

PHILOSOPHY

A philosophical discussion session, using questions.

What is philosophy?

Is wisdom the same as knowledge?

Is a philosopher necessarily a wise man?

A philosopher asks the question, seeks, but may never reach the answer.

(S)he is on a journey towards the answer.

Is asking the question more important than getting the answer? Why?

Philosophy started in wonder, especially wondering WHY.

Can anyone be a philosopher?

Children ask philosophical questions:

If Daddy had married someone else, would I still be me? (Identity)

Why can't we have yesterday again? (Concept of Time)

What is a child doing when he continues to drop things?

He discovers Gravity and practices Inductive Reasoning.

When did people start to think, to reason?

There are three main ways of thought: Religion, Science and Philosophy.

Are they totally separate?

Why did philosophy start?

What kind of problems was it supposed to solve?

Issues:

Is there an underlying unity in a changing world?

What can I be sure of?

Can we depend on our senses?

What is reality? (Plato)

Can I even be sure that I exist? (Descartes)

Can there be Free Will in a determined world?

What is Freedom? Freedom and Responsibility.

Are we 'condemned' to be Free? (Kierkegaard, Sartre)

Consolation of Philosophy. (Socrates, Epicurus, Boethius)

What can we do to change our own situation? Our immediate environment?

The world? (Pebble in the lake)

We can't change Fate, but we can change our attitude. (Stoics)

See our problems in context: don't waste time – our life – regretting what we can't have or do. Be positive about what we do have and can do.



Hot

WHEN DID MAN BEGIN TO THINK?



S. Hot

When and why did people start to think rationally?

Questions were asked about what Man did not understand.

The need for security in an unpredictable world.

Each society had its own questions – looked for its own answers.

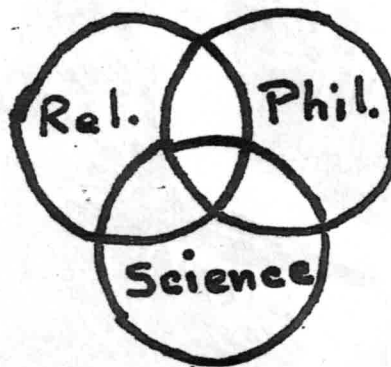
All had stories, explaining the world.

Three main branches of thought, which overlap:

Religion.

Philosophy.

Science.



What is Philosophy?

Greek: Philos = Love, Sophia = Wisdom.

Philosophical thinking started before writing, e.g. in Australia.

Between the 6th and 4th Centuries B.C. thought started to challenge established religious beliefs and myths in the Mediterranean, China and India.

INDIA.

Rig – Veda 10, 129 (1200 BC).

**“When neither Being nor Not-being was,
Nor atmosphere, nor firmament, nor what is beyond,
What did it encompass? Where? In whose protection?
What was water, the deep, unfathomable?
Neither death nor immortality was there then,
No sign of night or day....
Whence was it born, whence is this emanation?.....
Who then knows whence it has arisen?
Only he who is its overseer in highest heaven knows.
He only knows, or perhaps he does not know.”**

**This hymn questions not only the origin of the world but also materiality itself.
It questions not only the Gods but also Being itself.
The world did not arise out of Being or Not-being:
Its source must be prior to both.
Language fails here – there are no words for this condition except to say it was ‘neither this nor that’.
Cosmogonic question: Why is there anything?
Nothingness; What was there before creation?
Was there nothing? Or not even Nothing?
Later: The problem of the true self will be and remain the focal point in Indian philosophy.
Brahman as absolute existence, one reality with many manifestations. What is Brahman? Can we know him?**

BUDDHISM.

Elaborate speculation on the nature of suffering, the self and liberation.

Buddha (Siddharta Gautama, c. 563-? BC) was concerned about suffering and insisted on social reform, denouncing the caste system and excesses of Hindu priesthood.

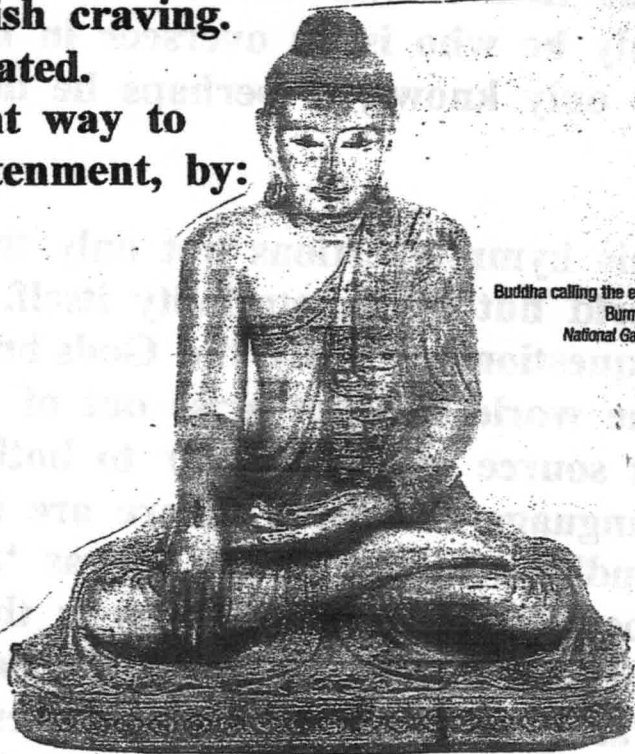
But his basic philosophy was concerned with one's *inner* transformation through insight into:

The Four Noble Truths:

- 1. All of life is suffering.**
- 2. This arises from selfish craving.**
- 3. Which can be eliminated.**
- 4. By following the right way to Liberation or Enlightenment, by:**

The Eightfold Path:

- 1. Right way of seeing.**
- 2. Right thinking.**
- 3. Right speech.**
- 4. Right action.**
- 5. Right effort.**
- 6. Right way of living.**
- 7. Right mindfulness.**
- 8. Right meditation.**



**Buddha calling the earth to witness
Burma, 19th century,
National Gallery of Australia**

The Buddhist aim: Free oneself from deluded belief in the Ego to gain Enlightenment and the end of suffering (Nirvana), which is Bliss.

像 禮 聖 孔

Confucius, 551-479

CHINA.

Man as social and political being.

Emphasis on society.

Interest in the past and respect for written word – veneration for early writing.

**CONFUSIUS (K'ung-fu-tzu)
551-479BC.**

Disorder of his time to be corrected by return to social and political order by adhering to Man's role in society.

Confucius was concerned with human relations, strict behaviour rules between e.g. father/son, master/servant etc.

Emphasis on ritual.

Tradition of honour and respect, dictated by the ancestors.

Good government is a matter of ethics.

The ruler's virtue and contentment of the people, not power, is the true measure of political success.

"Having heard the Tao in the morning, I may die content in the evening."



唐
吳
道
子
作

李
公
麟
作

Drawing from
c. 900 AD.

TAOISM.

Independence of the individual, who should fit into the great pattern of Nature - this is the Tao.

LAO-TZU, (6th century BC), was a real or mythical person (c.f. Homer).

He taught the Tao – the Way – which is mysterious: It can't be spoken or explained, but we have to try and find it and live by it.

From the TAO TE CHING:

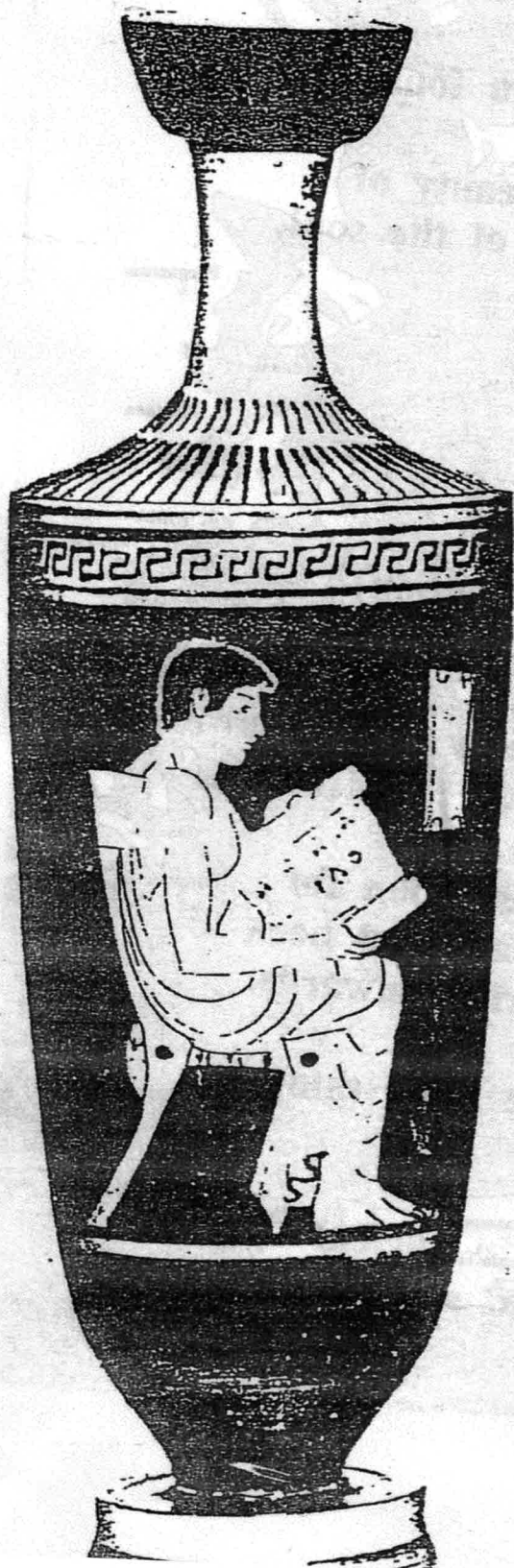
**"The way that can be spoken of
Is not the constant way;
The name that can be named
Is not the constant name.**

**The nameless (non-being) was the beginning of
heaven and earth;
The named (being) was the mother of myriad
creatures....."**

**For both Confucius and Lao-tzu, harmony is the
ideal for society and the individual.
Personal character is one of the goals in life.**

**For Confucius, the personal lies in the pattern, the
structure of society.**

**For Taoism, the personal lies in one's accord with
Nature.**



GREECE.

Ancient Greek settlers came from different areas. Greece was not one country, but a group of autonomous city states. When cities became too crowded, colonies were founded. Athens had colonies in Ionia.

There were flourishing civilisations in the Eastern Mediterranean, Middle East, Asia and Africa, long before the 6th century BC.

Influence and interaction through trade between Greece and other cultures: Phoenician alphabet, technology, religion.

Egyptian architecture, geometry, etc.

Babylonian astronomy, mathematics, geometry, religion.

Greek philosophy started from a mixture of mythology, mysticism, mathematics and a concern about the world.

Importance of FATE.

Now: a change from fate as a decision made by unpredictable gods, to the idea of underlying order, principle, *logos*, reason, logic.

The first Greek philosophers came from Ionia in Asia Minor, with Persian influence:

Zoroastrianism, unity of the cosmos, beauty of mathematics, monotheism, immortality of the soul, dichotomy of good and evil.

COSMOGONY:

Where did all this come from?

Why is it as it is and not different?

What is its purpose?

What does it mean?

Who created this (cause) and why (intention)?

It is a primordial project which needed comprehension.

The Greeks were motivated by curiosity in, and awe for a world they did not understand.

DEATH.

Wanted was an explanation and consolation for illness and death. The mystery of death had been disturbing from the Neanderthal period onwards.

TIME.

Having a concept of time is not the same thing as being able to measure time.

SOUL.

The soul had no moral significance in ancient Greece. Before philosophical thinking, it had a shadow-like existence in Hades (Homer).