Jainism.

We shall pay special attention to the philosophy of ancient Greece, which formed and developed on its own.

The heart of ph-al knowledge in ancient Greece is Milesian school. The famous members of this school are Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes. You know Thales from maths. Before the Milesians natural phenomena were explained solely by the will of gods. The Milesians defined all things by their quintessential substance of which the world was formed and which was the source of everything. They thought it to be water, or air, or fire, or earth. These views mean materialistic tradition in philosophy.

Another school of philosophy is Elastic school. Elastic school was founded by Parmenides. Other members of the school are Zeno, Xenophanes. Parmenides thought that the reality of the world is “ One Being”, an unchanging, timeless, indestructible whole, unlike the visible world, “One Being” is nothing else but a concept. Zeno is best known for this paradoxes, by which he denied the reality of the visible world.

Zeno is best known for this atomistic theory. Democritus maintained the impossibility of dividing things ad infinitum. The worlds which we see - with all their properties of immensity, resemblance, and dissimilitude – result from the endless multiplicity of falling atoms. The atomistic theory of Democritus means materialistic tradition in philosophy, it remained valid until the discovery of the phenomenon of radioactivity in XIXth century.

Plato is associated with idealistic tradition in philosophy. Central to the philosophy of Plato is the doctrine of ideas. According to this theory the world we know through the sence is only an, imitation of the pure, eternal, and unchanging world of the ideas. Ideas of Plato are nothing else but concepts. Position of Plato is defined as objective idealism.

Heraclitus was famous for his insistence on ever – present change as it is stated in the saying, “no man ever steps in the same river twice”. This position is considered as a naive dialectics.