

BPY-003- ANCIENT AND WESTERN MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY (4 credits)

COURSE INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the BA Philosophy Programme of IGNOU. The curriculum prepared for this degree is relevant and significant. We have included latest scholarship on the course prepared by renowned scholars from across the country.

The first course that you study is “Ancient and Western Medieval Philosophy.” In this course we have presented 4 blocks comprising 18 units.

Block 1 is an introduction to philosophy. In this block we have tried to explain the definition, scope and importance of philosophy, disciplines within philosophy and their complementarity, various methods in philosophy, and basic philosophical notions. The concluding unit of the block is an overview of western philosophies, which helps a student to properly assimilate the present course.

Block 2 deals with early Greek philosophers and their schools. The Block deals with Ionian and Pythagorean philosophers, Eleatic and atomistic philosophers, naturalistic and sophistic philosophers, and the philosophy of Socrates.

Block 3 studies the thought of Plato and Aristotle and explains the main ideas of Hellenistic and Neo-Platonic schools of thought.

Block 4 probes into the teachings of early medieval philosophers and expounds the great systems of Augustine, Aquinas, Dun Scotus, William of Ockham, and Jewish and Islamic thinkers.

Taken together, these Blocks will provide you with sufficient knowledge about Ancient and Medieval Western Philosophy.



BLOCK-1 INTRODUCTION

We have often heard philosophers asking the question 'what is philosophy?' But a group of sociologists or economists or physicists do not ask so often: What is sociology? what is economics? or what is physics? It is easier to define such disciplines which are much less controversial. This is not the case with philosophy. For some philosophers the central and the most fundamental philosophical question is the nature of philosophy itself. Some have thought that philosophy is the 'queen of all sciences'. For some others, philosophy is not a science at all. Some have argued that philosophy deals with the ultimate constituents of the world, while others have rejected even the possibility of such an enquiry. Some have expressed that it is a rational activity; but still others do not agree that reason is essential, or they are not convinced that there are any convincing arguments in philosophy at all. The present block, consisting of 5 units, introduces philosophy taking into account its various meanings.

Unit 1 on "Definition, Scope and Importance of Philosophy" gives a clear idea about philosophy, by giving a definition, which becomes clarified in the process of the course. The difference of meaning of the terms 'philosophy' and 'philosophizing' have been clearly explained. The unit expresses the conviction that philosophy is more related to wisdom than to knowledge. Finally, the unit concludes with a short consideration of the scope and importance of philosophy.

Unit 2 highlights the complementarity of different philosophical disciplines. The disciplines of philosophy are mutually related in one way or other. There is a specific kind of complementarity among all of them. Watertight compartmentalization of the branches of philosophy could harm the genuine purpose of philosophizing. For, philosophy is a comprehensive approach to life and the world, closely related to the main areas of human experience, which unifies the results of the views and insight of moral philosophy, aesthetics, religion etc.

Unit 3 explains that a philosophical method is established through logical reasoning, i.e., through deduction, induction, synthesis, or analysis. The characteristic feature of philosophy is the existence of different methods in it. The Western philosophy's preoccupation with 'the problem of the bridge', or the problem of dichotomy of the subject and object, probably necessitated its frequent emphasis on certainty and truth, invariably inherent in all its philosophical methods too. It is not wrong to say that *pramanas* constitute the method in Indian philosophy. There is also the well-known *purvapaksha sidhanta* method by which every school first states the rival positions that are then criticized and shown to be untenable.

Unit 4 discusses important philosophical terms and clarifies their meanings. Many terms in Philosophy may seem strange to a student because of their foreign origin, either Greek or Latin, which were the languages of philosophy for many centuries in the West. Hence if a student is familiar with the seemingly strange terms in philosophy, it can make the study of philosophy easier and the comprehension of the subject faster.

The last Unit, "An Overview of Western Philosophies," outlines the Western Philosophies from a chronological point of view, namely, ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary western philosophies. These overviews reveal that all questions about reality are also questions about ourselves and the way we interpret our knowledge about reality. They bear testimony to the fact

that the questioning capacity and nature of humans – under the basic thrust of skepticism, idealism, rationalism and positivism – are also existential questions.

The above given 5 units will give you basic understanding of philosophy required to grasp the profound reflections of great philosophers and their systems. In addition, this block will introduce you to the art of philosophizing. Those of you who are interested in further knowledge of an introduction to philosophy may read relevant books on the subject or browse through the internet.



UNIT 1: DEFINITION, SCOPE AND IMPORTANCE OF PHILOSOPHY

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1.0. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit—the first one with which philosophy-course is begun—is to give a pre-taste of philosophy without going to its intricacies. Although the details of the ‘how’ of philosophizing are not considered in this unit, it is a very important Unit as it is the basis for all that will follow during this course. In this unit we shall try to give a definition of philosophy, both etymological and real; and then we shall show as to how philosophy is to be differentiated from or related to ‘philosophizing’. But the notion of *wisdom* will be clarified in greater depth and width in relation to ‘philosophy’ and in contrast to ‘knowledge’. Philosophy is not just one of the disciplines of knowledge, as any other one. Hence clarification of its all-comprehensive character by referring to its scope is yet another objective of this unit of study. Finally the importance of philosophy is also to be paid attention to.

Thus by the end of this Unit you should be able:

- to have a basic understanding of philosophy;
- to differentiate it from philosophizing;
- to relate it with wisdom;
- to understand the all-comprehensive character of philosophy;
- to know the importance of philosophy both at the theoretical and practical levels

1.1. DEFINITION OF PHILOSOPHY

Western philosophy was born in Greece; the term ‘philosophy’ too has its roots in Greece and in Greek language. It is quite commonly known that *philosophia* etymologically means ‘love of wisdom’ (*Philia* + *Sophia*). But *sophia* had a much wider range of application than the modern English “wisdom.” Wherever intelligence can be exercised—in practical affairs, in the mechanical arts, in business—there is room for *Sophia*. Herodotus used the verb *philosophein* in a context in which it means nothing more than the desire to find out. We can find a gradual growth in the meaning of philosophy, as we go through the history of thought.

According to a tradition, Pythagoras was the first to describe himself as a philosopher. He speaks of three classes of people, attending the festal games: those who seek fame by taking part in them; those who seek gain by plying their trade; and those who are content to be spectators. Philosophers resemble the third class: spurning both fame and profit, they seek to arrive at the truth by contemplation. Pythagoras distinguished the *sophia* sought by the philosopher (knowledge based on contemplation) from the practical shrewdness of the businessman and the trained skills of the athlete. Plato points to Socrates as *the* philosopher. Plato gives a few characteristics of philosophical wisdom, such as ability to enter into critical discussion, having direct access to "true reality," knowledge of the purpose of life, etc. As evident from above, although philosophy is etymologically defined as 'love of wisdom', the meaning of wisdom is taken in a wider sense. We will be dealing exclusively with the notion of wisdom in this Unit itself.

Oxford Dictionary defines philosophy as "that department of knowledge which deals with ultimate reality, or with the most general causes and principles of things." It is presumed here that science, inheriting the cosmological tradition, does not offer us the knowledge of ultimate reality; only philosophy can do this. Science can only tell us *how*, whereas philosophy can tell us *why*, things happen as they do. Although science too speaks about the *why* or the causes, the "general causes and principles" of the philosopher are "higher" and "more ultimate" than the causes and principles that science reveals to us. There are two very different forms of activity now go under the name of "philosophy": one is essentially rational and critical, with logical analysis (in a broad sense) at its heart; the other (represented by Heidegger, for example) is openly hostile to rational analysis and professes to arrive at general conclusions by a phenomenological intuition or hermeneutical interpretation. The various schools of thought, belonging to these two branches, make use of different procedures or methods, which will be taken up in another Unit.

Aristotle considers philosophy as "the first and last science"—the first science because it is logically presupposed by every other science, the last because deals with reality in its ultimate principles and causes. He defines it as follows: "There is a science which investigates being as being, and the attributes which belong to this in virtue of its own nature. Now this is not the same as any of the so-called special sciences, for none of these treats universally of being as being. They cut off a part of being and investigate the attribute of this part" (*Metaphysics* 1003a18-25).

Descartes' distinction between mind and matter made it appear that there could be an inquiry into "the inner world" which would be wholly distinct from inquiries into "the outer world." Philosophy came to be thought of as running parallel to physics—the science of man as contrasted with the science of nature. Some of the later philosophers consider that the task of philosophy is to 'coordinate the most important general notions and fundamental principles of the various sciences.'

This unifying and coordinating activity is differently considered in different periods and places: in the medieval period it was done making philosophy theo-centric (God becomes the principle of coordination), in the modern period it was carried out by an anthropo-centric philosophy (a human activity by which the human spirit comes to an awareness of its own potentialities), in the English-speaking countries the coordination is done through the analysis of language. Thus there

is no unanimity in the way task of philosophy is considered. But it is generally accepted that the task of philosophy cannot be reduced to that of a mere science, and that philosophy has a priority and primordality in comparison to other sciences.

1.2. PHILOSOPHY AND PHILOSOPHIZING

After having seen the definition of philosophy, and received some understanding about 'philosophy', it is necessary that we introduce another notion, which is apparently similar to it, but very much different from it. That notion is nothing other than 'philosophizing'. Though the term 'philosophizing' is not of any recent origin, it has become in recent times more widespread in its being used in philosophical circles, in comparison to the more popular term 'philosophy'. This change is not a terminological change of one term (philosophizing) replacing another term (philosophy). But even in philosophical circles these terms are mistakenly used as synonymous. There is a basic difference between 'philosophy' and 'philosophizing' in their meaning and content. The term 'philosophy' is nominal in its structure, static and dead in its meaning, and refers to the finished product of thought, while the term 'philosophizing' is verbal in its structure, dynamic and alive in its meaning, and refers to the process of thinking.

What is summed up in the above sentence needs to be clarified a little more. The term 'philosophy' is a noun, and just as any other noun it serves as the subject or predicate of a sentence. A noun in the strict sense has the positive point of having a very precise meaning within a clear-cut boundary; but there is a negative-point in this positive, namely that the precision that it has, is a dead precision. For instance, the term 'table' has the same meaning irrespective of time and space—last year and this year, in this place and in another place. 'Sameness' of meaning without any dynamism characterizes all terms and notions in the traditional sense. Such an understanding is slowly disappearing. This change from a static to a dynamic meaning cannot be easily maintained in the term 'philosophy', as it is laden with an established traditional meaning. The term 'philosophy' presupposes a truth—at least it has been so—characterized by perennality and universality, untouched by time and space. Contemporary thought pattern has destroyed such a myth, and has opted for a more dynamic and humble attitude: *dynamic*, because every reality is philosophically seen as becoming; *humble*, because there is no dogmatism of absolute certainty about what is philosophically seen. The term 'philosophizing' reflects such a philosophical *dynamism* and *humility* of being constantly in search, taking serious consideration of the elements of time and space. Thus *philosophizing* is and has to be different according to the different places, times and perspectives. From what is explained above, we are not proposing that the term 'philosophy' be replaced with 'philosophizing'; rather we want to bring to the attention of the students that there is a difference in the meaning of these terms, and that in the contemporary understanding 'philosophy' should have a meaning with a philosophical dynamism and humility, which is better reflected in the term, *philosophizing*.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) What is your general understanding of philosophy?

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2) How is philosophy different from philosophizing?

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1.3. PHILOSOPHY AND WISDOM

We clarified the meaning of philosophy by referring to ‘wisdom’. Thus there is a close relation between philosophy and wisdom. But how close is this closeness? To understand this, we need first to clarify what is meant by wisdom, and by clarifying wisdom we are clarifying what philosophy is.

All of us think, and rightly so, that we know what wisdom is. But when we are asked to think it aloud and to thematize it, we are at a loss... we do not quite know the way to express in clear and precise terms what wisdom is and thus to remove the ‘vagueness’ surrounding this notion. Hence ‘wisdom’ is an elusive and enigmatic notion. Because of this vagueness of the notion of ‘wisdom’, it is enveloped and blanketed with what is other than ‘wisdom’. Just as today *philosophy* is lost among philosophies, wisdom is lost among ‘knowledges’. Western philosophy has been basically an epistemology, a theory of knowledge. Hence the various ‘philosophies’ have been nothing but the various theories of knowledge. Thus in the area of knowledge great progress has been achieved by the West; not only has man made an intellectual conquest of the various realities, he has theorized this conquest, making it an epistemology. But in this process ‘wisdom’ became the victim, insofar as it has been side-stepped and forgotten. What shines forth is the ‘peripheral’ at the neglect of the ‘fundamental’, the ‘ontic’ at the neglect of the ‘ontological’. Wisdom as the ‘ground’ is hidden, whereas what the ‘ground’ enables to grow i.e., knowledge, shows forth and thrives.

WISDOM VS. KNOWLEDGE

Now that we have referred to both wisdom and knowledge, we need to shed more light onto the relation between them. Wisdom has an ontological priority over knowledge insofar as the former enables the latter to emerge. I am *able* to know because I *enabled* to know by wisdom. Wisdom is the condition of possibility for knowledge. The relation between wisdom and knowledge is not that between possibility and actuality. Possibility does not enable the actuality; possibility refers to the situation prior to something becoming actual. Before I actually knew the distance between the earth and the sun, it was an un-actualized or possible knowledge for me. But this possible knowledge does not enable it to become actual knowledge. Wisdom is not the un-actualized knowledge, but the ‘ground’ that enables, the ‘source’ that engenders knowledge.

Is wisdom merely the 'source' of knowledge? No, it is its 'goal' as well. Knowledge is linked and limited to what is known; it is a limited enterprise. In knowledge one is almost exclusively concerned about the truth of the knowledge achieved. Once something is known, it is added to the fund of one's knowledge. One is complacent about what one has intellectually grasped. Wisdom, on the other hand, looks beyond the boundary of knowledge. A 'knowing' person would say: "I know that I know." His knowledge is limited to what he knows, and he is stuck up with it. But the 'wise' would rather say: "I know that I do not know." He is more concerned and anxious about what he does not know. Wisdom is, if we may use the expression, the *knowledge* of the non-knowledge. This genuine knowledge is wisdom. Thus there is a difference between 'wisdom' as the genuine knowledge and 'knowledge' as ordinarily understood. Hence rightly can we say: "The more one knows, the more one knows how little one knows!" Genuine knowledge thus takes one to the vast realm beyond the boundary of knowledge—the realm of wisdom. The end of all knowledge is to reach this realm of 'wisdom', which consists in one's ability to go beyond the boundary of knowledge.

Wisdom consists in the *wonder* not only at the 'beyond' of one's knowledge but also at the ordinary reality, evoking thought. Reality as dynamic coming-to-be evokes 'wonder' in a thinker. "The greatest of all wonder, that something is!" The 'wonder' that is referred to here does not necessarily mean 'to be startled' by something unusual, sudden and strange. The 'usual' and 'ordinary' engenders philosophical wonder. It is wisdom that enables the human to 'see' the wonder of reality. Thus a wise man is a 'seer' (*der Seher*). The 'seer' is the wise man who stands open to reality in its dynamic process.

Although Philosophy is etymologically defined as 'love of wisdom', Raimon Panikkar in his book, *Der Weisheit eine Wohnung bereiten*, introduces a new term 'eco-sophy'. The term 'eco-sophy' has to be differentiated from 'philo-sophy' and 'eco-logy'. We are not concerned here with the intricate analysis of the interrelation between these terms, but rather we want to make some reflections on this term. '*Eco-sophy*' (*oikos* + *sophia*) means 'house of wisdom' or 'wisdom as the house'. We have to clarify what is meant by 'house' here. It is not to be taken in its objective and static meaning of a 'building', but in the phenomenologico-intentional meaning of 'enabling to dwell'. "The house becomes a house only through dwelling." 'Wisdom as the house' is the process of dwelling so as to make the whole universe one's house; a wise person is one who, by his 'dwelling' in the sense of 'being at peace', is able to 'widen' the house so as to embrace the whole cosmos, i.e., to make a *cosmic house*, and thus to become a *cosmic person*. Such a person is different from a fragmented person of narrow perspectives of various types, but a person who is able to go beyond the boundaries of region and religion, culture and language, class and caste.

WISDOM AS THE HORIZON

What has been referred to as the process of dwelling or becoming a cosmic person can be explained in terms of a philosophically pregnant term 'horizon' so as to give a philosophical depth to our reflections. The term 'horizon' has been used in various contexts both philosophical and non-philosophical. But in the contemporary Western philosophy of Husserl and Heidegger it carries a deeper meaning. Heidegger employs the term 'horizon' primarily in the context of his development of hermeneutical phenomenology. According to his hermeneutics, "to interpret is to

expose the 'as-structure' (*Als-Struktur*), which is grounded in the 'fore-structure' (*Vor-Struktur*)... The fore-structure of (pre) understanding is the *horizon* or the hermeneutical situation, out of which something is 'let be seen' as such a thing. The fore-structure or horizon is not to be understood in the quantitative sense of the *whole* as different from the *part* (the thing interpreted); it is rather to be taken in the sense of the *implicit* (fore-structure or horizon) as the basis or ground for the *explicit* (as-structure). It is *from* and by the horizon of the implicit that something is made to stand out or interpreted as this something. Thus for Heidegger horizon as the implicit (pre)understanding enables all interpretation. It is *wisdom* that enables man to embrace the presupposed horizon, and thus to be in the constant process of moving to the *deeper* and *wider*.

Husserl uses 'horizon' in the context of his theory of intentionality and experience of consciousness. An object is actually experienced or apprehended only within a setting or horizon, which is the context of possible apprehensions. According to Husserl we are able to arrive at the essence of something only when we can move from the 'determinacy' of the actual apprehension to the 'indeterminacy' of the possible apprehension or horizon. A knowledgeable person is *struck up* with the actually known; he may try to know more and thus to increase his knowledge about the thing known by making the possible knowledge into actual knowledge. But a *wise* person is able to link his *actual* knowledge about something, however little and limited it may be, to the indefinite *possible* ways in which it can be known and he can know. Thus the Husserlian call to the phenomenological intuition is a *call to wisdom*—a call to the indefinitely wide *horizon of wisdom* by transcending the limitation of knowledge.

The world of *horizon* for Husserl, as explained above, is the world of *possibilities*. But the 'size' of this world of possibilities is in proportion to one's wisdom. This needs to be clarified. The less wise a person is, the less extensive is one's world of possibilities. It is our contention that a genuinely wise person will have an indefinitely extensive world of possibilities. On the other hand the un-wise limit their *possibility* to their *actuality*. To think of a possibility that is other than what they have actually experienced or perceived is an impossibility for them. For instance, if I am unable to accept even the very possibility of a person living on a strictly vegetarian diet just because I have not experienced or heard about it, then I am limiting the possibility, by placing a boundary around it, to my actuality. It is wisdom that enables one to go beyond one's actual experience or knowledge. We can bring in here the traditional notion of 'intellectual humility' in relation to wisdom. A wise person is one who is characterized by intellectual humility. He sees the limit of his knowledge; in other words, he accepts the possibility of his inability of knowledge. He does not exclude the possibility of his own ignorance from his world of possibilities. Such a person is gifted with *intellectual honesty*; a clear pointer to his wisdom.

Our reflections on wisdom could be extended to the phenomenon of time as thought by Husserl and Heidegger. Husserl expresses the phenomenological constitution of time as "a streaming present surrounded by a horizon of immediate 'retention' of the past (to be distinguished from active recollection) and of immediate 'protention' of the future (to be distinguished from active expectation)." Heidegger has developed a more profound notion of time, in comparison to Husserl. In their attempt to do away with the notion of time as an objective phenomenon Heidegger has been more successful. He takes time, in the earlier phase of his thought, as human being's process of temporalizing. Human being stands out into the three *ecstases* of time by which the future and the past are brought to the situation of the present, whereby the future is *already* present and the past is *still* present. What is to be specially noted in the conception of

time according to both Husserl and Heidegger is that man extends himself to the future and to the past by way of 'protention' and 'retention' [Husserl], or by way of 'coming towards' (Zukommen) and 'coming back' (Zurück-kommen) [Heidegger]. Is it not 'wisdom' that enables man to extend himself to the future and to the past, and to bring them to the present? 'Going to the past' is not to be taken in the ordinary meaning of the power of recollection or memory, but in the sense of 'gathering, appropriating, thinking back,' etc. It is in proportion to one's ability to dig into the past to gather the repeatable possibilities that one can go far into the future in the sense of fore-seeing, seeing ahead and thus planning for the future. The more a person can extend himself to the past, the more will he be able to extend himself to the future. We consider 'wisdom' as the vision that embraces the already (past) and the ahead (future)—the *vision* that looks back and looks ahead. Both these aspects go together. The wider the ambit of this thinking or *vision*, the more profound is the *wisdom*. When a person can hardly go beyond the boundary of the present, i.e., when he hardly carries anything of the past and can scarcely see anything of the future, as the past remains 'no more' and the future 'not yet', then there is present in him hardly any wisdom.

The capacity to go farther into the future speaks for man's power of imagination. In many a philosopher the notion of 'imagination' occupies an important place. For our purpose here, we shall refer only to artistic imagination, which is generally held as the power to visualize scenes or events that have not occurred yet. In other words, it is the capacity to 'see' the *presence* in the *absence*. In proportion to one's fertility of imagination one is able to move from 'what does not exist' to 'what could exist' and 'what ought to exist.' It is the peak of artistic creativity and power of imagination. Thus imagination points to man's capacity to look into the future, into what is not yet. It is our contention that this capacity of imagination amounts to one's *wisdom*. It needs little wisdom to make an assessment of something that is actually present; it needs only knowledge. We often come across persons statements of assessment on a building that is constructed, on a picture that is already painted, on a cultural item that is already performed, ... But to make a plan for a building, painting or cultural item, we need the power of imagination or the ability to 'see' in advance as to how it would be or should be. One creates a plan based on such 'seeing'. But for the wisdom that enables man to creatively see the presence in the absence, he would be condemned to *stagnation* by the mere repetition of the same. The world has grown, culture has developed and mankind has progressed, because *wisdom* has been present in the form of creative thinking at least in some persons. Thus 'wisdom' refers to one's *vision* of the future, of the not-yet, of the possibilities; in other words, *wisdom* implies and involves the power of imagination and creativity.

All that we have clarified with regard to wisdom is a clarification of philosophy. A philosopher is not merely a knowledgeable person but a wise person. S/he is not a person with a quantitatively unlimited knowledge, but a person with a qualitatively open horizon that enables one to open out to various realms of knowledge. Philosophy is wisdom that enables a person to open out to knowledge, going beyond the limiting boundaries of fragmentation. A philosopher is a wise person, who is in constant search; *he is always a seeker, and always on the way*. Our reflections are intended to serve as a *call* to move away from the narrowness of our actual knowledge, and thus to enter into the wide horizon of wisdom.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) Differentiate between wisdom and knowledge.

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2) How can wisdom be explained in terms of horizon?

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1.4. SCOPE OF PHILOSOPHY

By relating philosophy to wisdom, we have already implied that the scope of philosophy cannot be put within precise boundary, but within the widening horizon of wisdom. Thus the scope of philosophy embraces the whole of reality. Although philosophy claims to consider everything in general and nothing in particular, we can still point out some of the areas that are generally accepted as typically philosophical. By taking a quick glance at them, we will have clarified the scope of philosophy.

We start with the most fundamental realm of philosophy: metaphysics. It is the inquiry into the first *whence* and the last *whither*, an inquiry into the ‘beyond’ of physics, that seeks to ask and answer the most ultimate and fundamental questions about the whole of reality—the Divine, the human, and the cosmos. Metaphysical questions embrace everything as a whole. This does not mean that such questions are merely general questions; they are the most fundamental (the first *whence*) and ultimate (the last *whither*) questions. However advanced the physicist’s world may have grown, still the ‘world’ and concern of metaphysician is totally different from that of his counterpart. Thus metaphysics occupies the foundational realm in philosophy.

Another set of problems that philosophy has to consider are those connected with our thinking. There is, first of all, the study of valid thinking or argument, which is called ‘logic’. A related area is the ‘latent structure of our actual thinking’, traditionally called epistemology or theory of knowledge. It is the study, not so much on what we know or how we know, but what it is to know. The study of good and evil too is a baffling question for the philosophers. It is the realm of morality. It does not enumerate the good and bad actions, but it makes a fundamental analysis as to what it is to be right or wrong. It enables the human mind to distinguish between what is good and what is bad; thus it is a fundamental search.

Although cosmos is subjected to a thorough analysis in the wake of the growth of science, philosophy has not left it only to science. Complementing the scientific knowledge of the cosmos, philosophy too looks at it in its radicality. Even though what has been traditionally developed as cosmology by Aristotle is differently looked at in today’s scientific period, it continues to be a philosophical discipline. Reality includes not only cosmos, but the realms of

the human and of the Divine as well. These realms too are philosophically considered in philosophical anthropology (traditionally known as rational psychology) and in the philosophy of God (traditionally known as theodicy). Besides these traditionally accepted fields, philosophy brings to its embrace almost every other question. Everything is looked at in their ultimate causes and principles.

1.5. IMPORTANCE OF PHILOSOPHY

The importance of philosophy will show itself as one traverses through philosophy. As one gradually enters into the width of philosophy—grow in one's acquaintance with philosophy—one will experience its depth and importance as well. Just as philosophy cannot be confined within precise boundary, so also is its importance. At the same time, we can refer to a few points that will add to the importance of philosophy.

Every human being has a philosophy of life; it gives shape to his/her life. Even those who do not find any importance for philosophy and question its relevance are in fact shouting aloud its importance by their use of it. Since one's philosophy of life moulds one's attitudes and convictions, it has to be developed, which is possible only by coming into contact with way in which philosophers have thought. Study of philosophy is not for intellectual consumption, out of intellectual curiosity to know how others have philosophized; it is primarily for oneself to develop a philosophy of life.

The greatest advantage of philosophy consists in its ability to make the human mind sharp and disciplined. What one learns in philosophy may not be found as useful as other pieces of information from scientific and social fields. But what it does to human mind cannot be compared to the study of any other science. Study of philosophy gives a depth in one's thinking and acting—in one's being. Besides giving depth, philosophy disciplines the mind in such a way that it is able to understand every other disciplines of knowledge. Philosophy enables a person to have the clarity of concepts and precision of expressions. Such a precision and clarity will be seen in thinking, speaking and acting. Thus philosophy enters the practical life as well.

It has been generally considered that philosophy is a purely abstract enterprise without any practical relevance. But as Marcel says, "philosophy has no weight and no interest whatever unless it sounds an echo in our life." Today philosophy is brought down to philosophizing on questions with which the humans are constantly gripped. Thus it vibrates as a constant 'echo' in our life. Philosophy does not put people to slumber, but disturbs and awakens them from their life of mediocrity and stagnation, and spurs them to dynamic action and moral living. This is what was done Socrates of old, and Kierkegaard of last century. In short, philosophy enables people to live a life of existential depth, moral integrity and religious conviction.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) What is the scope of philosophy?

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2) Reflect on the importance of the study of philosophy.

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1.6. LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to give a rough idea about philosophy, by giving a definition, which becomes clarified in the process of the course. In keeping with the thinking of today we have shown the difference of meaning of the terms philosophy and philosophizing. We have rather elaborately considered the notion of 'wisdom' as related to philosophy, as well as in itself. It is our conviction that philosophy is more related to wisdom than to knowledge. Although the reflections on wisdom presuppose some understanding of contemporary philosophy, still it is more appropriate to introduce it as we begin the philosophical course than at a later stage. Finally we conclude the unit with a short consideration of the scope and importance of philosophy.

1.7. KEY WORDS

- Principle:** Principle is that from which something proceeds in any way whatsoever.
- Determinacy and indeterminacy:** Determinacy is the state of actuality and indeterminacy is the capacity to be determined.
- Ontic and ontological:** Ontic means beings (things) that appear and ontological means the being which is the ground of beings that appear.

1.8. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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1.9. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress I

- 1) Philosophy is born of humans' natural curiosity manifested in the form of human search. Western philosophy was born in Greece; the term 'philosophy' too has its roots in Greece and in Greek language. It is quite commonly known that *philosophia* etymologically means 'love of wisdom' (*Philia* + *Sophia*). But *sophia* had a much wider range of application than the modern English "wisdom." Wherever intelligence can be exercised—in practical affairs, in the mechanical arts, in business—there is room for *Sophia*. Oxford Dictionary defines philosophy as "that department of knowledge which deals with ultimate reality, or with the most general causes and principles of things." It is presumed here that science, inheriting the cosmological tradition, does not offer us the knowledge of ultimate reality; only philosophy can do this. Science can only tell us *how*, whereas philosophy can tell us *why*, things happen as they do. Although science too speaks about the *why* or the causes, the "general causes and principles" of the philosopher are "higher" and "more ultimate" than the causes and principles that science reveals to us.
- 2) The term 'philosophizing' has become in recent times more widespread in its being used in philosophical circles, in comparison to the more popular term 'philosophy'. This change is not a terminological change of one term (philosophizing) replacing another term (philosophy). There is a basic difference between 'philosophy' and 'philosophizing' in their meaning and content. The term 'philosophy' is nominal in its structure, static and dead in its meaning, and refers to the finished product of thought, while the term 'philosophizing' is verbal in its structure, dynamic and alive in its meaning, and refers to the process of thinking.

Check your progress II

- 1) Wisdom has an ontological priority over knowledge insofar as the former enables the latter to emerge. I am *able* to know because I *enabled* to know by wisdom. Wisdom is the condition of possibility for knowledge. The relation between wisdom and knowledge is not that between possibility and actuality. Possibility does not enable the actuality; possibility refers to the situation prior to something becoming actual. Wisdom is not the un-actualized knowledge, but the 'ground' that enables, the 'source' that engenders knowledge. Wisdom is the 'goal' of knowledge

as well. Knowledge is linked and limited to what is known; it is a limited enterprise.

- 2) The term 'horizon' has been used in various contexts both philosophical and non-philosophical. For Heidegger horizon stands for the implicit (pre)understanding that enables all interpretation. For Husserl 'horizon' stands for the 'indeterminacy' of the possible apprehensions. A knowledgeable person is *stuck up* with the actually known; but a *wise* person is able to link his *actual* knowledge to the indefinite *possible* ways in which it can be known and he can know. Thus Husserlian call to the phenomenological intuition is a *call to wisdom*—a call to the indefinitely wide *horizon of wisdom* by transcending the limitation of knowledge. The world of *horizon* as explained here is the world of *possibilities*. But the 'size' of this world of possibilities is in proportion to one's wisdom. A genuinely wise person will have an indefinitely extensive world of possibilities. On the other hand the un-wise limit their *possibility* to their *actuality*. It is wisdom that enables one to go beyond one's actual experience or knowledge.

Check your progress III

- 1) By relating philosophy to wisdom, it is implied that the scope of philosophy cannot be put within precise boundary, but within the widening horizon of wisdom. The most fundamental realm that philosophy deals with is that of metaphysics. It is the inquiry into the first *whence* and the last *whither*, an inquiry into the 'beyond' of physics, that seeks to ask and answer the most ultimate and fundamental questions about the whole of reality—the Divine, the human, and the cosmos. Besides these traditionally accepted realms, philosophy brings to its embrace almost every other question, looked at in their ultimate causes and principles. Thus the scope of philosophy embraces the whole of reality.
- 2) The greatest advantage of philosophy consists in its ability to make the human mind sharp and disciplined. Philosophy gives a depth in one's thinking and acting. Besides giving depth, it disciplines the mind in such a way that a person can have the clarity of concepts and precision of expressions. Such a precision and clarity will be seen in thinking, speaking and acting. Thus philosophy enters the practical life as well. Philosophy does not put people to slumber, but disturbs and awakens them from their life of mediocrity and stagnation, and spurs them to dynamic action and moral living. In short, philosophy enables people to live a life of existential depth, moral integrity and religious conviction.

UNIT 2 DISCIPLINES WITHIN PHILOSOPHY AND THEIR COMPLEMENTARITY

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2.0. OBJECTIVES

Dear students, the whole thrust of this unit is to bring to your attention the various topics or areas that are covered by philosophy at large. Although philosophy itself is a different field altogether, but within itself it gives room to many other sub areas. So in this unit we will be concentrating on:

- Different disciplines within Philosophy
- Their uniqueness and
- How they compliment each other

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Initially the study of all philosophical questions formed only one undifferentiated body of knowledge, called philosophy. Philosophizing is a process that is carried out at various levels of reality and on different aspects. As the body of philosophical knowledge grew, there appeared disciplines of philosophy dealing with specific objects of study such as nature, human, God, morals, knowledge, aesthetics, etc. The academic discipline of philosophy is traditionally divided into 6 branches. They are Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics, Logic, Anthropology and Aesthetics.

2.2. METAPHYSICS OR PHILOSOPHY OF BEING

The word *meta* in Greek means above, after or beyond; this is the study of the nature of things above/after/beyond physics. It is said that the word 'metaphysics' entered the philosophical lexicon unintentionally. Aristotle's papers included his works on

physics and his treatises on ultimate reality. Since these untitled treatises of Aristotle were placed at the end of his famous work *TA PHYSIKA* (The Physics) people began to call them *META TA PHYSIKA* (The Metaphysics). It is a branch of philosophy, which studies realities beyond physical things. Metaphysics is therefore after physics in so far as it goes beyond the physical nature of things to the being of things. For St Thomas, Metaphysics has two meanings:

- a) Post-physics – because the study of being and its necessity occurs to us after the study of physics.
- b) Trans-physics – across, above, beyond because this science transcends the physical and perceptible order to reach the awareness of immaterial or imperceptible being.

Metaphysics is the heart and the crowning point of philosophy. Metaphysics may be defined as the study of the ultimate cause and of the first and most universal principles of reality. It studies reality, seeking its ultimate causes in an absolute sense precisely in so far as they are, in so far as they exist, in so far as they are real and offers a comprehensive view of all that exist. Metaphysics is the foundational science which seeks to understand all reality, all beings in terms of the universal properties, laws and ultimate causes of BEING as such. It is the science of being as being; it studies Being which is common to all beings. It investigates Being which underlies, penetrates, transforms and unifies all beings.

Metaphysics includes two sections: a) It shows how every being is similar to every other in so far as it participates in being because it *is* and yet as being, it is this *one being* as distinct from *that other being*. b) Metaphysics also shows how every finite being is not self sufficient or self explanatory. A finite being is not able to give an intelligible account of its own actual existence. Hence it requires a self sufficient First Cause. Since God is the ultimate cause of all things, He is evidently a principal subject matter of metaphysics.

Metaphysics can be called the foundational science of all other sciences because:

a) the formal object of all other particular sciences must be something existing with a particular nature, e.g. beauty for aesthetics; b) the scope of particular sciences limited to things pertaining to that science; and c) since the human mind has a natural desire to know the ultimate reality, the why of things, there must be a science which studies BEING AS BEING. Metaphysics is the study of being as such. It studies being as being, its properties and its causes. Nothing escapes from the concept of being i.e., something which is. The term being (*ens* in Latin) denotes everything 'that is' A tree is a being, and so is a bird, a man, or a diamond.

The Greek philosophers began from the nature of things; they studied particular types of beings. But in metaphysics, we study things not just as particular types of beings – moving things, living things – instead, in so far as they are simply being (or being things), in so far as they exist. We

are not concerned with *what* they are but *that* they are. Metaphysics studies the whole of reality by focusing on the most common aspect of everything; that everything “is”, that it is “real”. The material object of metaphysics is all being, God, angels, substance, accidents, real being, possible being and rational being. Since metaphysics studies reality from the point of its being, the formal object of metaphysics is the being of reality, that is, what it seeks first and per se is being itself, or being in common, being as being. Metaphysics is also concerned with such problems as the relation of mind to matter, the nature of change, the meaning of freedom, etc.

2.3. EPISTEMOLOGY OR PHILOSOPHY OF KNOWLEDGE

The word epistemology comes from the Greek, ‘*episteme*’ meaning knowledge and *logos* meaning science or systematic way of studying. The term was first used in 1854 by J.F. Ferrier, who distinguished the two main branches of philosophy as Ontology and Epistemology. Epistemology as a distinct science is a recent development, beginning in the Modern period of philosophy with Descartes, and gaining prominence with the contemporary philosopher, Husserl (1859-1938). It is a branch of philosophy that deals with the problem of knowledge that is, it investigates the origin, structure, methods and the validity of knowledge. It answers the question, “How do we know?” This is the philosophy of knowledge concerned with such questions as; is knowledge of anything really possible, is our knowledge certain, how do we get our knowledge? What exactly is knowledge about etc.

A synonymous term for epistemology is Criteriology from the Greek word *criterion* meaning a criterion or rule by which we may test knowledge to distinguish the true from false. Sometimes it is known as Gnoseology, from the Greek *gnosis* meaning knowledge in a quite general sense.

It is the study of the nature of human knowledge and of how it can be achieved. Human knowledge is a complex process and many activities are involved in it; seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, inquiring, imagining, understanding, conceiving, reflecting, intuiting, judging etc. It is from all these activities taken together, that we acquire knowledge. In fact, human knowing consists of three main activities namely experiencing, understanding, and judging and all these three constitute the structure of human knowing.

- 1) Experiencing- It includes seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, imagining etc.
- 2) Understanding- It includes inquiring, conceiving, formulating in concepts and hypothesis etc.
- 3) Judging- It includes reflecting, weighing of evidence, affirming etc.

Check your progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is metaphysics?

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2. What are the three main activities involved in human knowing?
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2.4. ETHICS OR MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Etymological Meaning

The word ethics is derived from the Greek word *ethos*, which means custom, a habitual way of acting, character etc. So, ethics is the science of character, habits of activity or conduct of human being. It is also known as Moral philosophy as it studies the principles or standards of human conduct. Human beings do not live and act at random. They follow certain patterns. These are adopted spontaneously, and in general these prototypes stem from models and attitudes adopted as historical and cultural factors. These are not mere charters as directives for life, but the shaping of one's life in accordance with certain *mores*, customs. The term *mores* in Latin means customs and manners and *moral* in moral philosophy is derived from this very term *mores*. Ethics is the science of morals or that branch of philosophy which is concerned with human character and conduct. An action was considered to be morally good or bad if it was in line with or against the customs and traditions of the particular era or society.

Definition

Ethics is the science of what man ought to do in order to live as he should, in order to be what he ought to be, in order to attain his supreme value, in order to realize in his nature what presents itself as the justification of his existence, that towards which and for which he exists. In short, ethics is a categorically normative, practical science.

Ethics is a science. It is a science in as much as it is a set or body of reasonable truths organized in a systematic way and having its specific material and formal objects. The material object of ethics is the conduct of man – the acts controlled by his will. The formal object of ethics is the rightness or wrongness, the goodness or badness of human conduct. Ethics therefore is a science in its own right, distinct from all others.

Ethics is a categorically normative science because its directives are unconditional, absolute and obligatory. Ethics commands that all men, at all times, under all conditions ought to act as men that are faithful to and in conformity with their rational nature.

Ethics is a practical science since it studies how human acts are directed towards man's ultimate purpose or end. It not only treats of human activity but it aims at directing it. It does not stop at the contemplation of truth, but applies that learning to human acts, providing the necessary knowledge so that man may act in a morally upright way. Ethics is a practical science, i.e. it directs man's life of action. It is the most important practical science, since it studies the ultimate end of man, which ensures his happiness as well as the means to attain it.

Ethics studies human acts from a moral perspective, in so far as they are morally good or bad. This is known by taking into account the last end of man; whatever leads him to his real end is good and whatever deviates him from that end is bad. The study of the last end of man, which is God, and of the morality of human acts is proper to ethics. Human acts comprise the material object of ethics. Ethics deals with human acts, which proceed from the free will according to the dictates of reason. Since they depend on man and do not arise in a necessary manner, they entail moral responsibility. Acts performed by an individual, which are not subject to his will and reason, are not called strictly human acts but rather natural acts. The relation of human acts to man's last end is the formal object of ethics. Hence ethics is based on metaphysics; the latter studies God as the First Cause and Ultimate End of all creation, and particularly, of man.

2.5. LOGIC

Logic is the systematic study of the general structures of sound reasoning and valid arguments. It is the study of the methods and principles used to distinguish good (correct) from the bad (incorrect) reasoning. This does not mean that only a student of logic can reason well or correctly. To say so would imply that to run well one requires studying the physics and physiology. However it is true that a person who has studied logic is more likely to reason correctly than one who has never thought about the general principles involved in the activity. There are several reasons for that. First, the proper study of logic will enable the student to reason well, as practice can make one perfect. Second, the study of logic gives attention to the analysis of fallacies which are common and finds often natural mistakes in reasoning. Finally the study of logic will give the students techniques and methods for testing the correctness of different kinds of reasoning. Logic will provide us with criteria to correct reasoning with which we can test arguments for their correctness.

Logic is best defined as the science of reasoning. Reasoning is a special kind of thinking in which problems are solved, in which inference takes place, that is, in which conclusions are drawn from premises. Logic examines how the mind functions in reaching valid arguments and what are the criteria for validity of these arguments. The logician is concerned with the correctness of the completed process of reasoning. The logician asks: do the conclusions reached from the premise used or assumed? Do the premises provide good reasons for accepting the conclusion? If the premises do provide adequate grounds for affirming the conclusion, then the reasoning is correct, otherwise it is incorrect.

Logic is either deductive or inductive because one can argue from the universal to the particular (deduction) or from the particular to the universal. (induction). Deduction is pure reasoning while induction has recourse to experience and observation. A deductive argument involves the claim that the premises provide conclusive grounds for its conclusion. An inductive argument is an argument, which claims only that the premises provide some evidences for the conclusion. Hence, one of the basic differences between the deductive and the inductive argument is the strength of the claim made for the argument. In deduction we pass from the truth of the universal to the truth of the particular, in induction we pass from the truth of many particular instances to the truth of a universal law.

Every man is mortal.

Socrates is a man

Therefore Socrates is mortal (Deduction).

This man is mortal
That man is mortal
Therefore all men are mortal. (Induction)

Check your progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What are the main characteristics of Ethics that can be deduced from its Definition.

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2. What is Logic?

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2.6. PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OR PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN

In philosophical language the expression ‘Philosophical Anthropology’ came into use only in recent decades. It was with Rene Descartes (1596-1650) with the affirmation of the anthropocentric perspective, that the human person became the centre and the focal point of philosophy. The centre of concern in modern and contemporary philosophy is the human individual and his/her problems. Man is the main concern of our time. We live in an anthropocentric world, where human person is considered as the centre and summit and measure of everything.

Etymologically the word anthropology is derived from the Greek stem “Antropos” (man) and the noun “logos” (science). Its literal meaning is therefore, ‘the science of man’. Philosophical Anthropology is a reflection on man as he is; his origin, nature, meaning of life and destiny. It studies man and all his actions, what makes him human, his fundamental nature, his essential properties and potentialities in order to arrive at profound convictions about man. It is Kant who first used the term anthropology. He defined anthropology “as a systematically ordered doctrine of the knowledge of man”. Philosophical Anthropology deals with those vital and significant questions that touch our own very existence – Who am I? Why am I in this world? Where am I going? etc.

Man asks questions about his proper nature. This is possible because he has self awareness and self understanding. But the same capacities indicate that he does not understand himself completely. He knows that as a spiritual being, he is the master of himself, capable of self comprehension. But he also knows that he is essentially linked to the obscurity of materiality and contingency which hinder the complete knowledge of oneself. This duality determines the nature of man and from this arises the possibility and the necessity of man’s questioning.

2.7. AESTHETICS OR PHILOSOPHY OF ART

Traditionally it is described as the branch of philosophy dealing with beauty or the beautiful, especially in art and with taste and standards of value in judging art. Aesthetics is now achieving a more independent status as the subject which studies (a) work of art, (b) the process of producing and experiencing art and (c) certain aspects of nature. (eg. Sunsets, flowers, human beings, machines). Philosophers of art inquire into the nature and function of art and the nature of art experience. They also deal with the questions of whether such qualities are objectively present in the things or whether they exist only in the mind of the perceiver. Some questions of interest in philosophy of art are; why is an object called beautiful? Is art something that takes place in a triangular relationship; the artist, the art object, and the person appreciating it as art? Would a beautiful statue remain art, even if nobody appreciated it? Does art reflect reality? Etc. These and similar questions constitute the subject matter of aesthetics.

Etymological Reference

The term 'aesthetics' is derived from the Greek word for perception, *aesthesis*. The term aesthetics was first used by Alexander Baum Garten in his work "Aesthetica". However philosophical enquiry concerning the arts flourished in antiquity, the most celebrated discussion appearing in Plato's 'Republic' and Aristotle's 'Poetics'. Plato argues that art is imitation. In saying that art is an 'imitation' Plato sets a precedent that many philosophers follow in such views as art as expression, art as a wish fulfillment, art as a play etc. he maintains that the objects are beautiful In the West the history of systematic philosophizing of arts begins with Plato. From then on the philosophy of aesthetics is on the move.

Aesthetic as a Philosophical Discipline

Art and aesthetics are, today, in a period of rapid and radical change. It was only in the beginning of the 18th century that aesthetics was designated a separate discipline within philosophy. Modernism assumed that art has an important role to play in the evolution of the society. Before social values and norms can be stated logically, they must be intuitively explored by artists. In spite of all the variation in art and taste, it is possible for us to reach an agreement in our interpretations or judgments of art works. The interpretations of the works of art can be objective. This view is pertaining to the assumption that the works of art remains the same irrespective of 'who looks at it.' Though the interpretations of the work of art may vary with viewers the work itself remains the same.

2.8. PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

It is a philosophical thinking or reflection on religion by applying the philosophical method. It takes up basic problems relating to our belief in God. It also speculates about the origin, nature and function of religion. The task of Philosophy of Religion is to explain as best as it can, in its own language and to the rational and intellectual parts of man the beliefs, truths, the experience and the laws of religion. When Philosophy of Religion studies different religions, it finds that there is a fundamental unity that lies at the root of every religion with regard to three matters; *faith in god, *belief in the immortality of the soul, *and the fundamental principles of morality. All religions are trying to lead man to god. This fact enables man to have a synthetic attitude towards religion that all religions are different paths to the one God. It will enable one to respect other religions than one's own.

The aim of Philosophy of Religion is to render an important service to religion, analyzing and refining religious beliefs by separating the essential from the accidental elements of faith. It articulates the true idea of God, man and the universe. It liberates religion from religiosity, which is an excessive adherence to the external practices of religion. It makes intelligible the religious faith and enables man to lead a life of selfless love, truthfulness, justice, tolerance and forgiveness. Philosophy defends religion from the attack of heretics, deepening and evaluating the teaching of Sacred Scriptures. A philosophical approach to religion may well produce fresh understanding and increased clarity upon which an even deeper commitment can be made. Thus it enables man to become convinced of what he believes and practice it in his daily life with more earnestness.

There are three features of religion that are of particular interest to philosophy of religion: 1) Religious experience – what it is, and what sort of knowledge it can yield. 2) Miracles – where there can be sufficient evidence to prove that a miracle has taken place. 3) The problem of evil – whether there is any actual contradiction between the existence of evil and the existence of a good and omnipotent God.

Philosophy of Religion is not concerned with the defense and rational justification of religious beliefs against attacks. Rather it is a philosophical understanding of religious facts. It is committed to reason and philosophical method. Therefore the theists, the agnostics and even the atheists can study philosophy of religion because it is a philosophizing of religion.

Philosophy of Religion is an antidote to all kinds of dogmatism, fanaticism, irrationalism and superstitions in religions, which have been responsible for much abuse of its name. Often religions tend to put the cart before the horse, i.e., absolute doctrines on transcendental realities are given priority over the due place of man and eventually might become hostile to other religious views. Philosophy of religion points out such defects with the help of reasoning power. It can also very well help us to reject superstitions and blind beliefs from the religion. Thus it purifies religion of its distortions. The reason can help us control the infra - rational and lead us towards supra - rational.

2.9. PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

The perennial issue in the philosophy of mind has been the so called *mind-body problem*; the problem of how the mind is related to the body. It was the French philosopher Rene Descartes who, for the first time, paid sustained attention to the mind. Descartes' work represented a turning point in the thinking about the mind by making a strong distinction between bodies and minds, or the physical and the mental. This duality between the mind and the body, known as Cartesian dualism, has posed significant problems for philosophy ever since. A central issue in the philosophy of mind is the relationship between the mind and the body: How does the mind affect the body and vice versa.

For Descartes the body and the mind causally interact with each other. For example, our thoughts and intentions cause our limbs to move. In this way, the mind can affect the body. On the other hand external objects, through the senses, affect the brain and mental states. The sight of a snake causes fear in us. Thus the body may affect the mind. Exactly how the mind can affect the body,

and vice versa, is a central issue in the philosophy of the mind, and is known as the mind-body problem.

Other important issues in the philosophy of mind include those of personal identity, immortality, and artificial intelligence. According to Christianity, the soul is the source of a person's identity. In Descartes' view our personal essence is composed more fundamentally of mind and the preservation of the mind after death would constitute our continued existence.

For materialism nothing enduring remains once a physical body is destroyed. Some materialists think that a person consists of a stream of mental events linked by memory. It is these links of memory rather than a single underlying substance that provide the unity of a single consciousness. Immortality is conceivable if we think of these memory links as persisting and connecting to a later consciousness.

2.10. PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Philosophy of nature is that branch of philosophy that studies the nature of the external world, of material reality. The problem of philosophy of nature is this: To what degree, if any, do physical objects match our sensation? If we believe that physical objects exist outside of our sensations of them, we are realists. Direct realists believe that physical objects have all the characteristics that we normally think they have – colors, shapes, solid surfaces, sharp edges, tastes, odours, and sounds.

Scientific realists believe that physical objects are atoms flying about in a mostly empty space. According to them, these bizarre entities cause perceivers to experience illusions of familiar, solid physical objects possessing colors and sharp edges. If we believe that no physical objects exist, we are phenomenologists. Phenomenologists believe that neither physical objects nor space exist. According to them, the only things that exist are non-physical minds and their contents such as thoughts and sensations.

One major area of concern for philosophy of nature is the way we come to have knowledge of the structures of the world. This concern is addressed by philosophy of science, which is a reflection on the methods we employ to come to know physical reality. It analyses the methods of science and assesses its limitations and strengths. It asks questions such as: What is scientific method? What are laws and theories? What is scientific explanation? What is the ontological status of theoretical entities?

2.11. COMPLEMENTARITY

What is complementarity? *Complementarity* is “the interrelation of reciprocity whereby one thing supplements or depends on the other.” When we take different disciplines in philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology, logic, ethics, aesthetics etc) we can see that these are the different aspects of the same reality. All these disciplines supplement each other to arrive at the ultimate truth regarding God, world and man.

Emmanuel Kant in his book 'Critique of pure Reason' says that there are three important questions in philosophy. 1. What can I know? (Epistemology) 2. What may I do? (Ethics) 3. What may I hope for? (Metaphysics) These three questions can be answered only if I answer the question: Who is man? (Anthropology). According to David Hume science of man is the only solid foundation for other sciences. All the questions regarding God, world etc. have relevance only with regard to man.

Every discipline should ultimately aim at giving meaning to man's life and should help him to lead a successful life. Hence one discipline can be relevant only in relation to another.

Metaphysics is the nucleus of philosophy. The other branches of philosophy study their subject matter from the perspective of metaphysics. Metaphysics in its study of the being of things discovers 'laws of beings' that are universally valid for all reality, obtains conclusions applicable to all beings and ultimately reaches God as the First Cause of the being of all things. The other philosophical disciplines coincide with metaphysics in their search for the ultimate cause of reality. However they limit their study to some type of beings, which have a specific manner of being, for example bodies as well as living things. Thus they do not arrive at universal conclusions reached by metaphysics.

Ethics finds its foundation in Metaphysics. In order to determine the conformity of human acts to man's end, one has to consider basic truths about God, creation, the spiritual nature of man and his freedom which are the topics studied by metaphysics. There had been modern attempts to elaborate an ethical system without God. But they did not succeed because they lacked an adequate foundation because they could not account for the genuine meaning of human life.

Ethics has a close link with philosophy of man because both disciplines deal with the question of morality. Ethics has to rely on the studies of the philosophy of man when it deals with the spirituality of the human soul, intellectual and sense knowledge, the will and human freedom.

Logic too has its foundation in metaphysics, for the relations that the mind establishes among the products of intellectual knowledge ought to reflect the order existing in reality; otherwise the mental process will be incorrect and will not lead to the truth.

Epistemology and metaphysics are also closely related because epistemology deals with the objective value of intellectual knowledge in relation to its primary object, it deals with being.

2.12. LET US SUM UP

Thus, philosophy is a comprehensive approach to life and the world, closely related to main areas of human experience, which unifies the results of the views and insight of moral philosophy, aesthetics, religion etc.

The term complementarity could be better understood if one takes contradiction and opposition into consideration. There is complementarity and also opposition. We need to think of these two concepts and terms.

Search for truth is the ultimate aim of every discipline. Truth will have the ultimate victory. A student of a particular discipline of philosophy, who is a seeker of truth, must be ready to love the truth. He must be convinced that falsification or distortion of facts cannot hold ground for long. One cannot fool the people forever. Sentimental attachments or personal bias should not stand in the way of acquiring true knowledge. There should be the urge to free oneself from falsehood and ignorance. Our motto should everywhere be “let truth prevail”. When met with opposition, even if it should be our close friends and relatives, endeavor to overcome it by reasoning and arguments. Hence when every discipline supplement each other we get a better understanding of what reality is.

Check your progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is the subject matter of Anthropology?

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2. What is the ultimate aim of every discipline in Philosophy?

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2.13 KEY WORDS

Being: Being is that which is in some way or something.

Reasoning: Reasoning is the argument from premises to conclusion.

Premises: Premises are the basic statements from which conclusion is derived.

Dogmatism: Dogmatism is the view that fundamental principles should not be questioned or doubted.

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2.15. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress I

1. Metaphysics is the heart and the crowning point of philosophy. Metaphysics may be defined as the study of the ultimate cause and of the first and most universal principles of reality. It studies reality, seeking its ultimate causes in an absolute sense precisely in so far as they are, in so far as they exist, in so far as they are real and offers a comprehensive view of all that exist. Metaphysics is the foundational science which seeks to understand all reality, all beings in terms of the universal properties, laws and ultimate causes of BEING as such.

2. Human knowing consists of three main activities namely experiencing, understanding, and judging and all these three constitute the structure of human knowing.

- 1 Experiencing- It includes seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, imagining etc.
- 2 Understanding- It includes inquiring, conceiving, formulating in concepts and hypothesis etc.
- 3 Judging- It includes reflecting, weighing of evidence, affirming etc.

Check your progress II

1. Ethics is a science. It is a science in as much as it is a set or body of reasonable truths organized in a systematic way and having its specific material and formal objects. The material object of ethics is the conduct of man – the acts controlled by his will. The formal object of ethics is the rightness or wrongness, the goodness or badness of human conduct. Ethics therefore is a science in its own right, distinct from all others.

Ethics is a categorically normative science because its directives are unconditional, absolute and obligatory. Ethics commands that all men, at all times, under all conditions ought to act as men that are faithful to and in conformity with their rational nature.

Ethics is a practical science since it studies how human acts are directed towards man's ultimate purpose or end. It not only treats of human activity but it aims at directing it. It does not stop at the contemplation of truth, but applies that learning to human acts, providing the necessary knowledge so that man may act in a morally upright way. Ethics is a practical science, i.e. it directs man's life of action. It is the most important practical science, since it studies the ultimate end of man, which ensures his happiness as well as the means to attain it.

2. Logic is best defined as the science of reasoning. Reasoning is a special kind of thinking in which problems are solved, in which inference takes place, that is, in which conclusions are

drawn from premises. Logic examines how the mind functions in reaching valid arguments and what are the criteria for validity of these arguments. The logician is concerned with the correctness of the completed process of reasoning. The logician asks: do the conclusions reached from the premise used or assumed? Do the premises provide good reasons for accepting the conclusion? If the premises do provide adequate grounds for affirming the conclusion, then the reasoning is correct, otherwise it is incorrect.

Check your progress III

1. The material object of our study is the total man. Philosophical anthropology studies man and all his actions in order to understand him thoroughly and to arrive at profound convictions about man. It is a journey towards one's truest self to discover one's personal vocation, who one is in the deepest sense.

The formal object of Philosophical Anthropology is the study of the identity and uniqueness of human persons. It is concerned with the humanity (subjectivity) of man. So Philosophical Anthropology studies man as a subject who thinks, wills and feels and who is related to himself, fellow beings, nature and God.

2. Search for truth is the ultimate aim of every discipline. Truth will have the ultimate victory. A student of a particular discipline of philosophy, who is a seeker of truth, must be ready to love the truth. He must be convinced that falsification or distortion of facts cannot hold ground for long. One cannot fool the people forever. Sentimental attachments or personal bias should not stand in the way of acquiring true knowledge. There should be the urge to free oneself from falsehood and ignorance. Our motto should everywhere be "let truth prevail". When met with opposition, even if it should be our close friends and relatives, endeavor to overcome it by reasoning and arguments. Hence when every discipline supplement each other we get a better understanding of what reality is.



UNIT 3 METHODS IN PHILOSOPHY

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3.0. OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we explain the basic points of method in philosophy. The main methods developed by philosophers of the West and India will be briefly explained here. We will also detail the common meaning of each method and their general characteristics. This is an overview of the major philosophical methods.

By the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- understand the meaning of method in philosophy;
- describe the various methods in philosophy;
- comprehend the complementary function of different methods; and
- explain the method of philosophizing as the core philosophy.

3.1. INTRODUCCION

The term 'method' is derived from the Greek 'methodos' ('road to'). Hence

etymologically the term refers to the way of doing something, the system of procedure to obtain or reach the end intended. It is the way of procedure from the known to the unknown, from a given starting point to final propositions in a determined field of knowledge. In speculative sciences it indicates the road to propositions concerning that which exists or is thought to exist; whereas in normative sciences it indicates the road to the norms governing the doing of something. In the sciences, the use of correct methods is most important in order to make certain that the conclusions are correctly connected with the starting point and the foundation. Every scientific method is the road from the known starting point to a result which in one or the other is linked to this starting point. This connection can be established through logical reasoning or deduction, or through induction, synthesis, or analysis. The characteristic feature of the discipline of philosophy is the existence of different methods in it. When there was no distinction between science and philosophy and all knowledge was philosophy, it was thought that the task of

philosophy was to give a complete and coherent account of the universe as a whole. This view originated in ancient Greece and lasted for several centuries in the West until alternatives to it were developed. This Unit includes brief overviews of a few of the prominent Western and Indian philosophical methods with the humble proposal of an alternative view that might take into account some of their concerns.

3.2. WESTERN METHODS

Speculative Method

The intellectual development reached its climax in Athens as the various streams of Greek thought converged there during the fifth century B.C. The age of Pericles saw Athens at the peak of its cultural creativity and political influence. The development of democracy and technical advances in agriculture and navigation encouraged humanistic spirit and speculative method. Pre-socratic philosophers had been relatively isolated in their speculations. Now in Athens such philosophical speculation became more representative of the city's intellectual life as a whole, which continued to move toward conceptual thought, critical analysis, reflection, and dialectic.

Dialectic Method

Dialectic method of Socrates and Plato was essentially a method of discussion and debate in which the participants progressed from one point to another, each one disputing the point of the other until they could reach an undisputable point. It consisted in reasoning through rigorous dialogue as a method of intellectual investigation intended to expose false beliefs and elicit truth. The strategy was to take up a sequence of questions with whomever one was in discussion, relentlessly analyzing one by one the implications of the answers in such a way as to bring out the flaws and inconsistencies inherent in a given belief or statement. Attempts to define the essence of something were rejected one after another as being either too wide or too narrow. Often such an analysis ended in complete perplexity. Yet such times it was clear that philosophy was concerned less with knowing the right answers than with the strenuous attempt to discover those answers. To practice philosophy in the dialectic method was continually to subject one's thoughts to the criticism of reason in earnest dialogue with others. Genuine knowledge was not something that could simply be received from another, but was rather a personal achievement, won only at the cost of constant intellectual struggle and self-critical reflection.

Dialectic takes a different turn in Hegel. Hegelian dialectic is not merely epistemological, but ontological too. The method of dialectic involves thesis-antithesis-synthesis in which thesis, antithesis and synthesis are only different 'moments' in the movement of thought resulting in both continuity and difference. The very birth of the thesis is the birth of the antithesis as well as the synthesis. The thesis carries the seeds of the antithesis within itself and the two together carry in them the seeds of synthesis. Dialectic is not a one time movement. It does not stop once a synthesis is reached out of a thesis and an antithesis. It moves on to a higher level in the next stage to a new moment when the synthesis of the previous level itself becomes the new thesis

which generates its antithesis and from which yet another synthesis emerges. In this new synthesis, something of the previous synthesis remains, but with something from its antithesis added on. This novel synthesis again becomes the thesis for the next level of dialectical movement and it goes on like this.

Retortive Method

Towards the end of the patristic period, Augustine tried to answer the problem of certainty with his method of retorsion. He held that the skeptics are mistaken in assuming that certainty of knowledge is impossible and that human can achieve only “probable knowledge,” i.e., ideas whose validity is highly probable. Since any degree of probable knowledge implies an approach toward completely certain knowledge, the assumption of probably valid truths presupposes the existence and attainability of absolute truths. If the skeptic argues that no real objects of his sensory experience exist, nevertheless he cannot doubt the fact that his perception does exist. The person who doubts all truths is caught in a logical dilemma, for one must exist in order to doubt; in fact, no matter what else one doubts, one proves one’s own existence through the act of doubting. Nor is it of any use to suggest that one might err in thinking that one exists, for ‘even if one errs, one exists’ (*Si fallor, sum*).

Scholastic Method

The scholastic method – a creative synthesis of several previous methods – of Thomas Aquinas further supported the Augustinian view of certainty. Thomas was certain of concepts having their foundation in sense perception. He accepted Abelard’s view of the relationship between universals and particulars, including the Aristotelian thesis that Plato’s universals can be found only in particular things which thus become actualities detectable in sense experience. For Aquinas too, the universal nature, the essence, of a thing exists immanently in the object itself as part of the real world, but this universal characteristic (this substantial form of an object) is also an idea or concept separated from its object when it is abstracted by the human mind. As a part of the real world, the universal essence never exists independently of its object. Yet, before nature was created, these universals (essences) existed in the mind of God as archetypes or ideas which God used in creating the universe. Thus the Moderate Realism of Aquinas accepts not only Aristotle’s view that universals exist in individual objects (*universalis in re*) but also asserts that universals exist in the mind of God prior to the particular objects (*universalia ante rem*) and in the mind of human (as concepts) after the particular object has been created (*universalia post rem*). Thus truth is understood as the conformity between mind and object.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) Explain clearly the difference between Greek and Hegelian dialectical methods.

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2) What do you understand by retortive method?
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Cartesian Method

Descartes was also bothered by the same question of certainty. He became fascinated by the question of whether there was anything we could know for certain. He distinguished between certainty and truth. For him, certainty is a state of mind, whereas truth is a property of statements which usually relates to the way things are out there in the external world. But Descartes believed that only if one had grounds for certainty could one know that one had hold of the truth. The pursuit of truth involves the pursuit of certainty. He wanted that the method he was looking for would have to be one which not only delivered the goods in the form of worthwhile conclusions but could also defend itself against the arguments of sceptics. So he engaged himself in what might be called *pre-emptive scepticism* by which he wanted to put the foundations of knowledge beyond the reach of scepticism. He did it in three stages. First, he laid aside things that just on ordinary commonsensical grounds one might possibly find doubtful. For instance, he reminded himself of such well-known facts as that straight sticks can look bent in water. But he wanted to go beyond such ordinary kind of doubt. Second, he doubted that at any given moment he was awake and perceiving anything at all. For he had often dreamt in the past that he was perceiving things, and when he was dreaming, he had thought that he was seeing people, or tables, or whatever, around him. But, of course, he had woken up and found it was all illusion. Third, he imagined a malign spirit whose sole intent was to deceive him as much as it could. However, the point at which the doubt stops is the reflection that he is himself engaged in thinking. No malicious demon can ever make one to believe that one is thinking when one is not. If one has a false thought, that is still a thought. So his fundamental first certainty was 'I think, therefore I am' (*Cogito ergo sum*).

Empiricist Method

The empiricist method of philosophy advocated by Locke, Berkley, and Hume held that *all* essential truths about the world were discoverable only by empirical experience. Thus, reason was substituted by empirical experience. It was above all John Locke who set the tone for empiricist method by affirming the foundational principle of empiricism: 'There is nothing in the intellect that was not previously in the senses' (*Nihil est in intellectu quod non antea fuerit in sensu*). All knowledge of the world must rest finally on human's sense experience. Through the

combining and compounding of simple sense impressions or 'ideas' (defined as mental contents) into more complex concepts, the mind can arrive at sound conclusions. The mind is at first a blank tablet, a passive receptor of its experience. The mind possesses innate powers, but not innate ideas as cognition begins only with sensation.

Critical Method

The intellectual challenge that faced Kant was a seemingly impossible one: on the one hand, to reconcile the claims of science to certain and genuine knowledge of the world with the claim that experience could never give rise to such knowledge; on the other hand, to reconcile the claim of religion that human was morally free with the claim of science that nature was entirely determined by necessary laws. With these several conflicting claims, an intellectual crisis of profound complexity had emerged. Kant's method of resolution of that crisis was equally complex, brilliant, and weighty in its consequences.

According to Kant, the human mind does not passively receive sense data, but it actively structures them. Human, therefore, knows objective reality to the extent that reality conforms to the fundamental structures of the mind. All human knowledge of the world is channelled through the mind's own categories. The necessity and certainty of scientific knowledge are embedded in the mind's perception and understanding of the world. The mind does not conform to objects; rather, objects conform to the mind. Human can attain certain knowledge of the world, not because one has the power to penetrate to and grasp the world in itself, but because the world is saturated with the principles of one's own mental organization. Hence, human could know things only as they appear, not as they are in themselves. A genuine philosophical method should investigate the formal structure of the mind and analyze the nature and limits of human reason. Although reason cannot decide matters transcending experience, it can determine what cognitive factors are intrinsic to all human experience and inform all experience with its order.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Briefly interpret the statement that Descartes engaged himself in *pre-emptive scepticism* by which he wanted to put the foundations of knowledge beyond the reach of scepticism.

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1. Comment on the critical view of Kant that 'mind does not conform to objects, but objects conform to mind.'

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Analytical Method

Analytical philosophy refers to various contemporary methods of analysing the language. Other names for it are 'philosophical analysis,' 'logical analysis,' and 'scientific philosophy.' The names 'logical positivism,' 'scientific empiricism,' and 'neo-positivism,' refer to the tendency within analytical philosophy which has as its main target the 'verification principle,' i.e., the criterion of truth consists in its capacity of being verified by sense experience. The second branch of analytical philosophy is 'linguistic analysis' as it emphasizes the analysis of the language used in philosophy.

The verification principle and language analysis are not incompatible; both can be found in one movement. Furthermore, one should not confuse 'analytical philosophy' with symbolic logic. The latter is a system of expressing the rules of correct thinking through mathematical symbols, instead of using words as in traditional logic. Symbolic logic is only an instrument of philosophy rather than a philosophical position. Although its use is strongly advocated by most analytical philosophers to avoid some ambiguities proper to conventional words, it is not required by all philosophical analysts.

Pragmatic Method

Pragmatism is a philosophical method founded by three American philosophers: Charles Sanders Peirce, William James and John Dewey. Peirce argued that the function of inquiry is not to represent reality, but rather enable us to act more effectively. He was critical of the 'copy theory' of knowledge which had dominated philosophy since the time of Descartes. He was also one of the first philosophers to say that the ability to use signs is essential to thought. Peirce's thought was further extended by James, whose *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) broke with the associationism of Locke and Hume. James held that "The true"...is only the expedient in our way of thinking.' Truth is what 'works,' and not merely an idea of a harmony between thought and the things, since one could make a judgment about this only by means of thought and the things are accessible only within thought. Ideas are true to the extent that they help us to enter into satisfactory relationships with other parts of our experience. James and Dewey both wanted to reconcile philosophy with Darwin by making human being's pursuit of the true and the good (cultural evolution) continuous with the activities of the lower animals (biological evolution). Dewey criticized the Cartesian notion of the self as a substance which existed prior to language and culture, and substituted an account of the self as a product of social practices. Dewey, whose primary interests were in cultural, educational and political reform rather than in specifically philosophical problems, developed the implications of pragmatism for ethics and social philosophy.

Phenomenological Method

The main objective of the phenomenological method is the enlarging and deepening of the range of our immediate experience under the watchword 'to the things themselves' (*Zu den Sachen selbst*). Its interpretation may vary; but the common concern is that of giving the phenomena a fuller and fairer hearing than traditional empiricism has accorded them. Negatively it expresses a revolt against an approach in philosophy that takes its point of departure from crystallized beliefs and theories handed down by a tradition which often perpetuates preconceptions and prejudices. In this respect phenomenology stands for a kind of rebellion against the trend in modern science which begins with simplifying abstractions and ends with a minimum vocabulary of scientific concepts.

Deconstructive Method

In a deconstructive reading the text in question is shown to harbour contradictory logics which are standardly ignored. Very often it is a matter of locating certain clearly-marked binary opposition (as for instance between nature and culture, speech and writing, concept and metaphor, or philosophy and literature) and showing that their order of priority is by no means as stable as the text seeks to maintain. That is to say, there is a counter-logic at work whereby those distinctions can be shown to break down, or to generate a reading markedly at odds with author's overt intent. This leaves open the possibility that texts may mean something other and more than is allowed for by any straight-forward appeal to the authorial intention.

Transcendental Method

Transcendental method is a way of reflecting upon and interpreting the previous conditions of the possibility of an act of knowledge. Such a way of interpreting has been understood by Kant in his Critique of Pure Reason: "I entitle *transcendental* all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects in so far as this mode of knowledge is to be possible *a priori*." The method aims at discovering and explaining the knowledge which is prior and which makes possible every knowledge of objects. This knowledge is not explicitly available before all other kinds of knowledge. It is a pre-knowledge, a basic knowledge, which is implicit in every kind of empirical knowledge, and it can be made explicit only through a reflection upon the previous conditions of the possibility of empirical knowledge by both transcendental reduction and transcendental deduction. *Transcendental reduction* is a thematic uncovering of the conditions and presuppositions implied in the immediate data of consciousness. It is a return from that which is thematically known to that which is unthematically co-known in the act of consciousness. It is a return to that which is pre-known (pre-apprehended) as a condition of the act. *Transcendental deduction* is the movement of the mind from this previous datum uncovered reductively. In transcendental deduction, the mind deduces *a priori* the empirical act of consciousness, its nature, its possibility and its necessity from the previous datum uncovered reductively. In other words, *reduction* proceeds from a particular experience to the conditions of its possibility; whereas *deduction* proceeds from these conditions to the essential structures of the same experience. These movements are in constant interaction, influencing each other.

3.3. INDIAN METHODS

Indian epistemology accepts six means of knowledge (*pramanas*): perception, inference, verbal testimony, comparison, presumption, and non-cognition. Srinivasa Rao, in one of his recent articles, discusses these means of knowledge showing the intrinsic relation between metaphysics and epistemology. *Pratyaksha* (perception) is sense perception including mental perception. Perception may be determinate or indeterminate, ordinary or extraordinary, or yogic. This is a method universally accepted by all schools of Indian philosophy, but with their own individually prescribed interpretations. *Anumana* (inference) is necessarily linked with a universal relation and its recognition. The universal relation must have been cognized on a previous occasion, and must be re-cognized for inferential knowledge to occur. It is a process of reasoning by which we are led to what is not given in perception, but is always based on what is given in perception. This inference may be for oneself (*svathanumana*) as in the case of a person non-verbally inferring within oneself the presence of fire on the hill upon observing smoke there; or, it may be for another person (*parathanumana*), expressed in language, as when one argues to prove that there must be fire on the hill because smoke is observed. *Sabda* (verbal testimony) is a means of valid knowledge that enjoys a special kind of centrality in many schools. If a person has known things as they really are, his / her testimony should be accepted as a legitimate source of knowledge until we ourselves are able to attain direct knowledge of things. In several fields of knowledge, we accept the testimony of others even without questioning the truth of such testimony. *Upamana* (comparison) yields knowledge derived from judgments of similarity. A remembered object is like a perceived one. “y is like x,” where x is immediately perceived and y is an object perceived on a previous occasion that becomes the content of consciousness in the form of memory. For example, if someone has never seen a wild cow but has been told by others that it looks like a domestic cow, he will know that it is a wild cow when he, later on, sees a wild cow in the forest. *Arthapatti* (postulation or presumption) is knowledge obtained through postulating a fact in order to make another fact intelligible. For instance, a man fasts during the day, but continues to gain weight. Then one must assume, barring physiological problems, that he eats at night. *Anupalabdhi* (non-cognition) is the only means of the cognition of non-existence. It yields knowledge of absence where an object would be immediately perceived if it were there. However, not every instance of the non-cognition of something proves its non-existence. For example, the failure of a person to see a chair in a dark room (i.e., non-apprehension by the person) by no means indicates that the chair is not there. Hence, for non-apprehension to be a sign of absence, the attempt at apprehension must be under appropriate conditions, which are conditions sufficient to perception.

These six ways of knowing have played a very important role in the development of Indian philosophy. For example, if certain forms of verbal testimony like the Vedas were not to be allowed as sources of correct knowledge, the entire system of *Vedanta* would have been impossible. Besides, *pramanas* assume significance because of the inseparable relation between epistemology and metaphysics.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) Has phenomenology succeeded in its concern of giving the phenomena a fuller and fairer hearing than traditional empiricism has accorded them?

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2) Explain briefly that Indian epistemology accepts six means of knowledge (*pramanas*).

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3.4. LET US SUM UP

A philosophical method is established through logical reasoning, i.e., through deduction, induction, synthesis, or analysis. The characteristic feature of philosophy is the existence of different methods in it. The Pre-socratic philosophers mainly followed a speculative method that continued to move toward certainty and truth through conceptual thought, critical analysis, reflection, and dialectic. Dialectical method of Socrates and Plato was essentially a method of debate in which the participants progressed from one point to another, each one disputing the point of the other until they could reach a point of certainty. Towards the end of the patristic period, St. Augustine demonstrated that the skeptics are mistaken in assuming that certainty of knowledge is impossible. The scholastic method of Thomas Aquinas further supported the Augustinian view of certainty. Descartes was also bothered by the same question of certainty. He became fascinated by the question of whether there was anything we could know for certain. The empiricists' response was that *all* essential truths about the world were certainly discoverable through experience. However, Kant argued that no certain and genuine knowledge of the world could be possible only through experience without the *apriori*, categorial structures of the mind. For the analytic philosophers, the criterion of certainty and truth is the 'verification principle,' while the pragmatists hold on to the view that 'truth is what works.' The foundational principle of phenomenological method is the indubitability or certainty of the fact, act and object of consciousness. In a deconstructive reading the text in question is *certainly* shown to harbour contradictory logics which are standardly ignored. Transcendental method, of course, is a way of reflecting upon and interpreting the *necessary apriori* conditions of the possibility of an act of knowledge. The Western philosophy's preoccupation with 'the problem of the bridge', or the problem of dichotomy of the subject and object, probably necessitated its frequent emphasis on certainty and truth, invariably inherent in all its philosophical methods too.

From what we have discussed about Indian philosophical methods, it is not wrong to say that *pramanas*, whether six or three, constitute the method in Indian metaphysical systems. There is also the well-known *purvapaksha-sidhanta* method by which every school first states the rival positions that are then criticized and shown to be untenable. It is evident from our reflection that

no one method is adequate to comprehend the whole of reality which is infinite and multidimensional.

3.5. KEY WORDS

A Priori and a Posteriori: *A Priori* is knowledge independent of experience and *a Posteriori* is knowledge based on experience.

Categorical: Categorical means unconditional statement or principle opposed to hypothetical which is conditional.

Transcendental: Transcendental means that which goes beyond particular experiences by being present in all experiences as their principle.

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3.7. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

1. Dialectic method of Socrates and Plato was essentially a method of discussion and debate in which the participants progressed from one point to another, each one disputing the point of the other until they could reach an undisputable point. Hegelian dialectic is not merely epistemological, but ontological too. The method of dialectic involves thesis-antithesis-synthesis in which thesis, antithesis and synthesis are only different 'moments' in the movement of thought resulting in both continuity and difference.

2. Method of retorsion consists in arguing that any degree of probable knowledge implies an approach toward completely certain knowledge, the assumption of probably valid truths presupposes the existence and attainability of absolute truths. The one who doubts all truths must accept the fact that one must exist in order to doubt. In fact, one proves one's own existence through the act of doubting.

Check Your Progress II

1. The *pre-emptive scepticism* of Descartes consisted in three stages. First, he laid aside things that just on ordinary commonsensical grounds one might possibly find doubtful. Second, he doubted that at any given moment he was awake and perceiving anything at all. For he had often imagined in the past that he perceived things when he was dreaming. Third, he imagined a malicious spirit who could deceive him. However, no malicious demon can ever make one to believe that one is thinking when one is not. If one has a false thought, that is still a thought. So his fundamental first certainty beyond doubt was 'I think, therefore I am' (*Cogito ergo sum*).

2. According to Kant, the human mind knows objective reality to the extent that reality conforms to the fundamental structures of the mind. All human knowledge of the world is channelled through the mind's own categories. The mind does not conform to objects, but objects conform to the mind. Human can attain certain knowledge of the world, not because one has the power to penetrate to and grasp the world in itself, but because the world is saturated with the principles of one's own mental organization. Hence, human could know things only as they appear, not as they are in themselves. A genuine philosophical method, which is critical method, investigates the formal structure of the mind and analyzes the nature and limits of human reason.

Check Your Progress III

1. The main objective of the phenomenological method is the enlarging and deepening of the range of our immediate experience under the watchword 'to the things themselves' (*Zu den Sachen selbst*). Its interpretation may vary; but the common concern is that of giving the phenomena a fuller and fairer hearing than traditional empiricism has accorded them. It expresses a revolt against an approach in philosophy that takes its point of departure from crystallized beliefs and theories handed down by a tradition which often perpetuates preconceptions and prejudices.

2. Indian epistemology in general accepts six means of knowledge (*pramanas*): perception, inference, verbal testimony, comparison, presumption, and non-cognition. *Pratyaksha* (perception), universally accepted by all schools, is sense perception including mental

perception. *Anumana* (inference) is a process of reasoning by which we are led to what is not given in perception, but is always based on what is given in perception. *Sabda* (verbal testimony) is a means of valid knowledge. If a person has known things as they really are, his / her testimony should be accepted as valid. *Upamana* (comparison) yields knowledge derived from judgments of similarity. *Arthapatti* (postulation or presumption) is knowledge obtained through postulating a fact in order to make another fact intelligible. *Anupalabdhi* (non-cognition) yields knowledge of absence where an object would be immediately perceived if it were there.



UNIT 4 NOTIONAL CLARIFICATIONS

Contents

- 4.1. Objectives
- 4.2. Introduction
- 4.3. Terms
- 4.4. Let Us Sum Up
- 4.5. Key Words
- 4.6. Further Readings and References
- 4.7. Answers to Check Your Progress

4.1. OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we explain the common terms in philosophy which a student of philosophy often comes across. These are terms frequently used and developed by philosophers of the West and India over centuries. We will also give the etymological meaning of them wherever required.

- By the end of this Unit you should be able to:
- understand the meaning of common terms in philosophy;
- comprehend them as building blocks in understanding philosophy;
- describe them in your words; and
- explain the terms showing their interconnectedness.

4.2. INTRODUCTION

A student of philosophy will frequently come across many technical concepts, obscure terms and unknown names, which can be quite puzzling. This unit contains a collection of basic philosophical concepts frequently used with simple explanations. Many terms in Philosophy may seem strange to a student because of their foreign origin, either Greek or Latin, which were the languages of philosophy for many centuries. In addition, when a need was felt for a new word or an expression, it was usually met by drawing on Greek or Latin. Hence if a student is familiar with the seemingly strange terms in philosophy, it can make the study of philosophy easier and the comprehension of many philosophical issues less problematic.

4.3. TERMS

ABSOLUTE

The term Absolute stands for the ultimate reality or principle which is perfect, complete, independent, unlimited and all-embracing. The Absolute whether it is God or another cosmic force is generally seen as the source of all things, an infinite, wholly unrestricted and entirely independent of creation. It necessarily exists and depends on nothing else. In Christian and Judaic traditions the Absolute stands for

God, the supreme spiritual power and the only independent being. In Hinduism the Absolute is called Brahman, the eternal abstract principle of cosmic existence, oneness and unity which is the ultimate goal of Hindu devotions. In Buddhism the Absolute is identified with Nirvana the ultimate goal of all Buddhist pursuits.

ABSTRACTION

Abstraction is the process of culling the universal from the particular. It is an activity of the human intellect. Generally abstraction is considered to have three stages: first, sense experience, second, formation of phantasm or image of the thing experienced, and third, formation of idea, a process by which the intellect retains only the universal element and rejects everything particular or specific. Thus the idea or concept is the final product of the process of abstraction.

AGNOSTICISM

Agnosticism signifies a position of suspended belief. According to it human beings do not have sufficient evidence to warrant either the affirmation or the denial of a proposition. It is a theory according to which things within a specified realm are unknowable. Thus for instance, some philosophers hold the view that the ultimate reality is unknowable, which is metaphysical agnosticism. Agnosticism in religion is the view that it is impossible for us to know whether or not God exists.

A PRIORI and A POSTERIORI

The concepts *a priori* and *a posteriori* stand for two kinds of knowledge according to the way the human mind apprehends. *A priori* implies knowledge without recourse to experience or knowledge *prior* to and independent of observation or experiment. *A posteriori* stands for knowledge that comes only *after* direct experience. Thus *a posteriori* is a knowledge that can be formulated only after observation or experiment. Traditionally the truths of metaphysics, mathematics, geometry and logic and certain ethical principles have been considered as *a priori*.

CAUSE

A cause is anything that has an influence on the 'to be' or existence of another. A cause is something that which produces an effect and the former is necessary for the occurrence of the latter. Aristotle (384-322 BC) divided cause into four types: *material* cause, the matter or stuff out of which something is made; *efficient* cause, the agent or the action that brings about a change; *formal* cause, the design or pattern that determines its form; and *final* cause, the purpose for which an action is done or a change is brought about or a thing is produced.

DECONSTRUCTION

Deconstruction is an interpretative method that examines a text in the context of the linguistic, social and cultural structures within which the text was formulated. It tries to show that the text is incoherent because its key terms can be understood only in relation to their suppressed opposites. The process of deconstruction exposes inconsistencies and contradictions in a given text. This leads to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a single meaning in a text, nor can it claim to express any absolute truth. To the deconstructionist language, meaning and truth are elusive, equivocal and relative. In so far as a text outlasts its author, and the particular context in which it

was created, its meanings transcend those that may have been originally intended. In this sense the reader brings as much to the text as its author. In philosophy deconstruction is primarily identified with the French Philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004).

DEDUCTION and INDUCTION

Deduction is a process of gaining knowledge independently of experience through pure logical reasoning. A valid deductive inference is one in which the conclusion is a necessary consequence of the premises so that the conclusion cannot be false, if all the premises are true. Deductive reasoning begins with a universal or general truth and leads to knowledge of a particular instance of it. The classical form of deductive reasoning is the syllogism in which a necessary conclusion is derived from two accepted premises: e.g All men are mortal, Ram is a man, and therefore, Ram is mortal.

Induction is a process of arriving at knowledge through experience. It relies on observation and experimentation. Induction begins with the particular and moves to the universal, a generalization that accounts for other examples of the same category or class. For instance, if a number of ravens have been observed, all of which are black, and if no raven has been encountered that is not black, the inferences to the conclusion that the next observed raven will be black or to the general conclusion that all ravens are black, are inductive inferences.

DUALISM

Dualism is a theory which has at its basis two radically distinct concepts or principles. Dualism implies polarity and conflict and does not admit syncretism. The clash of good and evil in religious belief provides the paradigm for most dualistic philosophical systems. In *religious* field, dualism is the belief in two opposing principles of divine beings, one good and one evil. In *metaphysics* it is the view that there are two kinds of reality: finite and infinite, matter and spirit, relative and absolute. In *philosophy of mind*, psychophysical dualism which holds the view that human beings are made up of two radically distinct constituents: body constituted by matter like other natural objects, and an immaterial mind or soul.

EMPIRICISM

Empiricism is a philosophical position that all knowledge is based on experience or from the direct observation of phenomena through sense perception and from introspection. Empiricism thus contrasts with rationalism which identifies reason as the source of knowledge. For “hard” empiricism all ideas arise *only* from experience. “Softer” empiricism states that while not all ideas are causally connected to sense perception, anything we can call knowledge must be *justified* through the test of experience.

ETHICS

Ethics is the study of moral principles and behaviour and of the nature of good, and is one of the classical fields of philosophical inquiry. It is also called moral philosophy. Ethics as a discipline can be divided into normative ethics and meta-ethics.

Normative ethics is the rational inquiry into or a theory of the standards of right and wrong, good and bad in respect of character and conduct, which ought to be accepted by a class of individuals. Normative ethics prescribes how people ought to think and behave and its main aim is to formulate valid norms of conduct and of evaluation of character. *Applied ethics* is the study of

what general norms and standards are to be applied in actual problem-situations. Much of what is called moral philosophy is normative or applied ethics.

Meta-ethics (analytical ethics) is a kind of philosophical inquiry into ethical concepts, propositions and belief systems. It analyses concepts of right and wrong, good and bad in respect of character and conduct and related concepts. It also includes *moral epistemology*: the manner in which ethical truths can be known, and *moral ontology*: whether there is a moral reality corresponding to our moral beliefs, etc. The questions of whether and in what sense morality is subjective or objective, relative or absolute, also fall under meta-ethics.

EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism is an approach in philosophy that concentrates on the concrete, existential situation of human beings. Existentialism as a philosophical movement is usually traced back to the 19th century Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). The existentialists differ widely from one another: Kierkegaard was Christian, Frederich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was an atheist, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) was a Marxist and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976).

As a philosophical position existentialism holds that in an absurd universe without intrinsic meaning or purpose people have unlimited freedom of choice and must take absolute responsibility for their actions. In this predicament the individual either chooses an authentic life or gives into despair. Freedom of the will, individual and personal responsibility, authentic existence, personal choice and commitment, subjective truth, subjective morality, feeling of being 'out there in a crowd', absurdity of life, fear, dread, anxiety, nihilism, individual aspiration rather than follow the standards and norms set by others, confidence in the significance of being human, etc. some of the important themes of the existentialists.

Check your progress I

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What does the term "absolute" mean?

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.....

2) Explain the difference between deduction and induction

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FREEDOM

Freedom is a complex concept referring to the ability of a person for self-determination and personal autonomy and self-direction. Freedom is often considered in terms of free will, the individual's capacity to choose his or her own destiny rather than follow the dictates of determinism. Sometimes a distinction is made between negative freedom and positive freedom. The former means independence of determination by alien causes or absence of coercion or constraint ("freedom from"); the latter is the same as self-determination or autonomy or being

one's own master or being in-charge of the fulfilment of one's aspirations and the ability and resources to pursue one's dreams and ambitions ("freedom to"). In both senses it revolves around the question of what controls us, our individual will or an external force.

HERMENEUTICS

Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation or the formal study of methods of interpretation. There has been reflection on the art of interpreting texts since ancient times but the word 'hermeneutics' was first used by J.C. Dannhauer in the mid-seventeenth century. He noted that texts for which a theory of interpretation was needed fell into three classes: Holy Scriptures, legal texts and literature of classical antiquity.

HUMANISM

Humanism is a philosophical outlook that emphasizes the intrinsic value, dignity, autonomy and rationality of human beings. It is based on a belief in man's capacity for self-cultivation and self-improvement and in the progress of humankind. It holds the view that *human beings are at the centre of everything* and argues that individual beings are the fundamental source of all value and have the ability to understand or even control the natural world through a careful application of their rational faculties. Modern humanism is generally non-religious if not anti-religious, seeing intelligence, creativity and morality as human-inspired rather than God-given. Today philosophers speak of various type of humanism, such as, atheistic humanism, theistic humanism, Marxian humanism, Buddhist humanism, Christian humanism, etc.

IDEALISM

Idealism is the philosophical position that ideas, not objects are the basis of reality. According to idealism the *ultimate reality is mind* and the external physical world is a mind-dependent construct. Idealism is therefore the opposite of realism and materialism. Idealism takes three general forms: that all reality is a product of the mind, that we can have knowledge only of the contents of our minds, and that the material universe is imperfect reflection of an ideal realm beyond the senses. The word 'idealism' was first used by Leibniz (1646-1716) for Plato's ontology to contrast it with Epicurus's materialism.

MATERIALISM

Materialism is a doctrine that matter and *only matter exists*. In contrast to dualism, which makes a basic distinction between mind and matter, and idealism which sees reality as fundamentally mental or spiritual, the materialist view asserts that mind is reducible to an aspect of matter. Thus materialism is a theory which gives importance to the primacy of material over the spiritual, a belief that only physical things really exist. Materialism immediately implies a denial of the existence of minds, spirits, divine beings, etc. in so far as these are taken to be non-material.

NATURAL LAW

Natural law is the ideal law, innate, universal and unchanging against which actual human law (positive law) is measured. Natural law is said to have its basis in "nature" in the natural order, in the human nature *common to all people* or in some other pervasive principle such as God. According to natural law theory, any positive law that contradicts the natural law is invalid. The classical natural law is teleological and can be traced back to Aristotle. Human conventions, laws and actions are right if they accord with the purpose of nature; if they do not, they are wrong. Early Christianity interpreted natural law as an expression of God's will and Thomas Aquinas,

going further conceived it as the *part of the eternal law* that is accessible to a human reason and therefore a proper foundation for positive law.

NIHILISM

Nihilism is a philosophical position that there are no standards, that knowledge is impossible or at least worthless, that all action, all thought, all ethical and metaphysical conjecture is baseless and empty. It is often associated with extreme pessimism and radical scepticism. A true nihilist will believe in nothing and have no loyalties and no purpose other than, perhaps an impulse to destroy. The term nihilism has been applied to various negative theses or attitudes. Among the views labelled as nihilistic are those who deny the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, the freedom of the will, the authority of reason, the possibility of knowledge, the objectivity of morals, or the ultimate happy ending of human history. Nihilism was first prominently associated with a Russian intellectual and revolutionary movement of the 1860s and was popularised by Ivan Turgenev in his 1982 novel *Fathers and Sons*. These nihilists held that nothing in the established order commanded automatic respect and nothing should be taken on faith. In western European philosophy nihilism was closely associated with the pessimism of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Frederich Nietzsche. Nihilism has had a powerful effect on the 20th century philosophy, literature and radical politics especially in Europe.

NOMINALISM

Nominalism is the view that the *universals are not real entities* either in the world or in the mind but *names* which refer to groups or classes of individual things. In other words, it is the belief that *only particular things exist*. The reality of the world can therefore be understood only in terms of particulars, that is, the individual beings that inhabit it. In the debates of the Middle Ages the nominalist position was often attacked as heretical. Nominalism was an influential current in the empiricist thought of the scientific revolution of the 17th century which valued *hard facts* and not abstract concepts. This form of nominalism survives in much of modern analytic philosophy, which argues that the foundation of reality is to be found in the *actual physical objects* we encounter, not in any overarching relations among them.

NOUMENA and PHENOMENA

In the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) the *noumena* (sig. *noumenon*) is contrasted with *phenomena* (sig. *phenomenon*), which is the object of empirical knowledge. For Kant a noumenon is an object of awareness not produced by sensory experience. According to him we have no faculty of non-sensory intuition. Hence we can have no noumenal knowledge as such. Kant also contrasted the *thing-in-itself* with the phenomenon and identified it with the noumenon. A phenomenon is a thing (a quality, a relation, a state of affairs, an event, etc) *as it appears to us* or as it is perceived. This contrast gives rise to one of the fundamental problems in philosophy whether or how far we can have knowledge of the *way things really are* (things-in-themselves) or the noumena. In Kant's philosophy awareness of a phenomenon is based on sense experience, which involves sensory intuition. In contrast we can have no direct awareness of a noumenon since we have no intellectual intuition analogous to the sensory.

OBJECTIVISM and SUBJECTIVISM

Objectivism and subjectivism are two epistemological positions in philosophy. They are two opposing approaches to the question of how individuals interact with the external world. Objectivism holds that the *world's inherent qualities determine the observer's experience* and can be accurately perceived. Subjectivism maintains that *one's own perspective* bring more to

experience than is inherent in the world and colours one's judgement. The opposition between objectivism and subjectivism is also an *ethical* problem. Is something good because of an inherent quality of goodness or because it is conventionally considered good? This question raises the problems of determining the standards of goodness.

PANTHEISM and PANENTHEISM

Pantheism (literally 'God is all') holds that *God and nature are identical*, while panentheism ('all in God') means that *God contains the world but is greater than it*. Both these views imply that God is essentially immanent in the world and is opposed to the Judeo-Christian theological tradition which maintains that the creator is separate from creation (transcendentalism). While both pantheism and panentheism have been primarily intellectual interest in Western culture, they are fundamental to animistic and other beliefs founded on the worship of nature and hold central position in many Eastern religions. The best example of Western pantheism is in the philosophy of Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677) for whom God and creation are identical, nature being a limited modification of God's presence. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel 1770-1831 presents a good instance of panentheism holding that the Absolute contains not only the world as it is but also its contradictions, and history is a gradual elimination of those contradictions in a progression to ultimate unity with the Absolute.

PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenology is a name of a highly influential school of philosophy founded by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and developed in original ways by others. The term refers to the description or study of things as they appear without engaging in any value judgement. Husserl proposed what he called the "phenomenological reduction" which required the *bracketing* or "putting aside" all conventional assumptions, including the question of the very existence of an object or impression, in order to examine life experience from a fresh, unbiased perspective. In this connection Husserl also used the Greek term *epochè* or "cessation" implying suspension of judgement. For phenomenologists *intentionality* of consciousness is central. It is a fact that our consciousness is always of something. The mind does not create reality but interacts with it. Intentionality also sees the relation between subject and object as fundamental.

POSITIVISM

Positivism is a philosophical position which holds that the only genuine knowledge is what can be obtained by using the *methods of science*. It is therefore allied to empiricism and materialism and opposed to metaphysics and theology. According to positive theories of knowledge, all knowledge is *ultimately based on sense experience* and all genuine inquiry is concerned with the description and explanation of empirical facts. The term positivism was coined in the early 19th century by the French socialist Claude-Henry Saint-Simon (1760-1825), and the concept was developed and popularised by his student Auguste Comte (1798-1857).

POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism is not a neatly definable concept because it is a minefield of conflicting notions and an amalgam of things both positive and negative. Postmodernity signifies the paradigmatic shift in contemporary life marked by a certain rupture with the dominant patterns of society, culture and intellectual life of modernity, and entry into a new historical space where everything that is considered objective, fundamental, normative, universal and transcendental is subject to radical criticism, leading consequently to a triumph of *subject-*

centred reason, metaphysical agnosticism and deconstruction, epistemological and ethical relativism, empiricism, experimentalism, pragmatism and negation of all absolute truths and values. Thus in general the word ‘post-modernism’ denotes fragmentation and promiscuous trivialisation of values, symbols and images, a widespread *culture of nihilism* and the *tyranny of relativism*.

Check your progress: II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What is phenomenology?

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2) Explain the difference between *phenomena* and *noumena*

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RATIONALISM

Rationalism is a philosophical position which claims that reason is a more dependable path to knowledge than experience or observation. According to rationalism *true knowledge springs from the operations of the faculty of reason*, rather than being based on experiences. In this sense it is the opposite of empiricism. Although the rationalist outlook can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophy and was embodied in the medieval scholastic conviction that reason and faith are compatible, the term is primarily associated with the so-called continental rationalists of the 17th century, the most important of whom were Descartes (1596-1650), Spinoza and Leibniz. Most rationalists argued that the existence of God can be deduced using the tools of reason, and faith is not a pre-requisite. Strict rationalism, holding that truth can be obtained through reason alone is no longer given much validity. The complementarity of reason and sense experience is reflected in much of the modern thinking, that is, knowledge requires both thought and experience.

REALISM

Realism is a philosophical view which maintains that we live in a world that exists independently of us and our thoughts. The implication of realism is that *there is an objective world of which we can have objective knowledge*. This position is known as metaphysical realism. A consequence of realism in this sense is that the entities are there to be discovered and that ignorance and error is possible. Epistemological realism is the view that a mind-independent of world exists in combination with the view that in perception we mentally grasp qualities and objects that are part of that world.

RELATIVISM

Relativism is a philosophical doctrine that *no truths or values are absolute* but are related to our own personal, cultural or historical perspective. *Epistemological relativism* is most commonly associated with a dictum of the sophist philosopher Protagoras (c.485-c.415 BC) who said that “man is the measure of all things”, that is, we judge things more by our own individual perceptions and prejudices than by their objective qualities. *Ethical relativism* holds that value judgments arise not from universal principles but from particular situations. This position implies that all moralities are equally good. *Cultural relativism* is the view that customs, values, artistic expressions and beliefs must be understood and judged on their own terms, as products of a particular culture not according to outsiders’ theoretical preconceptions and classifications. This approach is basic to multi-culturalism.

SKEPTICISM

Scepticism is the view that *nothing can be known with certainty*, that at best there can only be some private probable opinion. It implies that human reason has no capacity to come to any conclusions at all and that all knowledge fall short of certainty. Hence it is better to suspend belief than to rely on the dubitable products of reason. Scepticism takes two main forms: the belief that *no position is certain* (including as is frequently noted, this position), and the view that *truth exists but that certain knowledge of it may be beyond our grasp*. Ancient Greeks sceptics such as Pyrrho of Elis (c.360-c.272 BC), and the Sophists denied the possibility of knowing anything for certain.

SCHOLASTICISM

Scholasticism is the name given to Roman Catholic philosophy and theology which determined Western thinking for many centuries. The Scholastics or Schoolmen from which the movement takes its name, were scholars in the early European universities. Scholasticism is a *manner of thinking* and perhaps more important a *method of teaching* which dominated Christian learning from the 11th to the 15th century A.D. Its central figure is Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274). Much of the teaching was done via the formal method of *scholastica disputatio*, a rigorous form of the dialectic in which a question was put forth, negated on the strength of the canonical evidence, then followed by a positive statement that was also backed by scriptural and dogmatic evidence. This method became the foundation of university education and eventually in revised form of virtually all schooling up to the 20th century.

SOLIPSISM

In metaphysics solipsism is the view that *nothing exists except one’s own self* and the contents of its consciousness. In epistemology it is the view that nothing can be known except one’s own self and the contents of its consciousness. In other words, the individual human mind has no grounds for believing in anything other than itself.

SUBSTANCE

In philosophy substance is the *basic, underlying essence of a thing that gives it existence*. It is a fundamental concept in metaphysics. From the Latin *substare*, “to stand under”, substance is the *substratum of reality*. It is the independent, irreducible basis of something which remains unchanged despite any outward changes. Substance can be both physical (material) and spiritual (mental). It has no qualities or properties itself but it is that in which qualities and properties inhere. Substance is contrasted with accident, the external form and appearance of a thing. The

idea of substance was a consistent theme in philosophy from the ancient Greeks to the 19th century. Substance is the first of Aristotle's categories.

TRANSCENDENT

The general meaning of the word 'transcendent' is 'going beyond' or 'being beyond'. It is used in many contexts. The term is employed particularly and frequently in the sense of being *beyond the limits of any possible experience* and *beyond the limits of the world of experience*. For instance, God is said to be transcendent in relation to the created world. The question whether there is anything transcendent beyond the world of experience is answered in the negative by materialists and empiricists. But an argument for the opposite view is that the material world, nature, the world of experience, the world open to scientific inquiry, cannot be ultimately self-sufficient or self-explanatory, but must in its totality, be assumed to stand in some relation of dependency which, accordingly must be transcendent.

TRUTH

The question of truth, what it is and how we can recognise it, is among the oldest and most controversial themes in philosophy. Most philosophical definitions of truth have been based on the notion of "correct description", although there is wide disagreement over what constitutes "correct". Three major theories of truth have been proposed. The generally accepted approach is the *correspondence theory* which was defined by Thomas Aquinas as "the correlation of thought and object", that is, our idea of something is true if it corresponds to the actuality of things. The *coherence theory* states that something can be said to be true if it is consistent with the other elements in a coherent conceptual system. Thus a proposition is true if it is coherent with every other proposition which is part of a comprehensive system. According to the *pragmatic theory of truth*, truth is something that is judged by its practical consequences; an idea is true if its implementation achieves an intended satisfactory result or if it works or if accepting it brings success. The generally accepted theory of truth is the correspondence theory of truth.

UTILITARIANISM

Utilitarianism is a moral theory according to which an action is right if and only if it conforms to the *principle of utility*. An action conforms to the principle of utility if and only if its performance will be more productive of pleasure or happiness or more preventive of pain or unhappiness, than any alternative. Utilitarianism is generally expressed as "the greatest good for the greatest number". Thus according to utilitarians the morally superior action is the one that would result in the greatest pleasure or happiness and least pain for those to whom it would apply. The term was coined in 1871 by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and is primarily associated with him and with James Mill (1645-1707).

VOLUNTARISM

Voluntarism is a theory in which *will* is the central concept. It is the view that God or the ultimate reality is to be conceived as some form of will. This theory is contrasted with intellectualism which gives primacy to God's reason. If we maintain that moral or physical laws issue from God, we also need to answer the question whether they issue from *God's will* or God's reason. In medieval philosophy voluntarism was championed by John Duns Scotus (1266-1308) and William of Ockham (1280-1349) and intellectualism found support in Averroes (1126-1198), Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart (1260-1328).

Check your progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What is Skepticism?

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2) What do you understand by truth?

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4.4. LET US SUM UP

We have seen above some of the key philosophical concepts which a student of philosophy will frequently encounter. Hence a student should be very familiar with them and be able to describe them as clearly and precisely as possible. One should also know the distinction between the different schools of thought which many of the terms represent, and develop the ability to judge their relative and demerits.

4.5. KEY WORDS

Law: Law is the statement of what always happens or should happen.

Conduct: Conduct is deliberate or intentional behaviour.

Intellect: Intellect is the faculty of understanding.

Will: Will is the faculty of decision.

Memory: Memory is the faculty of recollection or remembrance.

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4.7. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress I

1. The term Absolute stands for the ultimate reality or principle which is perfect, complete, independent, unlimited and all-embracing. The Absolute whether it is God or another cosmic force is generally seen as the source of all things, an infinite, wholly unrestricted and entirely independent of creation. It necessarily exists and depends on nothing else.

2. Deduction is a process of gaining knowledge independently of experience through pure logical reasoning. Deductive reasoning begins with a universal or general truth and leads to knowledge of a particular instance of it. The classical form of deductive reasoning is the syllogism in which a necessary conclusion is derived from two accepted premises: e.g. All men are mortal, Ram is a man, and therefore, Ram is mortal. Induction is a process of arriving at knowledge through experience. It relies on observation and experimentation. Induction begins with the particular and moves to the universal, a generalization that accounts for other examples of the same category or class.

Check your progress II

1. Phenomenology is a name of a highly influential school of philosophy founded by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and developed in original ways by others. The term refers to the description or study of things as they appear without engaging in any value judgement. Husserl proposed what he called the “phenomenological reduction” which required the *bracketing* or “putting aside” all conventional assumptions, including the question of the very existence of an object or impression in order to examine life experience from a fresh, unbiased perspective.

2. In the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) the *noumena* (sig. *noumenon* = thing in itself) is contrasted with *phenomena* (sig. *phenomenon* = thing as it appears), which is the object of empirical knowledge. For Kant a noumenon is an object of awareness not produced by sensory experience. According to him we have no faculty of non-sensory intuition. Hence we can have no noumenal knowledge as such. A phenomenon is a thing (a quality, a relation, a state of affairs, an event, etc) *as it appears to us* or as it is perceived. This contrast gives rise to one of the fundamental problems in philosophy whether or how far we can have knowledge of the *way things really are* (things-in-themselves) or the noumena.

Check your progress III

1. Scepticism is the view that *nothing can be known with certainty*, that at best there can only be some private probable opinion. It implies that human reason has no capacity to come to any conclusions at all and that all knowledge fall short of certainty. Hence it is better to suspend belief than to rely on the dubitable products of reason. Scepticism takes two main forms: the

belief that *no position is certain* (including as is frequently noted, this position), and the view that *truth exists but that certain knowledge of it may be beyond our grasp*.

2. Three major theories of truth have been proposed. The generally accepted approach is the *correspondence theory* which was defined by Thomas Aquinas as “the correlation of thought and object”, that is, our idea of something is true if it corresponds to the actuality of things. The *coherence theory* states that something can be said to be true if it is consistent with the other elements in a coherent conceptual system. Thus a proposition is true if it is coherent with every other proposition which is part of a comprehensive system. According to the *pragmatic theory of truth*, truth is something that is judged by its practical consequences; an idea is true if its implementation achieves an intended satisfactory result or if it works or if accepting it bring success. The generally accepted theory of truth is the correspondence theory of truth.



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5.0. OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we attempt at presenting an overview of Western Philosophies. This unit is intended to achieve the following aims, from a synthetic point of view. By the end of this unit, you should be able to get familiar:

1. with the different themes, running through the history of Western Philosophy
2. with the different schools, which fall under the broad category called Western philosophy
3. with the common problems in the filed of knowledge, search for meaning, ethics and politics faced by the different schools

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Alfred North Whitehead, eminent Process Philosopher and Mathematician once stated that the entire Western Philosophy was a footnote to Plato. Given the fact that Plato carried forward many of the philosophical concerns his predecessors and left his imprint on the whole of the subsequent development of Western thought, the observation of Whitehead on Plato seems in place. What is to be noted however is that, what was stated by Whitehead about Plato's philosophical impact on posterity, can be said of any other philosopher too, to a certain extent. This is because, philosophy is a pluralistic enterprise, dialectical in its nature and process.

When we say that pluralistic enterprise, we mean that philosophers approach reality and the problems posed by it, from their own historical contexts and perspectives. When we state that philosophy is a dialectical enterprise, we mean that in it, there is an interplay of the opposites, giving rise to a new ideas and phenomena.

In this Unit, which is meant to be an overview of the Western Philosophies, we shall try to capture the dialectical interplay play of ideas, in the history of Western Philosophies. We shall

also try to take note of the pluralism of approaches to different philosophical problems. In the process, we shall also appreciate the underlying unity

of concerns, which are always present, throughout the course of the History of Philosophies, in spite of the differences in their professed perspectives.

5.2. ANCIENT WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Ancient Western Philosophy is also known as **Greco-Roman Philosophy** or **Greek philosophy**, because it started in Greece, or rather with the proto-Greek people. Ancient Western Philosophy is also known as “**Greek Miracle**”. This Maritime colonial power began to flower as a centre of thought and creativity that it became a mark of all future thinking.

‘Ancient’ is a relative term. Usually it refers to things, events, persons, time which are removed from as in the past. AWP refers to the pioneers, the first to go and venture in a new field or territory. They were daring thinkers, who were ready to look at problems afresh, searching for new solutions.

Greece is considered as the cradle of Western thought:

1. Geographical conditions

The external beauty or natural environment was so favorable for their thinking. They made them wonder about the creation of the universe.

2. Cultural Interaction

Greeks having many harbors they could develop trade with surrounding nations or countries. People, who came for trade, brought with them their literature and culture. These helped Greece to interact with other nations. They had the possibility of knowing each other. This factor led to the universal thinking in Greece.

3. Political and Economic security

There was no poverty, disturbance or troubles. They had no political and economic botheration. The stable political life, flourishing democracy and abundance of leisure time helped create favourable conditions towards philosophizing.

4. Myths and Legends

They had many myths. The country was blessed with mythical views from which they could draw inspiration. The myths tried to convey truths about the realities of life.

5. Religious Freedom

They were free to worship whichever gods they liked.

6. Extroverts

The people of Greece were generally extroverts, who were sociable and other-centered.

1. Here they gave more importance to search for wisdom (connected with wonder).
2. Philosophers like Plato and Socrates emphasized the search for wisdom and others like Aristotle emphasized on the very aspect of wisdom.
3. Ancient people were amazed at the different realities of nature. This wonder forced them to search for wisdom.

The principal philosophical issues were: the nature of visible reality (changing or unchanging/ being or becoming of reality/order and harmony of the physical world); the unifying principle of multifaceted universe (arché) - the world-stuff; affirmation of the desire and capacity to know the intrinsic nature of the external world; the rational (moral) nature of human beings in the society; the place of human beings in the vast universe. The final result is: acknowledgement of the immensity of the physical universe and the inability of man to comprehend the whole reality. The chief proponents were non-believers and polytheists thinkers; their 'belief' did not affect their human speculations

The study of ancient western philosophy is very relevant even today. An educated man is a person who knows history. Unless one knows what had been taking place, one finds difficult to proceed further. This study also helps us to learn from the mistakes of the past. By studying the history of philosophy, we come to know the ideas, in either positive or negative influence. It also helps us to know that no philosophy is fully right or wrong. In reading history of philosophy doubts may arise in our minds. It creates in us an enquiring mind. Every philosophical system is a development of previous one. Ex: To understand philosophy of Aristotle, we need to study his predecessor, Plato. It is relevant because it is embedded with the spirit of searching for truth.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Discuss about the background of Ancient Western Thought.

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2. What are the central issues of the Ancient Western Philosophy?

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3. Write about the relevance of Ancient Western Thought.

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5.3. MEDIEVAL WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Medieval philosophy is the philosophy of Europe and the Middle East in the era now known as Medieval or the Middle Ages, the period roughly extending from the decline of classical culture and the fall of the Roman Empire to the Renaissance. "The Middle Ages" refers to the period of European history from the end of the Roman Empire in Italy until the Renaissance, i.e. from the 5th century A.D. until the 15th.

Philosophers during this time include Boethius, Anselm, Peter Abelard, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, William of Ockham and many others. During the 12th and 13th centuries European philosophy was much influenced by the writings of Muslim philosophers including Avicenna (ibn Sina) and Averroes (ibn Rushd). Philosophy in the medieval style continued into the late seventeenth century. Descartes and Leibniz cannot be well understood without some knowledge of medieval thought. It is defined partly by the process of rediscovering the ancient culture developed in Greece and Rome in the classical period, and partly by the need to address theological problems and to integrate sacred doctrine and secular learning. Medieval philosophy was decisively influenced by ideas from the Greece, the East, and the patristic period, from the Jewish philosophical tradition and from Islam.

1. The main problematic of Medieval Western philosophy is the relation between faith and reason.
2. It is during this period, that Christians came in contact with Greek philosophy.

Medieval philosophy in general could be called a Christian philosophy. Christian philosophy is a term to describe the fusion of various fields of philosophy, historically derived from the philosophical traditions of Western thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle, with the theological doctrines of Christianity. Christian philosophy originated during the Middle Ages as medieval theologians attempted to demonstrate to the religious authorities that Greek philosophy and Christian faith were, in fact, compatible methods for arriving at divine truth. The chief proponents were Christian thinkers – philosophers and theologians.

The problems discussed throughout this period were the relation of faith to reason, the existence and unity of God, the object of theology and Metaphysics, and the problems of knowledge, of universals, and of individuation. The chief philosophical reflection was around man's relationship with other human beings, the world, and God. It was a period of 'tension' between philosophy and theology of major monotheistic religions. Often philosophical categories were made use of to explain theology, under the inspiration of 'revealed truths'. During this era philosophy became a system, with well-established schools. The Catholic Authority had the last word on the authenticity of philosophical reflections. It emphasizes on the necessity and importance of man's openness to transcendent reality in order to comprehend truth.

Check Your Progress II

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Write a short note on the origin and importance of the Medieval Western Philosophy.....

2. What are the reasons for identifying Medieval Western Philosophy as religion-oriented Philosophy?

3. Discuss the main themes during the Medieval Western period.....

5.4. MODERN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

The focus of Modern Western philosophy was reason. This period was marked by separation of philosophy from theology and separation of philosophy from science. There are three main schools of philosophies, that of *Rationalism*, *Empiricism* and *Transcendentalism*. Rationalism was trying to give importance to reason. Method they used was deductive method. Important philosophers of this school were Rene Descartes, the father of modern western philosophy, Pascal, Spinoza and Leibniz. Empiricism spoke about sense knowledge. The method of philosophizing was inductive method. Locke, Berkeley and Hume are eminent thinkers of this school. Transcendentalism tried to bring about a synthesis between Rationalism and Empiricism. Immanuel Kant is the main figure of this school.

Etymologically, Renaissance means rebirth, renewal or awaking etc. It starts from about 1450 and stretches for hundred years. It starts with the fall of Constantine to Turks and inventing of the printing machine. Printing helped towards the faster dissemination of ideas. Renaissance is also known as “age of adventure”.

Renaissance had much to give to philosophy as it developed the thinking patterns of the people. It led to the growth of humanism i.e. a belief in man, a passion for learning, an emphasis on scholarly exactness, value of human being, his nature, his power etc., which had much influenced post-Kantian philosophers. Renaissance also led to geographical discoveries, development in art and literature, change of idea on religious thinking and development of political and economical views.

Enlightenment is the term used to describe the trends in thought and letters in Europe and the American colonies during the 18th century prior to the French Revolution. The phrase was frequently employed by writers of the period itself, convinced that they were emerging from

centuries of darkness and ignorance into a new age enlightened by reason, science, and a respect for humanity.

More than a set of fixed ideas, the Enlightenment implied an attitude, a method of thought. Given the motto of the age, “Dare to know”, a desire arose to reexamine and question all received ideas and values, to explore new ideas in many different directions—hence the inconsistencies and contradictions that often appear in the writings of 18th-century thinkers.

Rationalism

This school of philosophy mainly concentrated on the reason of human being. Important philosopher in rationalism, Descartes used *Methodic Doubt* to arrive at the reality. For him the truth is “what can be clearly and distinctly thought of.” He considered man as a thinking thing. He says, “I think, therefore, I am” this is called famous **Cogito, ergo sum, i.e. primacy of consciousness**. They believed in innate ideas and later Kant remarks that they were too dogmatic about metaphysics. They tried to give definite, pristine shape to the reality with the help of reason. They had also attempted to prove God’s existence.

Empiricism

Empiricism is the view that all knowledge is derived from experience. They deny the innate ideas. Empiricism was mostly held by British philosophers who lived from 16th century to 18th century, running parallel with continental philosophers. Main theories like skepticism, enlightenment, deism, pragmatism and utilitarian ethics etc. came about because of empiricism. Locke, who held that sense knowledge alone is real and denied innate ideas and Hume, who subordinated reason to instinct and sense experience were the leading figures of this school. Kant remarks that they were too skeptic about the knowledge. They did not attempt to know the metaphysical realities. As result, they ended in skepticism.

Transcendental Idealism

Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher is the founder of Transcendentalism who tried to bring about a synthesis of rationalism and empiricism. Kant speaks of impossibility and possibility of metaphysics. In his book *Critic of Pure Reason* he says that metaphysics is impossible because we cannot reach nowhere about the knowledge of God, nature, soul, freedom etc. with scientific knowledge. Thus, metaphysics is impossible. However, in his second book *Critic of Practical Reason* he concludes that metaphysics is possible, because it is a natural disposition, which ultimately leads us in search of destiny.

Post Kantian philosophy.

Continental modern philosophy is a significant strand Western philosophy. It was a culmination of the social, cultural and economical developments that developed European society. Reformation of traditions, abolishment of tradition and giving up religious thinking and humanistic approach towards philosophy were the main characteristic of this era.

We have Subjective Idealism of Fichte i.e. self or ego or subject or spirit was alone real, Objective Idealism of Shelling i.e. nature is the commander of the reality and Absolute Idealism

of Hegel i.e. unity of spirit and nature. They introduced dialectical method. It is a method of reaching the reality in three steps.



Voluntaristic idealism of Schopenhauer i.e. “human being is the will to live”.

5.5. CONTEMPORARY WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

If Modern Western Philosophy reached the astronomical heights of reason, the locus of Contemporary Western Philosophy was about discovering the meaning of human existence. It analyzed the existence of human being in a concrete and practical way, seeing existence as something grounded and caught up in concrete situations of life.

Contemporary Western Philosophy is a journey in which, we visit many schools of Philosophical thought to be arrived in theory and to be lived in action beginning from Pragmatism to Post-Modernism. Let us survey each of the schools of thought in brief.

Pragmatism: It is the starting point of journey that emphasizes the importance of action over doctrine, experience over fixed principles, meaning of the ideas reside in the practical consequences and proclaims ideas as the instruments of action. In simple words, it is a philosophy of action. The main exponents of this school are William James, Charles S. Pierce, and John Dewey. What is noteworthy about this school is that it recognized the relative, contingent and fallible character of human reason.

Phenomenology: It is a century old international movement in philosophy. In the 18th century, Johann Henrich applied it in his theory of epistemology to distinguish truth from error and in 19th century, Hegel used it to trace the development of human spirit from mere sense experience to absolute knowledge. However, it is with Edmund Husserl, that it took its present shape and proposed it as a technique for describing things as they appear to conscience. In simple words, it is a method of approaching the phenomena in its pure state. The main exponents were Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Martin Heidegger, the student of Edmund Husserl, diverged from the thought and methodology of his master and gave an existential and hermeneutical turn to phenomenology.

Analytic Philosophy/ Linguistic Philosophy: It brought into light that language is not a neutral tool that serves to depict ready-made reality, instead is an active player in the very understanding and grasping of a reality. The main exponent of this school, Ludwig Wittgenstein clarified that function of philosophy was to clarify language through an analysis of words. Other exponents are A. J. Ayer, Rudolf Carnap, Frege and Bertrand Russell. This school had two main branches, namely, Logical Positivism and Logical Empiricism. Logical Positivists held the Verification Theory as key to their analysis of language. It stated that a proposition was either verifiable or falsifiable and if it could not either of these criteria, it was nonsensical. Together with the verification theory, they also held the Picture Theory of language, which assumed that language

was an exact mirroring of or a one-to-one correspondence of reality. Logical Empiricism questioned the Verification Theory, as well as the Picture theory of Language, stating that each of languages was a game, and there was a Family resemblance between different games. Wittgenstein, in the earlier stages of his thought was a Logical Positivist, who later on evolved himself to be a Logical Empiricist reality, affect each other and reality is in a dynamic process, and at the same time, is dependent. The main exponent of this school is Alfred North Whitehead.

Philosophy of Life: It started in France and Germany. For materialists reality = matter, for idealists reality = idea and for life philosophers reality = life. The main exponents of this school are Henri Bergson, Fredrich Nietzsche, Maurice Blondel, Teilhard de Chardin, and Victor Frankl. According to this school, the secret of the world is in movement rather than in the material things. For Henri Bergson dynamism of life is movement moving from past to present which advances into the future, for Nietzsche living out values and will to become make life dynamic, for Teilhard dynamism of life is immersing the human self in the process of evolution and become Christ realized being and Victor Frankl dynamism of life is making and producing meaningfulness in human life.

Existentialism: Kierkegaard combines the Individualism of Marx and Emotionalism of Shelling that gave rise to Existentialism, and thus became the father of Existentialism. It deals with the varied themes of life, authenticity and inauthenticity of existence, inter-subjectivity, estrangement, alienation, absurdity, homelessness, depersonalization, dehumanization, objectification, and the eclipse of God. It stresses the aspect of freedom, precedence of existence over essence, personal responsibility, free will and the good of the many individuals. The main exponents of the school of Existentialism are Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Karl Jaspers, Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel, and Martin Heidegger.

Philosophical Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation. Philosophical Hermeneutics broadens this understanding of interpretation to include all human understanding as a journey and process of interpretation. The main exponents of Philosophical Hermeneutics are Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricouer.

Postmodernism: Postmodernism is a contemporary intellectual movement that had begun in the West and now it affects the entire world. It focuses on the periphery, as contrasted to the centre – of events, meaning and ideologies, critiques human reason and presence of human self to itself as a Representation and affirms plurality of the locations of knowledge and meaning and multiplicity of selves. The main promoters of the Postmodernism are Jacques Derrida, Georges Bataille, Jean Baudrillard, Michael Foucault, and Jean-Francis Lyotard

Process Philosophy: It is a 20th century school of philosophy that rejects Parmenides' notion of being, its permanence and emphasizes the Heraclitus' idea of change and Aristotle's theory of becoming. It stands on the ground that events make up a Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

Check Your Progress IV

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Explain the school of Phenomenology

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2. Write in your own words about the School of Existentialism

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3. What is the special contribution of Contemporary Western Philosophy to human being?

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5.6. LET US SUM UP

The task we undertook in this unit was basically an overview of Western Philosophies. We approached this process from a chronological point of view, namely, ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary western philosophies. This task could have been approached from the perspective of Kant, who summed up the entire philosophical project, under the three questions, “What can I know”, “What should I do” and “What Can I hope for?”

Human beings exist in the world and with the world. They are also capable of asking questions about themselves and the reality, in which and with which they exist. They have been asking the question about the primordial stuff of reality. The basic philosophical question has been “Why there is something rather than nothing?” All questions about reality are also questions about ourselves and the way we interpret our knowledge about reality. All philosophy of every age and place has to return to this primordial or fundamental question. The history of Western Philosophies bears testimony to the fact the questioning capacity and nature of human beings, especially under the basic thrust of Skepticism, Idealism, Rationalism and, positivism. All questions of philosophy, we have seen in the above overview, are also existential questions.

5.7. KEY WORDS

Myth: Myth is an imaginative story with a philosophical or theological orientation.

Orthodoxis: Orthodoxis means right teaching or doctrine.

Orthopraxis: Orthopraxis means right practice.

5.8. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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5.9. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check your progress I

1. Greece is considered as the cradle of Western thought

Geographical conditions – peninsula:

The external beauty or natural environment was so favorable for their thinking. They made them wonder about the creation of universe.

2 Cultural Interaction

Greeks having many harbors they could develop trade with surrounding nations or countries. People, who came for trade, brought with them their literature and culture. These helped Greece to interact with other nations. They had the possibility of knowing each other. This factor led to the universal thinking in Greece.

3 Political and Economic security

There was no poverty, disturbance, and troubles. They have no political and economic botheration. The stable political life and flourishing democracy helped philosophizing. Since they had all these things in abundance they could spend much time in meditation or to think, they have lot of leisure time.

4. Myths and Legends

These people had many myths. This country was blessed with mythical views from which they could get inspiration. They speak about the realities of life.

5. Religious Freedom

They were free to worship the God they liked.

6. Extroverts

The people of Greece are generally extroverts who are sociable and other-centered.

01.

The principal philosophical issues were: the nature of visible reality, the unifying principle of multifaceted universe,; affirmation of the desire and capacity to know the intrinsic nature of the external world; the rational nature of human beings, the place of human beings in the universe, acknowledgement of the immensity of the physical universe and the inability of man to comprehend the whole reality. The chief proponents were non-believers and polytheists thinkers; their 'belief' did not affect their human speculations.

02.

An educated man is a person who knows history. Unless one knows what had been taking place, one finds difficult to proceed further. This study also helps us to learn for the mistakes. If we reflect upon our past mistakes, we can learn from them. By studying the history of philosophy we come to know their ideas either positive or negative, thus we do not make them in the future. It also helps us to know that no philosophy is fully right or wrong. In reading history of philosophy doubts may arise in mind. It creates in us a skeptical (cynical) mind. Every philosophical system is a development of previous one. Ex: To understand philosophy of Aristotle, we need to study his predecessor, Plato. It is relevant because it is embedded with the Spirit of searching for truth. They were very anxious to know the truth.

Answers to Check your progress II

1.

Medieval philosophy is the philosophy of Europe and the Middle East in the era now known as medieval or the Middle Ages, the period roughly extending from the decline of classical pagan culture and the fall of the Roman Empire to the Renaissance. "The Middle Ages" refers to the period of European history from the end of the Roman Empire in Italy until the Renaissance, i.e. from the 5th century A.D. until the 15th. Philosophers during this time included Boethius, Anselm, Peter Abelard, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, William of Ockham and many others. During the 12th and 13th centuries European philosophy was much influenced by the writings of

Muslim philosophers including Avicenna (ibn Sina) and Averroes (ibn Rushd). Philosophy in the medieval style continued into the late seventeenth century; Descartes and Leibniz cannot be well understood without some knowledge of medieval thought. It is defined partly by the process of rediscovering the ancient culture developed in Greece and Rome in the classical period, and partly by the need to address theological problems and to integrate sacred doctrine and secular learning. Medieval philosophy was decisively influenced by ideas from the Greek East, the patristic period, from the Jewish philosophical tradition, and from Islam.

2.

Medieval philosophy in general could be called a Christian philosophy. Christian philosophy is a term to describe the fusion of various fields of philosophy, historically derived from the philosophical traditions of Western thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle, with the theological doctrines of Christianity. Christian philosophy originated during the Middle Ages as medieval theologians attempted to demonstrate to the religious authorities that Greek philosophy and Christian faith were, in fact, compatible methods for arriving at divine truth. The chief proponents were Christian thinkers – philosophers and theologians.

3.

The problems discussed throughout this period are the relation of faith to reason, the existence and unity of God, the object of theology and Metaphysics, and the problems of knowledge, of universals, and of individuation. The chief philosophical reflection is around man's relationship with other human beings, the world, and God. It is a period of 'tension' between philosophy and theology of major monotheistic religions. Often philosophical categories were made use of to explain theology, under the inspiration of 'revealed truths'. During this era philosophy became a system, with well-established schools. The Catholic Authority had the last word on the authenticity of philosophical reflections. It emphasizes on the necessity and importance of man's openness to transcendent reality in order to comprehend truth.

Answers to check your progress III

1.

Etymologically, Renaissance means rebirth, renewal or awaking etc. It starts from about 1450 and stretches for hundred years. It starts with the fall of Constantine to Turks and inventing of the printing machine. Printing helped towards the faster dissemination of ideas. Renaissance is also known as "age of adventure". Renaissance had much to give to philosophy as it developed the thinking patterns of the people. It led to the growth of humanism i.e. a belief in man, a passion for learning, an emphasis on scholarly exactness, value of human being, his nature, his power etc., which had much influenced post-Kantian philosophers. Renaissance also led to geographical discoveries, development in art and literature, change of idea on religious thinking and development of political and economical views.

2.

It is a method by which we reach the reality in three steps.

Thesis → antithesis → synthesis

It was introduced by idealistic philosophers especially Fichte and Hegel. Later Karl Marx would use for his theory of Marxism.

E.g. Private interest → Public interest → State

3.

Karl Marx gave new outlook to whole philosophy. He used the dialectical method introduced by post Kantian philosophers in his philosophy. His communistic ideals which highlighted the plight of the working class under Capitalism, speaks of religious alienation i.e. religion is an opium, which takes away the working class from the product, from themselves, from the community and philosophical alienation i.e. "hitherto the philosophers have been interpreting the world, task is to change it." His was a philosophy of hermeneutics of suspicion. He speaks of dialectical materialism in which he explains the history of nature and historical materialism, which held that the history is marked by class struggle and structure of the society is made up of relation to the product, which he termed as economic Infra structure.

Answers to check your progress IV

1.

It is a century old international movement in philosophy. In the 18th century, Johann Henrich applied it in his theory of epistemology to distinguish truth from error and in 19th century, Hegel used it to trace the development of human spirit from mere sense experience to absolute knowledge. However, it is with Edmund Husserl, that it took its present shape and proposed it as a technique for describing things as they appear to conscience. In simple words, it is a method of approaching the phenomena in its pure state. The main exponents were Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Martin Heidegger, the student of Edmund Husserl, diverged from the thought and methodology of his master and gave an existential and hermeneutical turn to phenomenology.

2.

Existentialism is a combination of individualism of Marx and emotionalism of Shelling. Soren Kierkegaard is the father of Existentialism. It is a school of thought that emerged after the war and concentrated mainly on the existential problems of human existence about meaning in life, authentic and inauthentic existence, absurdity, inter-subjectivity etc., The main exponents of the school of Existentialism are Jean Paul Satre, Albert Camus, Karl Jaspers, Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel, and Martin Heidegger.

3.

The special contribution of Contemporary Western Philosophy to human being is that, the philosophers of this period concentrated on discovering the meaning of human existence. It analyzed the existence of human being in a concrete and practical way. In simple words, Contemporary Western Philosophy is a shift from orthodoxis to orthopraxis.

BLOCK -2 INTRODUCTION

It is interesting to go through the history of Greek philosophy which gives us answers to many problems which arise in the life of ordinary humans. The Greeks in general were lovers of wisdom. Many early Greek philosophers criticized myths that gave importance to gods who were subjected to fate. They evolved a rational way of thinking of truth and reality. In fact, they laid the foundations for further development of western philosophy that has predominantly taken the path of rationality. The spirit of independence and the love of truth are the visible characteristics of their thought.

Unit 1 studies “Ionian and Pythagorean Philosophers.” They enquired into the origin of things and the mysteries of universe. They were concerned about two problems: the ultimate principle of all things and the problem of substance. The second problem is related to the problem of change and permanence; the Ionian philosophers thought that, in spite of all these changes and transitions, there must be something permanent.

Unit 2 explains the philosophies of “Eleatic and Atomistic Philosophers.” The Eleatic and the Atomist philosophical thoughts made the ancient Greek philosophy very attractive and rich. Both schools tried to find out the Ultimate Cause which rules over the universe. The Atomists say that the universe is formed out of small invisible and physically indivisible particles called ‘Atoms,’ which are eternal and immutable.

Unit 3 on “The Sophists” explores problems of knowledge and conduct rather than the structure of the universe or the ultimate constituents of reality. Their acquaintance with the earlier philosophers had convinced them that it was impossible to attain certain knowledge of external reality, that human reason could not solve the riddle of the universe. Thus, the unit highlights how the Sophist thought concerns itself with certain basic questions in ethics and epistemology. This represents a major shift of philosophical interest from the problems of nature to the problems of human.

The last Unit on “Socrates” demonstrates how Socrates’ opposition to the blind acceptance of tradition and authority allied him with the Sophists such as Protagoras, Gorgias and Prodicus. However, he was far more committed to know the inner person than the Sophists. Unlike the Sophists, he was in search of truth and knowledge of the universal validity of moral laws. For him this search was intimately connected with the chief problem of knowing what human is. This Unit explains the basic philosophy of Socrates: Socratic problem, Socratic method, epistemology, ethics, and Socratic schools of thought.

The above given 4 units will give you an introduction to early Greek philosophers who not only laid the foundations for later Greek philosophers but also anticipated in their debates several issues with which European civilization occupied itself for more than two thousand years. As you study these philosophers you will come to know that their philosophy is one of the best examples of the evolution of human thinking from simple mythological beginnings to complex and comprehensive systems.

UNIT I GREEK PHILOSOPHY

IONIAN AND PYTHAGOREAN PHILOSOPHERS

Contents

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- 1.1. Introduction
- 1.2. Thales
- 1.3. Anaximander
- 1.4. Anaximanes
- 1.5. Pythagoras
- 1.6. Heraclitus
- 1.7. Let Us Sum UP
- 1-8. Key Words
- 1.9. Further Readings and References
- 1.10. Answers to Check Your Progress

1.0. OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we introduce the origin and development of Greek philosophy, its history and its philosophers such as Thales, Anaximander, Anaximanes, Pythagoras and Heraclitus with their philosophical insights on God, world and human beings. Most of these philosophers belonged to the Ionian School active at Miletus (hence some of them are also called Milesian thinkers). In the process we will be touching upon various issues of ordinary life, helping one to have a better view on the world experience.

By the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- Begin philosophizing with awe and wonder;
- Look at various issues of life, such as moral, social, religious and political with a philosophical bend of mind;
- Follow the style of Greek thinking; and
- Explain ‘the ultimate principle’ proposed by the Ancient Greek Philosophers.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The Greeks in general were philosophers, because they were lovers of wisdom. 'Lovers of wisdom' means that those who have the real thirst for knowledge. The word 'philosophy' itself is coming from the Greek language. The Greek word "*Philo-Sophia*" means love of wisdom. Philosophy should always aim at the wisdom which spreads light on the supreme cause. This supreme cause is what is called in Greek "*arche*". This principle is not equal to the phenomena of direct experience such as water, air, and fire as they are manifested in the world of senses: rain, wind, flames, sun, day, night, etc. The sense experience appeared as wonders in their life. Behind these wonders, a cause was sought. The external nature of the universe was considered in the Ionian Period as the first great problem. The enquiry into this problem was dynamic from about 585 to the middle of the 5th century B.C. The first stage in the growth of Greek philosophy was naturalistic: its efforts were oriented to the nature, with the nature, by the nature and in the nature. They were much impressed by the fact of birth, growth, decay and death. It was a search for knowledge for its own sake. The origin of things and the mysteries of universe were the central points. It was a cosmological problem. It was concerned mainly with two problems: what is the basic substance of the universe? And from where do they originate?

1.2. THALES (624-548 B.C)

The historian Herodotus, who used for the first time the Greek-term 'philo-sophia,' told that Thales was one of the seven sages: Thales, Biantes, Pittacus, Solon, Cleobule, Mison and Chilon. Aristotle has generally used this name 'sage' for philosophers and he particularly called Thales an "Initiator of Philosophy". The "sophia" of seven sages was merely a moral knowledge or practical righteousness.

Thales, who has fame as the first Ionian philosopher, flourished at Miletus a Greek colony in Asia Minor. This city is now in modern Turkey. At the time of Thales it was a Greek city. He might have done his studies with Egyptian or Babylonian teachers. Miletus had colonies at this time in Egypt.

We do not know much about the life of Thales. Even the dates of his birth and death are uncertain. He was born about 624 B.C. He travelled to Egypt, and visited great centres of Lydia, a powerful kingdom then allied with Miletus and all Ionia. He is the first philosopher of Greece. He was named as statesman, mathematician, and astronomer. It was Thales who told the eclipse, which happened on May 28th, 585 B.C. Thales died in 548 BC.

Thales was also an important mathematician. And he was able to prove several interesting mathematical ideas. He measured the height of a pyramid by calculating the shadow of his own, when his own shadow became the same length of his height. Thales confirmed that

- A circle is bisected by its diameter
- The angles at the bases of any isosceles triangle are equal
- If two straight lines cut one another, the opposite angles are equal.
- If two triangles have two angles and a side in common, the triangles are identical.

His question was about the basic stuff of the universe. He searched for the cause of the universe. According to him, water was the original stuff. He would have been led by myth of oceans and Tethy's gods of ocean. Water has the potency to become solid, liquid and vaporous forms. Water evaporates in the heat of the sun, and according to Thales it is the transformation of water into fire. Water comes down again in the form of rain and it is transformed into earth. Water is essential to life. The reason is that nourishment, seed, and heat which are essential to life, contain moisture or wet. Hence water is the primordial principle, and all things (*physis*) were water (*arche*) and are water (*physis*). The earth is a flat disc floating on water. Water is the material cause of all things. He clearly perceived that nature was alive.

His claim involves three vital assumptions. He wanted to assert his belief that the universe is made up of One thing, i.e., water. Indeed, he brought the question of One:

- He believed that the fundamental explanation of the universe must be one in number. There can not be two realities behind the mysteries of the universe. The controlling element of the Nature should be one.
- This one reality must be a 'thing'. It ought to be a definite thing; and this thing is water which has the capacity to be present in everything.
- And this one 'thing' must have within itself the ability to move and change.

METAPHYSICAL PROBLEM AND SOLUTION

From this thinking he comes to the metaphysical problem of "the One and the many". How the multiplicity (*physis*) of beings can be explained in a unity (*arche*), a unique principle? How does Thales explain the term multiplicity? For philosophical understanding, we have to see beings as a whole. This whole is not to be understood as a sum of non-living things lacking movement, but this whole has its life as a single reality. Things have their own lives. Life is the element that brings the unity among all these multiplicity. This is an animistic vision of reality. Therefore, Aristotle quotes of Thales in '*De Anima*', "all things are full of gods" and hence the "*physis*" is something divine (*theion*') both in its being and in its change. What we have is only a first reflection, but that is full of philosophical implications.

He believed that 'All things are full of gods'. Perhaps, he might have thought that the universe is full with small invisible seeds for life. He saw that soon after the first rain after summer the earth began to bring new lives forth. Water may be the primordial stuff or the first cause for all lives in the earth. It can transform itself from one form to another form: solid, soft and again unseen like vapor. When he speaks that water is the '*arche*' of the universe, he does not mean that this '*arche*' is the beginning, but this is the sustaining Principle or material cause. He said already that this '*arche*' is a thing, from that we can guess that this is not god. This water is wet as ultimate reality.

1. 3. ANAXIMANDER (614-540 B.C)

He was a disciple of Thales lived around 614-540 B.C. He participated in political life. He travelled to Sparta to construct sundial. For the Milesian sailors in Black Sea he designed a map. He says that the earth is a cylindrical body and is in the centre of the universe. It is not supported

by anything but held in the equilibrium by other bodies. These things show his interest in scientific matters.

He sought like Thales for the primary principle and the ultimate end of all things, but he decided that it could not be any particular kind of matter such as water. If change, birth, growth and decay are due to conflict, on the supposition that everything in reality is water, why not in water all other things are absorbed? Therefore, he came to an idea that the primordial stuff is indeterminate. He named this as the material cause. It is different from water or any such kind of things and which is infinite. From this indeterminate cause emerged all the heavens and the earth. It is “Ageless and Eternal”

This principle consists of and controls all elements, like the water, the earth and the fire; but it is not confused with these same elements. This primordial principle, called in Greek *apeiron*, will be divine, immobile, not generated, immutable, venerable, an absolute justice. This is the reality behind all cause and effect.

MERITS OF TEACHING

1. The primordial stuff, according to Anaximander, is a derivative element from ‘water’ of Thales.
2. Here the thought of Anaximander has a stage of process of becoming.
3. He thinks of a primordial stuff, which is indestructible.
4. He refuses to tell the qualities of primordial stuff; because of its complexity.
5. Therefore this refusal shows the abstract mode of his thought, by proposing ‘Indefinite Principle’.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for the answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What is the basic stuff and cause of the universe according to Thales?

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2) What is the basic philosophy of Anaximander?

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1.4. ANAXIMANES (6th Cent. B.C)

The third philosopher of the Milesian school was Anaximanes. He was the disciple of Anaximander. Anaximanes comes back again to the mode of thinking like Thales. He says that the primordial stuff of the world and the heaven is air, vapour or mist. Air is the life-giving element in man. By the disappearance of the air, man stops to breath and he ends. "Just as our soul, being air, holds us together, so do breath and air encompass the whole world." Air then is the primordial stuff of the world, and out of which all things originated.

He went back to the theory of Thales that the ultimate principle of the universe is a thing. For him water was condensed form of air. Air was therefore the origin of earth, water and fire. He might have thought that earth, air, and fire were all necessary to the creation of life, but the source of all things was air or vapor. Air can also become fire by rarefaction. Air is the thing that animates all things to move. It is something sacred and eternal. The universe is a sacred sphere, with a divine eternal fire or 'pneuma' palpitating at the center and animating all things with a cosmic breath. From air all things arise through the process of rarefaction and condensation. This theory of condensation and rarefaction is an advanced form of scientific explanation of the emergence of elements in the universe.

1.5. PYTHAGORAS (580-497 B.C)

Ionian philosophy moved into Southern Italy through the work of Pythagoras. Pythagoras of Samos (530) is the founder of Pythagorean School. He was born in Samos between 580 and 570 B.C., and immigrated to the Greek Colonies in southern Italy about the year 529. Iamblichus opined that Pythagoras was leader and father of divine philosophy. It is written by V.Capparelli that Pythagoras' philosophy is wisdom impregnated with a profound religious spirit. It is clear that there is evident dependence on the teachings of Anaximanes: the universe is a sacred sphere, with a divine eternal fire, or *pneuma* palpitating at the centre and animating all things with a cosmic breath. The Neo-Pythagoreans identified the central fire with Zeus or with the mother of gods, Olympus, castle of Zeus, etc. The fire stands here as the cause of Unity from where everything derives. He concentrated on cosmology, anthropology and ethics. Pythagorean society had a spirit of religious revival. It began to render the genuine religious teachings.

ETHICAL ASSOCIATION

Pythagoras founded an association for ethical, religious, and political purpose. His ideal was to develop among his followers the political virtues, to teach them to act for the good of the state, to subordinate them to the whole. Here the individual should learn to control himself or herself, to abase his or her passions, to harmonise his or her soul; he or she should have respect for the authority of elders, teachers and the state. Due to this reason, the view has been held that the Pythagoreans were political communities. But they were not essentially political but religious or ethical. Chief orientation of his teachings was to the religious-ascetic ideas which centred round the purification and purity.

CONCEPT OF SOUL

Pythagoreans saw the human soul as the life spirit which endures after the death of its first body and may take it abode subsequently in another human or animal body. This theory of metempsychosis or transmigration of souls is ethically significant since it provides for the rewarding of good action and the punishment of evil in these subsequent reincarnations. He taught silence, music, and mathematics to soften the soul. We are not sure all these teachings are coming from Pythagoras or his followers, Pythagoreans. Diogenes Laertius tells us of a poem of Xenophanes, in which Pythagoras told to stop beating a dog, seeing somebody beating it, because he had recognized the voice of a friend in the yelping of that dog. It strengthens the teachings of metempsychosis. Thus, they give importance to soul not to body. That is why they give soul purification and soul training in their life. It is said that it may be due to the influence of Orphicism which was indeed a religion rather than a philosophy though it tends towards pantheism. It was also a way of life not mere cosmological speculation. In this regard Pythagoreans inherited something from Orphicism.

THEORY OF OPPOSITES

The Pythagoreans also developed a theory of opposites in which the "limiting" and the "non-limiting" were the chief pair. They understood limit as a definite and measurable characteristic of anything, and the non-limited is that which defied attempts at definition and measurement according to Pythagoras. Their standard geometrical example of the latter was the diagonal of any rectangle: it is impossible to express its length simply in terms of the sides.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLE

This is the beginning of a very important approach to ethical problems, the view that 'good' means what is rational and intelligible. Thus, in the fourth century B.C., a later Pythagorean, Archytas of Tarentum, first enunciated the principle of "right reasoning" as the key to good behaviour: "Right reckoning, when discovered, checks civil strife and increases concord...(it is) the standard and deterrent of wrong doers". It is quite possible that Aristotelian and the medieval theories of right reason (*recta ratio*) as the norm of ethical judgement are directly indebted to Pythagorean intellectualism. The life of reason (*logos*) in the classical Greek is respected very much. Aristotle's ethics is constructed on the importance of the rationality of the human soul. With the appearance of the Pythagorean concept of good, the Homeric good was rationalised with all the qualities that this had, and it has been elevated to the degree of philosophy.

CONCEPT OF NUMBER

Aristotle tells us in the *Metaphysics* that Pythagoreans are devoted to mathematics. They were the first who initiated this study. The most important teachings of Pythagoras are that all things are numbers. Number is the basis of everything and the principle of universe. He was explaining the universe with the concept of numbers. All things are countable and we can express many things numerically. So the relation between two related things may be projected in accordance

with countable proportion. Just as musical harmony is dependent on number, so also harmony of universe is dependent on number. The world is not only order, beauty and system but a relation of intelligible and multiple proportions or numbers. Philolaus has well expressed it in the following words: "Everything that is known has a number; without this, nothing could be thought or known...Never does falsehood approach the number, because the number's nature is hostile to falsehood, while truth is proper and natural to the species of number. Love, friendship, justice, virtue, health, etc., are pictured on numbers. Love and friendship are counted by the number eight, because they are harmony, and octave is harmony."

Pythagoras regarded numbers as spatially. One is the point; two is the line; three is surface; and four is the solid. To say that all things are numbers, it would mean that all bodies are of points or units in space, which when taken together form a number. Points, lines, and surface are therefore the real units which form all material bodies in nature, and in this sense all material bodies must be considered as numbers. He believed that the things were the copies or imitations of number. The whole phenomena of the universe can be expressed under the concept of number.

Check Your Progress II

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for the answer.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What is the ethical principle of Pythagoras?

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2) Explain 'all things are numbers.'

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1.6. HERACLITUS (536-470 B.C)

Heraclitus was born in Ephesus, the son of a noble family and flourished around 504-501 B.C. He always displayed an extreme contempt for democracy. About one hundred fragments of his writings are extant. They are mostly epigrams and cryptic remarks dealing with the cosmos and the soul. He said, "Man is called a baby by God, even as a child by man".

CONSTANT FLUX

Heraclitus is best known for his cosmological teaching that all things are in constant flux or change. This is the most basic principle of the nature. He gave importance to the perception on

the nature. He says, "Everything flows" just like a river. Everything is moving and nothing is remaining just as in the river. He says: "One cannot enter twice into the same river, nor can one twice touch the same mortal substance in the same state" (fragment B 91). When one person steps into the river for the second time, neither the river nor the person is the same. The person would have already changed, because cells of person's body were newly produced. The person is already in the process of becoming; and since the water in the river constantly flows, the river, where the person entered into, would have already changed within seconds; because it is the flowing water what makes the river as river. Since his entire philosophical conception is dominated by a sense of realities' change, he is also known as "crying philosopher".

FIRE AND UNIVERSAL CHANGE

For him the most mobile substance of the world is fire. It is ever-living and never comes to rest, and it is named by him as vapour or breath which is the vital principle in the organism and the essence of the soul. Some interpret that this fire is only a concrete physical symbol for ceaseless activity or process, not itself a substance, but the very denial of all substance. It indicates to a principle that changes constantly or transforms into something other. Only fire can satisfy these conditions. The way of change to upward is same to the way of change to down ward. Fire changes into water, then earth, earth changes back again to water and fire. All things are exchanged for fire and fire for all things. The things we think that they are permanent, are not permanent, the thing that we do not see the movement which takes place in them. He says, "What is cold heats up, what is hot cools, the wet dries and the dry becomes wet" (fragment B126). "This order of the world is not the same for all, but it has always been and is, and will be a living fire for eternity, which at the due time lights and at the due time goes out" (fragment B 30). The world is an ever-living fire.

THE UNION OF THE OPPOSITES

World is consisted of opposites. The presence of opposites makes the world as it is. The concept good and evil has its place in the order of the world. If there is no war, how can we acquire peace? The war consists of the peace. Construction is for destruction. Birth is for death. Decease demands the need of health. If there were no summer, what is the use of monsoon?

The novelty of the teaching of Heraclitus is in the conception of unity in diversity, difference in unity. He considers opposites as essential to the being of the One. As a fact the One only exists in the presence of the opposites. This presence of opposites is essential to the unity of the One. The reality for Heraclitus is one; but it is multiple at the same time. This is not accidentally but essentially. It is an essential character of the reality that it should be one and many at the same time. The teaching of Heraclitus is more near to the idea of One existing in the many. Here there is Identity in Difference. He confessed that all things are One. This unity is happening only through the conflict of opposites.

There is a principle to unite the opposites into a unity. The monistic principle of the cosmos is known in the name of Logos, which means reason. The reason of Heraclitus is a 'universal reason,' which guides everything that exists in the universe. Among the constant complex changes this 'universal reason' takes role of unity of the cosmos. One's creation is another's destruction, and again the destruction of something is the beginning of the creation of something else. Everything is changed into their opposites. In this world remains nothing permanent in their

qualities. Everything both is and is not. Therefore everything unites opposites within itself. For example, harmony in music results from the combination of high notes and low notes that mean a union of opposites. Therefore the world is the combination of opposites. "War is the father of all and the king of all"; because, war is in peace. If we do not fight, we will not get peace. Therefore the peace is included in the war and war brings peace.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLE

Heraclitean fragments suggest that there is an ever-present rational pattern (logos) in this Process or 'Becoming'. Heraclitus says: "To be ethical is to live a rational life, to obey the dictates of reason, which is the same for us all, the same for the whole world." Man is entrusting himself to his senses, and he lives as if he were epileptic. The strife between opposites, such as love and hate, is to be resolved according to a measure (metron). Research on Heraclitus reveals that his moral views are of primary importance in his teaching. Morality means respect for law, self-discipline, control of the passions; to be moral is to govern oneself by rational principles. The following excerpts from his writings illustrate the lofty idealism of Heraclitus' ethics: "Character is a man's guardian divinity"; "It is hard to contend with passion; for whatever it desires to get it buys at the cost of the soul". "To me one man is ten thousand if he be the best". Man's condition is bad if we look into his mind. One more element is added here to the richness of the concept of our good. Would not this be thought a great influence for the character disposition in Aristotle's virtue theory? Aristotle says that a good action springs from a permanent state of good moral character. "The many are not worth anything, only the few are valuable" (fragment B 104). In another fragment Heraclitus affirms, "Man lights for himself a light in the night, while his eyes are shut: alive, he touches the dead with what is turned off; awake, he touches the sleeping" (fragment B 26). He is negating the sensory knowledge for the access into the truth. His ethical conception is growing from the external to the internal and from internal to the celestial. "No matter how much you travel, and even though you travel every road, you will never reach the boundaries of soul, so profound is the logos it possesses" (fragment B 45).

According to Heraclitus, man has to become a man of intelligent character. He has to reflect from the immediate concrete data to elevate oneself to a unity where empirical experience is pacified in the principle. Here the phenomenology of Heraclitus leads to the discovery of oneself. He is a philosopher of truth by which he has managed to have an intellectual intuition of intelligent character.

CONCEPT OF "LOGOS"

The word '*logos*' of Heraclitus has a decisive philosophical meaning. The philosophical character of the '*logos*' consists of its value in unifying the universe. The '*logos*' brings the contraries as harmony or as the "coexistence of contraries" or equilibrium. The variety of formulas also indicates the disparity of interpretations, which can be fundamentally divided into groups: the '*logos*' is not outside the contraries, but is their immanent law. Guthrie interprets that the harmony of contraries contains three affirmations. They are: 1) everything is *made up of contraries*; 2) the *contraries are identical*; 3) *war is their creative force* and the constituent director.

As a conclusion, in the teachings of Heraclitus, we could see that there were threefold character: linguistic, gnosiological and ontological. 'Logos' reveals itself, it thinks itself and it is. It will not be proper, if we see a trinity made up of god, fire and 'logos'. Heraclitus speaks of the One as God and as wise. God is the universal Reason. It is the universal law immanent in all things and binding all things into unity and determining the constant change in accordance with universal law. Man's reason is a moment in this universal Reason. Man, therefore, has to struggle to live according to the reign of unalterable law. Man's reason and consciousness, which are the fiery element, are the precious element. Without pure fire body is worthless.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for the answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Write a short note on the ethical principle of Heraclitus.

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2) Explain the concept of "Logos" according to Heraclitus.

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1.7. LET US SUM UP

Ionian and Pythagorean Philosophy taught us to reflect on the external nature and tried to get into the essence of the universe. For every reality there should be a cause and this cause must be the ultimate one which unites, directs, guides and is present in everything. These philosophers helped us to develop a truth seeking mind. They emphasized that it is our duty to disclose the mysteries of the relevant issues in the universe where we live. All the above Ionian philosophers had their reason and logic in solving and answering the questions. All generations in all periods had their existential problems. The wise men of each period have suggested their insights and visions to solve the problems and for a better life. We must have an integral vision on the reality to propose a right view on the universe. When the Ionian philosophers were trying to highlight an aspect of the universe, for example, Change for Heraclitus, he ignored the other reality of Permanence of the universe. Since Pythagoras was a mathematician he ignored many other aspects of the truth about the universe, while stressing the concept number. However, all these philosophers laid foundation for a systematic philosophy which was developed by Plato and Aristotle.

1.8. KEY WORDS

Reality: Reality is that which exists objectively.

Existence: Existence is that which is definite in the mind or outside the mind.

Being: Being is that which is in some way or something.

Change: Change is transition or passage from one state to another.

Mind: Mind is the subjective, comprehensive structure of a rational being.

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1.10. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) According to Thales, water was the original stuff. Because, water has the potency to become solid, liquid and vaporous forms. It evaporates in the heat of the sun, and according to Thales it is the transformation of water into fire. Water comes down again in the form of rain and it is transformed into earth. Water is essential to life. The reason is that nourishment, seed, and heat which are essential to life, contain moisture or wet. Hence water is the primordial principle, and all things (*physis*) were water (*arche*) and are water (*physis*). Water is the material cause of all things.

- 2) According to Anaximander, the primary principle and the ultimate end of all things is indeterminate. He named this as the material cause. It is different from any finite things. It is infinite. From this indeterminate cause emerged all the heavens and the earth. It is "Ageless and Eternal" This principle controls all elements, but it is not to be confused with these same elements. This primordial principle, called in Greek *apeiron*, will be divine, immobile, not generated, immutable, venerable, an absolute justice. This is the reality behind all cause and effect.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) Pythagoras taught his ethical principles to develop among his followers the political virtues, to teach them to act for the good of the state, to subordinate them to the whole. Accordingly, the individual should learn to control himself or herself, to abase his or her passions, to harmonise his or her soul; he or she should have respect for the authority of elders, teachers and the state. His ethics was centred round the purification and purity.
- 2) Pythagoras regarded numbers spatially. One is the point; two is the line; three is surface; and four is the solid. To say that all things are numbers, it would mean that all bodies are of points or units in space, which when taken together form a number. Points, lines, and surface are therefore the real units which form all material bodies in nature, and in this sense all material bodies must be considered as numbers. He believed that the things were the copies or imitations of number. The whole phenomena of the universe can be expressed under the concept of number.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) Heraclitus says: "To be ethical is to live a rational life, to obey the dictates of reason, which is the same for us all, the same for the whole world."
Morality means respect for law, self-discipline, control of the passions; to be moral is to govern oneself by rational principles.
"Character is a man's guardian divinity"; "It is hard to contend with passion; for whatever it desires to get it buys at the cost of the soul". "To me one man is ten thousand if he be the best".
"Man lights for himself a light in the night, while his eyes are shut: alive, he touches the dead with what is turned off; awake, he touches the sleeping" (fragment B 26). He is negating the sensory knowledge for the access into the truth. His ethical conception is growing from the external to the internal and from internal to the celestial. "No matter how much you travel, and even though you travel every road, you will never reach the boundaries of soul, so profound is the logos it possesses" (fragment B 45).
- 2) The word '*logos*' of Heraclitus has a decisive philosophical meaning. The philosophical character of the '*logos*' consists of its value in unifying the universe. The '*logos*' brings

the contraries as harmony or as the “coexistence of contraries” or equilibrium. The ‘logos’ is not outside the contraries, but is their immanent law. Guthrie interprets that the harmony of contraries contains three affirmations. They are: 1) everything is *made up of contraries*; 2) the *contraries are identical*; 3) *war is their creative force* and the constituent director.



UNIT 2 ELEATIC AND ATOMISTIC PHILOSOPHERS

Contents

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2. 1. Introduction
- 2.2. Parmenides
- 2.3. Zeno of Elea
- 2.4. Empedocles
- 2.5. Anaxagoras
- 2.6. Democritus & Leucippus (Atomist)
- 2.7. Let Us Sum Up
- 2.8. Key Words
- 2.9. Further Readings and References
- 2.10. Answers to Check Your Progress

2. 0. OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we try to identify the Eleatic and the Atomist philosophical thoughts which made the ancient Greek philosophy so attractive and rich before the world. Both the Eleatic as well as the Atomist are trying to find out the Ultimate Cause which rules over the universe. Atomists say that the universe is formed out of small invisible and physically indivisible particles called 'Atoms' which are eternal and immutable. This mode of thinking slowly develops into a materialist and quantitative theory; because they deny the immortality of souls. By the end of this unit you will be able to identify:

- whether the ultimate principle of the universe is 'Being' or 'Becoming'.
- the fantastic argument of Zeno to prove the permanence.
- the difference between the Pluralist and the Atomist philosophers; and likewise the differences between the qualitative and quantitative philosophy.
- the ethical insights which govern the universe
- an attempt at reconciliation of the monists who simultaneously uphold two contradicting principles such as 'Being' and 'Becoming'.
- The atom theory.

2. 1. INTRODUCTION

When Parmenides was sixty five years old, he might have exchanged his own ideas with young Socrates at Athens. Parmenides is the one who prepared laws for his native city of Elea. In the beginning of his philosophic career, Parmenides was a follower of Pythagoras, but afterwards he left those thoughts in favour of his own. His main teaching was that the reality is "Permanence" and "change" is an illusion.

Proclus said that Zeno made forty arguments to demonstrate that being is one, thinking that he had to help his master. Empedocles wrote his philosophical thoughts in the form of poetry. He agrees with Parmenides that the reality is permanent. But the concept of change is an

undeniable fact and the change cannot be looked upon as an illusion. In this statement he is agreeing with Heraclitus.

Leucippus of Miletus was the founder of the Atomist School. According to the Atomists, there are an infinite number of indivisible units. They are called atoms. So the fundamental elements of the universe are atoms for Atomists School. They cannot be perceived by senses.

2.2. PARMENIDES: (540-480 B.C)

He is the head of the Eleatic School of Greek Philosophy. He is the one who developed the concept of “being” in opposition to the concept “becoming”.

Concept of ‘Being’

Parmenides developed the conception of 'Being' in opposition to the 'Becoming' of Heraclitus. First of all we have to study the truth – the philosophy of ‘Being’. This being is indestructible, perfect and intelligible. He regarded being as material. He thinks that this being is finite, since he thinks that this is one. Being is for the time being infinite, as having neither beginning nor end, but it is spatially finite. He has also difference of opinion compared to Pythagoras’ concept of abstract essences. For Pythagoras’ reality consisted of geometric points, then everything is reduced to abstract essences, just as the point, the line, the triangle, the circle, the cube etc., are abstract. Pythagoras says that the existence must be protected; the existent can not be reduced into logical elements. The existent exists before thought. Before arithmetic and geometry, a philosophy of being is or metaphysics exists on which thought depends, and not vice versa.

Interpretation of ‘Being’

What is this ‘Being’, which is expressed as ‘to be’ as infinitive, and with the singular participle ‘being’, and the third person present indicative ‘is’? There are six interpretations on this ‘Being’.

1. Mystical interpretation: Plotinus interpreted the being of Parmenides as to be Xenophanes’ Unum, god.
2. Idealistic interpretation: This is done by Hegel and Stenzel. The existent of Parmenides is a production of thought; to think means to be.
3. Materialistic interpretation: it is the sum of material bodies.
4. Logical interpretation: Being is the copula of a proposition. No being exists before the predication and hence before grammar and Logic.
5. Platonic-Aristotelian or categorical interpretation: It is a transcendent concept with various meanings: substance, quality, quantity, place etc., they are modes of being. Being is a concept which is spoken in many ways.
6. Existential or metaphysical interpretation: Being is the original and primary form of existence in the world.

Due to many reasons, according to Dario Composta, the first four and the sixth interpretations cannot be accepted. This being cannot be god because it is never called a god in the texts; and this would make Parmenides a pure monist. The idealistic interpretation does not show the attitude of the Greeks, because those philosophers were mainly objectivistic. The materialistic theory is also not acceptable, since being is not the “arche” of the Ionian

philosophers. Logical interpretation can not be taken, because he is not working from a judgement to arrive at reality.

Principle of Non-Change

How is this possible, he asks, how can a thing both be and not be? How can one thing change into another? How can one quality become another quality? If the answer is positive, then we must admit that something is and something is not. At the same time this would again imply that something can come from nothing and something can become nothing. Parmenides says, "For never will this be proved that things, that are not, are". This is what is known as the *principle of non-change*. Things which have no existence are nothing. Nothing means non-being. If they are non-being, how can we prove that they are? The answer is no and this is an impossibility. The impossibility remains always an impossibility and never becomes a possibility.

Principle of Indestructibility

"Being cannot not be", or as the text puts it: "it is not possible for it not to be" (Fragment 11). The Aristotelian *principle of non-contradiction* states that while the being is (but could not be), it necessarily is. Here with this *principle of indestructibility*, according to Parmenides, the being necessarily is. Therefore, Parmenides asserted the un-changeability of being; in so far as he conceived of being as material, he asserted the indestructibility of matter. Thus Parmenides said that being can neither arise nor pass away, that is the indestructibility of the matter. Being is complete one in itself and is Reality which cannot be added to? If it is not one but divided, then it must be divided by something else. This something else does not exist besides the existent. That means besides being there is nothing. Nothing could be added to, because anything that is added to being would also be a being. Therefore, forms of becoming are negated.

Being and Non-being

Another way of expression: if being has *become*, it must either have come from non-being or from being. If from non-being, it has come from nothing, which is impossible, because, "besides the existent, nothing non-existent exists". In *Metaph*, 986b 28, Aristotle commends on this that Parmenides believes that the existent is of necessity one so that nothing else exists. On this very point Aristotle has spoken more clearly in his work on *Physics*, 184b 16; 185a 9; 185b 18; 186a 7; 186a 22. If it is from being, then it has come from itself. It is the same as saying that it is identical with itself, and thus has always been. Parmenides concludes: "that all things that are, are one and this is being". This is the *principle of identity*. Hence there can be only one eternal, non-derived, unchangeable being. It must be continuous, indivisible and immovable.

Being and Thought

Moreover, being and thought are one, for what cannot be thought, cannot be; and what cannot be, i.e., non-being, cannot be thought. That is, thought and being are identical. Whatever is thought has being. Parmenides may also have believed that being and thought exist in the sense that reality is endowed with mind. An important text shows: "Thought and the function of thought are the same thing, because you will not find thought without being in which it is expressed. In fact, thought is, or it is nothing when outside of being" (Fragment B 8).

Being and Illusion

All change is inconceivable, and, therefore, the world of sense is an illusion. To regard as true what we perceive by the senses is to confuse being with non-being. Parmenides shows a firm belief in reason: reality is obeying to reason and what is contradictory to thought cannot be real. "He did not claim that reality was thought, but that it could be truly apprehended only by thought". If this reality is knowledge for Parmenides, his concept of good is formed by reason. It is sure that some sort of reason certainly qualifies his concept of *agathos* (good) and seems to be very near to the control of intellectual virtue over moral virtue of Aristotle.

2.3. ZENO OF ELEA (490-430)

He was a student of Parmenides and he came from the town of Elea. There is difference of opinion about his discipleship of Parmenides. Zeno was a mathematical and logical genius. He showed the stupidity of plurality. He was very famous for his dialectic. Being is one and immutable. Plurality and motion are contradictions in themselves. He denies the reality of both. His argument clearly brings out the discrepancy between logic and experience.

Arguments against Plurality

He argued: If the whole of being is a plurality, it is formed of many points, and this whole can be proved to be both infinitely small and infinitely great. One thing is formed of small parts and the same thing is formed of large parts, it is absurd to say that the one and the same whole is both infinitely small and the infinitely big. For example, let us take a line which is made up of many points each of which is having a certain size. Then the line must be infinitely big; because it is made up of infinite number of units. Therefore, everything in the world must be big in size or the world itself must be infinitely great. Just imagine, on the other side, if the units are without magnitude, the whole universe also will be without magnitude. Since the single unit has no magnitude, the whole sum also will not have magnitude. Then, in conclusion, the universe will be infinitely small. Hence we reject completely the initial supposition of plurality.

If we believe that many beings exist, then Zeno says that this belief is an absurdity. These beings, which are existing, are numerically defined. If they are not numerically counted, how can they exist? If it is not possible to count them, then they are infinite. They are not counted because between two beings (two parts) there is another being. And between the third and the original two there rests yet another; and so on ad infinitum.

There is an argument against the Pythagorean Doctrine of space. Parmenides said that there was no empty space. Zeno supported this view and reduced the opposite view to absurdity. Suppose, there is a space in which things are. If that space is nothing, then things cannot be in it. If this space is something, then this space needs another space and so on ad infinitum. If there is no such space, then things cannot be in space. Things therefore are not in space or in an empty void. In that case multiplicity also does not exist.

Similarly, we shall think that a body is moving through space. In order to pass to some other space it has to pass at least half of that space, in order to reach the half it has to pass half of the half, therefore, ad infinitum. How can you cross infinite number of points and thereby an infinite distance? Therefore no body will cross anywhere and motion is impossible. In this style movement becomes impossible.

Even in movement it does not move, because a body in motion must occupy its own dimensions. Now in every event of its motion, an arrow occupies a space equal to its dimensions, while these dimensions do not have movement. Occupying space means that object is at rest.

Therefore the moving arrow is still. Nothing is moving at the moment in which it occupies its own dimensions. As a disciple of Parmenides, Zeno was refuting all the plurality in the universe.

The ultimate principle of the universe, according to Parmenides, is permanence. A thing that exists cannot change into another. If someone believes that they change, that will be a mere illusion. For him change is impossible. He believed that everything, that we experience, that exists, had always existed. Nothing can become anything other than what it is. He was sure that human sense felt the change; on the other side he was sure that his reason felt the permanence even within this change. He has given more importance to the feeling of reason and other is simply denied as an illusion. He was a man of rationalism. He believed that human reason is the primary source of our knowledge of the world.

2. 4. EMPEDOCLES (490-430 B.C)

He is from Sicily an Island near Italy. He was a leader of the Democratic Party in his native city. He is also known as magician and wonder worker. He helped us to come out of these complex concepts of his predecessors like Heraclitus and Parmenides. He is of the opinion that these philosophers have concentrated on the monistic way of explaining the substance of the world.

Cosmogony

He says that one thing cannot turn into another matter. In fact, fire can not change. Real fire will remain as real fire and it will continue to be fire. At this point Parmenides is right by telling that 'nothing changes'. On the contrary, Empedocles accepted the teaching of Heraclitus that the sense perception is also true. Here, what we see is the change of the nature. He concludes that this problem arises because of the belief in one single principle. As a solution to this above riddle he suggests that the cosmos is made up of four principles: earth, water, air, and fire. All movements in the cosmos consisted of these four elements. They come together and are separated. The cosmos is a mixture of these elements, but the proportion of these elements would be different. In one comparison Empedocles refers it to the work of a painter. He can make different paintings with four colors: white, black, red, and yellow. The intelligent painter creates various pictures. He harmoniously mixes these colors, some in greater measure and some in lesser, and he creates beautiful figures similar to. The death or destruction of one thing is due to the separation of the unity of these principles. These elements remain always without change, even if we notice the changes with our eyes. Therefore it is not right that everything changes. In reality nothing changes, but what really happens is the combination and separation of these things. All through these combinations and separations these principles keep their character without change.

Principle of Unity and Separation

One doubt remains unclarified. What makes the thing to combine and to disintegrate? Empedocles added two different forces at work in the process of nature. They are love and strife. Love brings unity and life, but strife causes destruction and death. These are the two structural forces in the cosmogony. Nothing becomes, nothing is destroyed and everything is eternal. "There is no means through which something would arise from what earlier did not exist and through which what exist would perish. This would be a vain thing without any terminus. In fact, (being) will always be, wherever we may look" (Fragment B 6). Therefore life and death

is not the goal, but mixing and separating is the goal of love and hate through a universal eternal cycle. He also found out the separation of 'substance' and 'force'.

Check your progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Give the second argument to confirm that there is no change but only permanence according to Parmenides?

2. Give the first argument against Plurality according to Zeno?

2.5. ANAXAGORAS (500-428 B.C)

Anaxagoras born in Clazomenae, in Asia Minor, took up his abode at Athens, and became the friend of the great statesman Pericles, who aimed to make his city the intellectual as well as political center of Hellas. His life span was between 500-428.

Anaxagoras like Empedocles, adopted the teachings of Parmenides that the being is permanent. That means, being neither comes into being nor disintegrates, but it remains unchangeable. Anaxagoras does not agree with the teaching of Empedocles the ultimate units are many like earth, air, fire and water. He teaches that everything which has parts which are qualitatively the same as the whole is ultimate and un-derived. For example a piece of silver is cut into two, the second piece also will have the quality of the first. Here the part is also the same as whole. Those things, which have the same quality even in parts and are same as the whole, are ultimate and un-derived. They are mixtures composed of many qualitatively different particles. According to Anaxagoras there was no individual particle, but all kinds of particles stayed together and they were indivisible. But in reality some particle was dominating, that is why something becomes gold and other thing becomes silver. He continues, "In everything there is a portion of everything". In this way he was trying to explain the concept change and permanence. If it is so, it is easy to explain that flesh can come from grass or grass can come from flesh. From one nature, something of a different nature can emerge.

Teleology

In Anaxagoras we encounter for the first time the linking of teleology with the uniqueness and perfection of the world order. He sees the entire complex world-process, as it

now appears, as the result of a long series of movements, which followed necessarily from the original rotation. To account for the initial motion he puts this *nous*, an intelligent principle, as the cause. *Nous* is a spontaneous active being, the free source of all movement and life in the world. It rules over all that has life. This *nous* or mind is a special contribution of Anaxagoras. *Nous* has power over all things that have life, both great and small. It is controlling the whole revolution and it started to revolve in the beginning. The *nous* is a teleological or purposive principle.

Ethical Principle

He had no formal ethical teachings but at the same time he introduced the concept of mind or intelligence (*nous*) into Greek philosophical studies. He stressed that "Mind is infinite and self-ruling, and is mixed with nothing, but is alone by itself". Aristotle gave Anaxagoras credit for the soberness of his thought but criticised him for failing to use *nous* consistently in explaining cosmic events. It is possible that the concept of mind in Anaxagoras would have helped Aristotle to discuss the mental aspects of human conduct. Sometimes, Anaxagoras is calling the mind the most rarefied of all things. Thereby he is suggesting that it is a kind of matter. *Nous* is not to be considered as creating matter. At the same time it is both immanent and transcendent. *Nous* is present in all living things. Among living beings it has essential differences in bodies, but not in their souls. Anaxagoras, however, does not explain the human consciousness as having independent selfhood. There is confusion in his doctrine of mind, whether it is theism or pantheism. Aristotle criticises him saying that Anaxagoras brings the mind only when mechanical explanation fails to answer the reality.

2.6. DEMOCRITUS & LEUCIPPUS (ATOMISTS)

The founders of Atomists' School are Leucippus of Miletus and Democritus of Abdera. But, Aristotle and Theophrastus made Leucippus to be the sole founder of this School. Democritus of Abdera was born about 460 B.C. in the commercial city of Abdera, situated on the coast of Thrace, and died in 370 B.C. He said that the universe is built upon certain small invisible particles. The characteristics of these particles are eternity and immutability. He named these small units 'atoms'. The meaning of the term 'a-tom' is 'not-divisible'.

Atom Theory

For him the most important thing was that the substantial element of the nature, out of which the nature was built up, could not be indefinitely divided into smaller particles. If this were possible the permanent character of the nature would be in danger. There would not be then any permanency to the nature. He also agreed in the teaching of Parmenides that 'nothing comes from nothing'. So, the substantial particle of nature should be eternal, and then only the nature can come out of it. These eternal particles which are atoms, are firm and solid, but they are not identical. Otherwise, the multiplicity and the unity of the nature would be impossible. Because, we see mountains, oceans, sky, ameba, birds, fish, flowers, animals and human beings. He confirmed that the universe is composed with unlimited number and variety of atoms. Out of them, some are round and smooth, some are irregular and jagged. And precisely due to their multiplicity in eternity, they could combine each other to unlimited bodies. When a body dissolved or disintegrated, the atoms become free and ready for other new combinations of bodies. Atoms moved around in space, but they are hooked and are free to join together for a new creation.

According to him, the only things that existed were atoms and the void. Soul' and 'force' have no much role in his teaching on the universe. 'Soul' is connected with brain. Once brain disintegrated, we lose consciousness, and then the special round smooth shaped 'soul atoms' spread in all directions. He believed that nothing could influence the universe except atom. It could be possessed by some other new bodies. That means, human beings have no immortal soul. Therefore, he is known as a materialist, since he believed in material things. In nature, everything happens quite mechanically, it does not mean that it happens randomly. Because, he said, there were the inevitable laws of necessity. A natural cause, which is inherent in everything, guides the happenings in the nature. All the processes in the universe are quite natural, though, it is mechanical.

Theory of Knowledge

The theory of knowledge according to this school is developed from the sense perception. Sense perception is formed by the action of emanations resembling the perceived body. All bodies transmit their image through air. The image, which is transmitted by the body, modifies the object near to it and so on; finally it reaches the sense organs of a person or a living being. If the images proceeding from other objects interfere with other images in the process of transmission, then illusion takes place. If they proceed without interference true knowledge takes place. It means a direct hit on the organs of sense and finally on the soul.

The sensible qualities (colour, sound, taste, smell and touch) are not in the things themselves. It is merely the effects of combinations of atoms on our sense organs. Atoms as such have no qualities other than shape or size. Hence sense perception does not provide true knowledge of things. It shows how things affect the human beings. The Greek atomists have already distinguished between the primary qualities (shape, impenetrability, etc.) and the secondary qualities (colour, sound, smell, etc). This distinction is a main discussion in modern philosophy.

We can only think of atoms, we can not see them as they are. Sense perception is not a clear knowledge. Thought, which penetrates our sense perception and appearances, and reaches atom, is the only right knowledge. Democritus is a rationalist. Rational thought begins where sense perception ends. It is the genuine way of knowing. Reason is the highest function of soul. For Democritus soul and reason are the same.

Ethical Principle

Democritus stressed the soul as the locus of human well-being. His concept of *eudaimonia* includes both the notion of 'good existence' (*eu-esto*) and of 'good feeling' (*euthymie*). Pace Gosling and Taylor think that Democritus was the first Greek philosopher to produce a systematic ethical theory. The most important step towards systematisation was, the transition from the vague ethical thinking that everybody wants to be happy or cheerful, or free from troubles.

On the list of Democritus' writings on ethics there appears a treatise *Peri euthymias* (DL IX 46) of which only a sentence or two has remained. Later doxographers, assuming the framework of eudaimonistic theories, tell us that Democritus declared *euthymia* to be the goal of life (*telos*).

The superiority of reason is taken into consideration in the ethical life. The end of all conduct of men is well-being of society and ultimately of man. Well-being means not only the intellectual satisfaction but also the pleasure of senses. We can trace a line of hedonism in the teaching of Democritus. True happiness is the end of man's life. It is an inner state of satisfaction or pleasure, depending on the tranquillity, harmony and fearlessness of the soul. This happiness is not coming from wealth or material good, nor from the pleasure of the body. It needs a little pain, and requires repetition and moderation of pleasure. The less you desire, the less you are disappointed

All virtues are valuable only if they help to cultivate happiness. Envy, jealousy and bitterness of mind bring friction and they will destroy everybody. The sense of duty must be the basis of doing the right thing; it should not be from the fear of punishment. We have to serve the state too, because if the state is in peace, all realm of state will grow; if the governance of the state is corrupted, then there will not be any order or law but only chaos.

Theology of Democritus

According to Democritus God exists. God is composed of atoms. The Gods are mortal like men, but they live longer. They are more powerful than human being and they possess reason of high order. Gods are known to men in dreams. They do not interfere in the affairs of men and therefore men need not fear them. Like all other things, God is subjected to the motion of atoms. One must achieve mental power to reach the goal reflecting and contemplating on beautiful acts.

Check your progress II

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. How does Empedocles explain the theory of Cosmogony?

2. Sketch out the Atom theory of the Atomists?

2. 7. LET US SUM UP

We have been looking into the cosmological point of speculation basing mainly on the reflection of the Eleatic and the Atomist philosophers. Though they were convinced of the cosmic unity, they had to answer the problem of the multiplicity in the world. They, therefore, faced the dilemma of the one and the many.

The Atomist and the Pluralist Schools were slowly preparing the base of reconciliation of these contraries of 'Change' and 'Permanence' proposed by their predecessors. It was really a tough task for them to fulfil, though they were not fully successful in their attempt. The Pluralist and the Atomist School gave the same answer to the problem put forward by Heraclitus and Parmenides. That is how, they admitted the change, but it is accepted as relative change not as an absolute change. In this explaining they were admitting the permanent reality i.e., Being. In other words, they agree absolute change is impossible but relative change is possible. Nothing in the universe arises or perishes, everything is keeping the same nature, but through combination we feel that something arises, and through separation we feel that they disintegrate. Aristotle and Plato will explain it more clearly as we are to see in the coming units. Now it is time to switch over to the problem of man as such by the time of Sophists and Socrates.

2.8. KEY WORDS

Illusion: Illusion is the state of mind in which one mistakes one thing for the other due to passion, prejudice, or conditioning. It is distinct from hallucination in which one perceives an absent thing as present.

Cause: Cause is a real principle which exercises a positive influence in the production of an effect.

Universe: Universe is the totality of space which includes all the galaxies.

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2.10. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. "Being cannot not be", or as the text puts it: "it is not possible for it not to be" (Fragment 11). The Aristotelian *principle of non-contradiction* states that while the being is (but could not be), it necessarily is. Here with this *principle of indestructibility*, according to Parmenides, the being necessarily is. Therefore, Parmenides asserted the un-changeability of being; in so far as he conceived of being as material, he asserted the indestructibility of matter. Thus Parmenides said that being can neither arise nor pass away, that is the indestructibility of the matter. Being is complete one in itself and is Reality which cannot be added to.

2. If we believe that many beings exist, then Zeno says that this belief is an absurdity. These beings, which are existing, are numerically defined. If they are not numerically counted, how can they exist? If it is not possible to count them, then they are infinite. They are not counted because between two beings (two parts) there is another being. And between the third and the original two there rests yet another; and so on ad infinitum.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. The cosmos is made up of four elements: earth, water, air, and fire. All movements in the cosmos consist of these four elements. They come together and are separated. The cosmos is a mixture of these elements, but the proportion of these elements would be different. In one comparison Empedocles refers it to the work of a painter. He can make different paintings with four colors: white, black, red, and yellow. The intelligent painter creates various pictures. He harmoniously mixes these colors, some in greater measure and some in lesser, and he creates beautiful figures similar to. The death or destruction of one thing is due to the separation of the unity of these principles. These elements remain always without change, even if we notice the changes with our eyes. Therefore it is not right that everything changes. In reality nothing changes, but what really happens is the combination and separation of these things. All through these combinations and separations these principles keep their character without change.

2. For him the most important thing was that the substantial element of the nature, out of which the nature was built up, could not be indefinitely divided into smaller particles. If this were possible the permanent character of the nature would be in danger. There would not be then any permanency to the nature. He also agreed in the teaching of Parmenides that 'nothing comes from nothing'. So, the substantial particle of nature should be eternal, and then only the nature can come out of it. These eternal particles which are atoms, are firm and solid, but they are not identical. Otherwise, the multiplicity and the unity of the nature would be impossible. Because, we see mountains, oceans, sky, ameba, birds, fish, flowers, animals and human beings. He confirmed that the universe is composed of unlimited number of atoms. Out of them, some are round and smooth, some are irregular and jagged. And precisely due to their multiplicity in eternity, they could combine each other to unlimited bodies. When a body dissolved or disintegrated, the atoms become free and ready for other new combinations of bodies. Atoms moved around in space, but they are hooked and are free to join together for a new creation.

UNIT 3

THE SOPHISTS

Contents

- 3.0. Objectives
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- 3.3. Prodicus
- 3.4. Hippias
- 3.5. Gorgias
- 3.6. The Lesser Sophists
- 3.7. Let Us Sum Up
- 3.8. Key Words
- 3.9. Further Readings and References
- 3.10. Answers to Check Your Progress

3.0. OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we explain in detail the Sophist movement and their philosophical insights that abandoned all abstract, metaphysical enquiries concerning the nature of the cosmos and focused on the practical issues of life.

By the end of this Unit you should know:

Their foul or fair argumentation

Epistemological and ethical skepticism and relativism of the Sophists

The differentiation between the early philosophers and Sophists

The basic philosophical positions of Protagoras, Prodicus, Hippias and Gorgias

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Sophist movement flourished in 5th century B.C., shortly before the emergence of the Socratic period. Xenophon, a historian of 4th century B.C., describes the Sophists as wandering teachers

who offered wisdom for sale in return for money. The Sophists were, then, professional teachers, who travelled about, from city to city, instructing people, especially the youth. They were paid large sums of money for their job. Until then teaching was considered something sacred and was not undertaken on a commercial basis. The Sophists claimed to be teachers of wisdom and virtue. These terms, however, did not have their original meaning in sophism. What they meant by these terms was nothing but a proficiency or skillfulness in practical affairs of daily life. This, they claimed, would lead people to success in life, which, according to them, consisted in the acquisition and enjoyment of material wealth as well as positions of power and influence in society.

THE INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

The epistemological and ethical skepticism and relativism of the Sophists reflected a reaction against the abstract and metaphysical philosophy of the pre-Socratic thinkers. The earlier Greek philosophers had been chiefly interested in investigating the ultimate nature of the cosmos. Their systems excluded one another. In fact the Sophists' attention was diverted from the problem of Nature to problem of Man by the diversity of opinions found among the early Greek philosophers. Faced with this baffling array of conflicting theories of the world, the Sophists came to the conclusion that the lack of agreement among nature philosophers was due to the inherent limitations of the human reason. The Sophists however subjected the human reason to a searching criticism. As a result they came to a thoroughly relativistic conclusion, denying all objectivity to knowledge and thus paving the way for skepticism.

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

Political life gained momentum in Greece after the Persian Wars (500 – 449 BC) and this was particularly the case in democratic Athens which became the centre of intense political, cultural and economic activity in the region. The free citizen was expected to play an active role in the affairs of the state, and so he had to be trained to share greater political responsibilities. Mastery of rhetoric and oratory was of considerable importance in building up a political career. In fact the Sophists considered speech as a powerful weapon with which the speaker might bewitch his audience and induce them to accept his views. In a Greek democracy, there was money to be made by winning lawsuits, and the Sophists claimed to be able to teach the right way of winning lawsuits. By instructing the youth in political eristic skills, the Sophists helped create a new aristocracy of intellect and ability, naturally frowned upon by the older aristocracy that lived by conventional wisdom in knowledge and conduct.

SOPHIST TEACHINGS: MAIN FEATURES

As has been pointed out, the Sophists were concerned to explore problems of knowledge and conduct rather than the structure of the universe or the ultimate constituents of reality. Their acquaintance with earlier philosophers had convinced them that it was impossible ever to attain

certain knowledge of external reality, that human reason could not solve the riddle of the universe. The more pertinent, therefore, was an enquiry into the very nature of human knowledge and the practical rules of moral conduct. Thus, the chief contribution of sophist thought concerns basic questions in ethics and epistemology as well as the proper method and goal of rational enquiry. This represented a major change of philosophical interest from the problems of nature to the problem of man though this change is best seen in the philosophy of Socrates.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Pre-Socratic philosophers, while investigating the nature of reality, had taken for granted the competence of human reason to attain truth. It never occurred to them to criticize the intellect itself. It was this very assumption that the Sophists called in question; for, why else should these great thinkers arrive at conflicting, even contradictory, conclusions about the nature of reality since they all were investigating the same object? The conclusion arrived at by the Sophists was that knowledge depends upon the particular knower, that what seems true to him *is* true for him, that there is no objective truth, but only subjective opinion. Protagoras' famous dictum, namely, 'Man is the measure of all things' is a repudiation of the paradoxical conclusions of the nature philosophers in favour of the common sense judgments of the individual man. Such a view would make the individual a law unto himself in matters of knowledge. There may be as many views of the same thing as there are individuals, yet all will be true. Likewise, two opposite statements on the same subject may both be true, each relative to the individual making it. This being so, there is no point in attempting to demonstrate *the* truth of a statement that is acceptable to all; rather, it is the business of the Sophist to persuade people to embrace one of the two opposing statements rather than the other.

ETHICS

The ethical views of the Sophists are of a piece with their epistemology in that these views follow natural from the subjectivism and relativism of their theoretical position. If knowledge of reality is impossible, then knowledge of right and wrong is impossible; there is no universal right and wrong so that each person is free to make ethical choices according to his conscience. If it was conflicting cosmologies of early Greek thought that generated the Sophists' epistemological skepticism, it was the diversity of customs, morals and traditions prevailing in various nations that led them to question the validity of absolute, objective standards of action and value. Sophism differed from the early Greek philosophy not only in regard to subject matter, namely, metaphysics and epistemology, but also in the method and the proper goal of philosophical investigation.

METHOD OF ENQUIRY

The method of the Sophists was "empirico-inductive" while that of the early philosophers was, in the main, deductive. The latter would typically start with a general principle, and then proceed to explain the phenomena in accordance with that principle. The Sophists, on the other hand, started with particular observations and facts. They would have collected a plentiful store of them from their travels. From these they would draw their conclusions, partly theoretical and

partly practical. For instance, having studied a store of facts concerning differences of opinion and belief, they would come to the conclusion that it is impossible to have any certain knowledge universally valid for all.

THE GOAL OF PHILOSOPHICAL ENQUIRY

Because they were knowledge skeptics, the Sophists did not aim to establish objective norms or discover necessary truths from their investigations. Here, again, they differed from the early Greek philosophers whose primary aim was finding out the truth. The cosmologists wanted to find out the objective truth about the world. The Sophists, on the other hand did not expect to reach objective truth, but only relative, subjective truth. They set themselves the modest task of teaching the art and control of life. In other words, their goal was practical, not speculative.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SOPHIST THOUGHT

The sophistic movement of 5th century BC represents a phase of transition. It reveals a growing distrust of the power of human reason to solve the riddle of the universe and a consequent lack of faith in traditional values and institutions. This movement is radically skeptical and revolutionary; it is indifferent and even hostile to metaphysical speculation; in calling attention to the problem of man, however, it necessitates a thorough examination of the problem of human knowledge and conduct, and ushers in the Socratic period.

On the positive side, we might note that the Sophists made philosophy accessible to the common man, turned attention away from the contemplation of external nature to man himself. Secondly, they fostered the spirit of critical reflection on all fields of human life and thought. They compelled philosophers to examine the thinking process itself and this led to the formulation of a theory of knowledge. Likewise, their use of logical fallacies and sophisms made it necessary to study the correct laws of thought. In time, this led to the development of dialectic (Plato) and logic (Aristotle). In the same way radical criticism of the common notions of right and wrong, of public and private justice compelled a reexamination of the foundations of ethics and politics.

On balance, then, it must be conceded that the Sophists were a great educative force in Hellas. They forced philosophy to be built upon more solid foundations, to examine more closely the fundamental concepts of knowledge, truth, right and wrong, the meaning and purpose of human institutions and religion.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Explain the epistemological position of Sophists.

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2) Write a short note on Sophist's ethics.

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MAJOR SOPHIST THINKERS

3.2. PROTAGORAS

LIFE

Protagoras was born about 481 BC at Abdera in Thrace. He is believed to have come to Athens sometime by the middle of the century. Pericles entrusted him with the task of drawing up a constitution for the colony of Thurio, founded in 444 BC. He was back at Athens in 431 and during the plague in 430 which killed two of Pericles' sons. The story goes that Protagoras was charged with blasphemy because of his book on the gods, fled the country before trial, and was drowned on the crossing to Sicily.

TEACHINGS

EPISTEMOLOGY

Protagoras is best known for his dictum: "Man is the measure of all things, of things that are that they are, of things that are not that they are not". Controversy surrounded the precise signification of the terms 'man' and 'things'. Does 'man' refer to individual man or man in the specific sense? Does 'things' mean physical objects only or does it include objects of thought (eg. ethical values) as well? In Plato's *Theaetetus*, the above saying of Protagoras is interpreted in the individualistic sense in regard to sense perception. When the same wind is blowing, one may feel chilly, another not. Socrates asks if we should agree with Protagoras and say that the wind is cold to the one who feels chilly and not to the other. From this it is clear that Protagoras is taken to mean the individual man, and not man in the specific sense. Moreover, it is to be

noted that the Sophist does not mean that the wind *appears* cold, but that it *is* cold to one man's sense perception, while to another's it *is not*.

ETHICS

Against this interpretation it is pointed out that in the *Protagoras* of Plato, the Sophist is not represented as applying his dictum to ethical values in the individualistic sense. One might say, in answer to this objection, that what is true of objects of sense perception need not necessarily be true of ethical values. If, however, it is further objected that since Protagoras uses the term 'all things', he must be taken to mean both objects of sense perception and objects of abstract, conceptual thought and intuition (= values). This objection can be countered in two ways. First, it is far from clear whether Protagoras intended to bring together both material and spiritual objects under the term 'all things'. Secondly, objects of sense perception (= material objects) are of a kind that *cannot* become the subject of true and universal knowledge whereas ethical values are of a kind that *can* become the subject of true and universal knowledge. This was the view of Plato himself. Not that Protagoras subscribed to such a view; he did not. But point is that sense perception, and intuition of values do not stand or fall together in relation to certain knowledge and truth for all.

We still have to find out Protagoras' actual teaching in regard to ethical judgments and values. In the *Theaetetus* he does set forth a relativistic view of ethical judgments that is characteristic of his theory of knowledge: he declares that whatever practices seem right and praiseworthy to any particular State are so for that State. At the same time, he also urges that the wise man should attempt to substitute sound practices for unsound. In other words, all kinds of ethical views are true relatively, yet some may be 'sounder' (= more useful, expedient) than others and it is beauty of the wise man to promote these sounder practices. When we come to the *Protagoras* we find in the Sophist's words hints of a natural law common to all men. Plato depicts him as saying that the gods have bestowed on all men a proper sense of righteousness, moderation and respect for others, which are absolutely necessary for the existence and functioning of the State; otherwise the State would not exist at all. This is a peculiar domain of human activity that is quite different from all others. For instance, a city could function properly even if only a few possessed musical skills, but it would not, if only a few citizens possessed a proper sense of rights and obligations enjoined by just laws. Now, does this contradict the relativism of *Theaetetus*? What Protagoras seems to mean is this: law in general is founded on certain ethical tendencies implanted in all men, but that the differences of law found in individual States are relative. On this view, the law of one State will not be 'truer' than the law of another State, but it may be 'sounder'. The State of city community would be the determiner of law, and not the individual. Yet, its laws will only be relatively true with reference to the legal code of another State, no more true or no less. Now, Protagoras was an upholder of tradition and social convention. He laid great emphasis on the importance of education, of imbibing the ethical traditions of the State while admitting that the wise man may lead the State to the formulation of 'better' laws. As far as the individual citizen is concerned, the proper course is to be faithful to tradition, to the accepted code of the community. This is so because no one 'way' is 'truer' than another. It is as though Protagoras would say: do not set up your private judgment against the law of the State, for no one code is 'truer' than

another. In this way, Protagoras is able to reconcile his relativism with respect for tradition and custom, a relativism that had seemed to many to be intentionally revolutionary.

RELIGION

Of Protagoras' work *On the gods* only a fragment has come down to us. In this extract he expresses a characteristic skepticism regarding the existence and nature of gods. Such a statement may easily be interpreted as subversive of faith in religion. In fact, however, this is not so. In the *Protagoras* the Sophist recommends submission to one's inherited faith just as he advocated obedience to the laws of the State and for much the same reason: if we cannot be certain of absolute truth, why throw out the religion of our fathers! At any rate, Protagoras' attitude is not really so destructive as believers of a dogmatic faith might suppose. The fact of the matter is that Greek religion was not based on a reasoned faith; its main thrust was worship rather than dogmatic affirmations and negations. Although the general tendency of sophist thought was to weaken men's trust in tradition, Protagoras personally was a conservative in temper and had no intention of educating revolutionaries. On the contrary he claimed that his task was to educate good citizens. Ethical tendencies innate in all men can only come to fruition in organized societies. A good citizen should, therefore, strive to realize this aim by absorbing the social tradition. This tradition is not absolute truth, but it is the norm for a good citizen.

ERISTIC

As regards eristic practices, Protagoras' views stem directly from his relativistic theory. On every subject, he argued, it was possible to have more than one opinion. The dialectician and rhetorician would do well to develop different opinions and arguments. He would shine best when he made the weaker side appear the better. Enemies of sophism have interpreted this to mean making the morally worse cause appear the better. However, by 'weaker side', Protagoras did not necessarily mean a morally worse side. In a court case this could mean presenting the case of a man who is too weak to defend himself, or presenting a case the justice of which it is difficult to establish with hard evidence. It is true that in the hands of unscrupulous rhetoricians and lawyers, this principle easily degenerated into unscrupulous advocacy; but such a motive could not be attributed to Protagoras.

LINGUISTICS

Protagoras led the way in the study of the science of grammar. His distinctive contribution relates to classification of different kinds of sentence and the terminology of genders of nouns.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Explain the epistemological position of Protagoras.

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2) Write a short note on the ethical philosophy of Protagoras.

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3.3. PRODICUS

Prodicus was a native of the island of Ceos in the Aegean. Like most of his compatriots, he is said to have possessed a pessimistic disposition. In the pseudo-Platonic dialogue *Axiochus* it is said that he considered death desirable as it afforded an escape from the evils of life. Fear of death, he argued, is irrational because death concerns neither the living nor the dead. The basis of this argument is the notion that life and death are mutually exclusive.

Prodicus' chief contribution was in the area of theogony. In the beginning men worshipped natural objects – sun, moon, rivers, lakes, fruits etc. - as gods because these were useful to them. The cult of the Nile in Egypt was an example of this practice. The next stage was worship of inventors of various arts and crafts – agriculture, viniculture, metal work etc. So they had such deities like Demeter, Dionysus, Hephaestus. This view rendered prayer superfluous and for this reason, Prodicus got into trouble with authorities at Athens. Like Protagoras, Prodicus too was interested in the study of language. He wrote a treatise on synonyms. His style was markedly pedantic.

3.4. HIPPIAS

A younger contemporary of Protagoras, Hippias of Elis was a polymath, being well versed in mathematics, astronomy, grammar and rhetoric, music, literature, history and mythology. He prided himself on his sartorial skills. His list of the Olympic victors paved the way for the later Greek system of dating by means of the Olympiads. In the *Protagoras*, Plato attributes to him the view that law is the tyrant of men, which forces them to do many things contrary to nature. It appears that Hippias wanted to draw attention to laws of the city state that were at variance with natural laws.

3.5. GORGIAS

A Sicilian by birth, Gorgias came to Athens in 427 BC as ambassador of his native State. He was a champion of panhellenism.

METAPHYSICS

Gorgias' early interests were the philosophy of Empedocles and natural sciences. It is generally believed that he wrote a book on *Optics*. Later, he was attracted to skepticism by the dialectic of Zeno and published a book entitled *On Not-being or Nature*. It is learned from this work that Gorgias reacted to the Eleatic dialectic differently from Protagoras. While the latter held that everything is true, Gorgias asserted an absolute nihilism. The three cardinal propositions of this doctrine are the following: (1) Nothing exists; (2) If there were anything, then it could not be known; (3) Even if there were knowledge of being, this knowledge could not be imparted.

It need hardly be said that these ideas struck one as being provocative in the extreme. But did Gorgias seriously offer it as his metaphysics? Some thought he did. Others took it as a joke intended to show what can be done by a clever use of words. It may well be that Gorgias wished to employ the Eleatic dialectic in order to render Eleatic philosophy meaningless. Afterwards, Gorgias renounced philosophy and turned to rhetoric.

RHETORIC

Gorgias saw that to master rhetorical art one had to master the art of persuasion and this required a close study of practical psychology. He deliberately practiced the art of suggestion which could be used for both practical and artistic ends. With regard to artistic use Gorgias proposed the concept of justifiable deception, of which tragedy was an obvious example. Tragedy's power over the spectator is compared to the effect of purgatives which reminds one of Aristotle's theory of Katharsis.

3.6. THE LESSER SOPHISTS

Amongst the lesser figures of the Sophist movement one might mention Callimachus who put forward the 'might is right' doctrine; Lycophron who asserted that nobility is a sham, that all men are equal; Thrasymachus of Chalcedon who figures in the *Republic* as the brutal champion of the rights of the stronger; and Antiphon of Athens who denounced the distinction between nobles and commons, Greeks and barbarians as itself a barbarism.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) State the philosophical thoughts of Prodicus.

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2) What are the philosophical contributions of Hippas and Gorgias?

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1.7. LET US SUM UP

We have already seen how some of the sophists held a relativistic view on cognition and knowledge. Their philosophy contains criticism of religion, law, and ethics. Though many sophists were apparently as religious as their contemporaries, some held atheistic or agnostic views. In some cases, such as Gorgias, there are original rhetorical works that are fortunately extant, allowing the author to be judged on his own terms. In most cases, however, knowledge of sophist thought comes from fragmentary quotations that lack context. Many of these quotations come from Aristotle, who seems to have held the sophists in slight regard, notwithstanding his other disagreements with Plato. Owing largely to the influence of Plato and Aristotle, philosophy came to be regarded as distinct from sophistry, the latter being regarded as rhetoric, a practical discipline. Thus, by the time of the Roman Empire, a sophist was simply a teacher of rhetoric and a popular public speaker.

3.8. KEY WORDS

Judgment: Judgment is an act of the intellect in which we say something of an object by way of affirmation or denial

Rhetoric: Rhetoric is the art of using language as a means to persuade. Along with grammar and logic or dialectic, rhetoric is one of the three ancient arts of discourse. From ancient Greece to the late 19th Century, it was a central part of Western education, filling the need to train public speakers and writers to move audiences to action with arguments.

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3.10. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Knowledge depends upon the particular knower, that what seems true to him *is* true for him, that there is no objective truth, but only subjective opinion. There may be as many views of the same thing as there are individuals, yet all will be true. Thus, there is no point in attempting to demonstrate *the* truth of a statement that is acceptable to all. To fix a truth that is valid for all and for all times is to go against the very nature of reality which is in constant flux. Thus anything and everything can be equally true or false at the same time depending on the experience of various individuals.

For Protagoras, two mutually contradictory statements might be equally true. But one might be 'better' than the other - one view might be more normal or natural than the other. For Gorgias, in any case of conflict of opinions, none is true. He supports this in three paradoxical statements: (1) there is nothing; (2) even if there were something, we could not know it; (3) even if it existed and we could know it, we could not communicate this knowledge to others.

- 2) If knowledge of reality is impossible, then knowledge of right and wrong is impossible; there is no universal right and wrong so that each person is free to make ethical choices according to his conscience.

The older Sophist Protagoras declared all institutions, including law and morality, to be merely conventional. However, he recognized the necessity of legal and moral rules for social order.

The younger Sophists argued that the foundation of ethics is mere convention and arbitrary agreement among men. Some maintained that laws were made by the “weak” in order to prevent the “best” from getting their due. Others held that laws were made to subserve class interests, to promote the interests of minority of privileged individuals.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) The epistemological position of Protagoras can be presented in his own saying: “Man is the measure of all things, of things that are that they are, of things that are not that they are not”. But the questions are: Does ‘man’ refer to individual man or man in the specific sense? Does ‘things’ mean physical objects only or does it include objects of thought (eg. ethical values) as well?

For example, When the same wind is blowing, one may feel chilly, another not. This means the wind is cold to the one who feels chilly and not to the other. From this it is clear that Protagoras is taken to mean the individual man, and not man in the specific sense. Moreover, the Sophist does not mean that the wind *appears* cold, but that it *is* cold to one man’s sense perception, while to another’s it *is not*.

- 2) In the *Theaetetus* he does set forth a relativistic view of ethical judgments. He declares that whatever practices seem right and praiseworthy to any particular State are so for that State. At the same time, he also urges that the wise man should attempt to substitute sound practices for unsound. In other words, all kinds of ethical views are true relatively, yet some may be ‘sounder’ (= more useful, expedient) than others and it is beauty of the wise man to promote these sounder practices.

What Protagoras seems to mean is this: law in general is founded on certain ethical tendencies implanted in all men, but that the differences of law found in individual States are relative. On this view, the law of one State will not be ‘truer’ than the law of another State, but it may be ‘sounder’. The State of city community would be the determiner of law, and not the individual. Yet, its laws will only be relatively true with reference to the legal code of another State, no more true or no less. As far as the individual citizen is concerned, the proper course is to be faithful to tradition, to the accepted code of the community. This is so because no one ‘way’ is ‘truer’ than another. In this way, Protagoras is able to reconcile his relativism with respect for tradition and custom.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) Prodicus considered death desirable as it afforded an escape from the evils of life. Fear of death, he argued, is irrational because death concerns neither the living nor the dead. The basis of this argument is the notion that life and death are mutually exclusive.

His chief contribution was in the area of theogony. In the beginning men worshipped natural objects – sun, moon, rivers, lakes, fruits etc. - as gods because these were useful to them. The next stage was worship of inventors of various arts and crafts – agriculture, viniculture, metal work etc. So they had such deities like Demeter, Dionysus, Hephaestus.

- 2) For Hippias, law is the tyrant of men, which forces them to do many things contrary to nature. It appears that Hippias wanted to draw attention to laws of the city state that were at variance with natural laws.

Gorgias proposed absolute nihilism. The three cardinal propositions of this doctrine are the following: (1) Nothing exists; (2) If there were anything, then it could not be known; (3) Even if there were knowledge of being, this knowledge could not be imparted.

UNIT 4

SOCRATES

Contents

4.0 Objectives

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4.2 Socratic Problem

4.3 Socratic Method

4.4 Epistemology

4.5 Socratic Ethics

4.6 Socratic Schools

4.7 Let Us Sum Up

4.8 Key Words

4.9 Further Readings and References

4.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we explain the basic philosophy of Socrates: Socratic problem, Socratic Method, his epistemology and his ethics, and Socratic School such as Cynicism, Cyrenaic School, The School of Megara and the Elian and Eretrian Schools.

By the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- Heighten your critical thinking
- Develop your own personal investigation and reasoned argument for answering life questions
- Comprehend Socratic Method
- Apply his ethical principles in one's life

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Socrates was born in Athens in 469 and lived over a span of seventy years filling entirely the second half of fifth century B.C Athens' cultural life. He died at the age of 70 in 399. He was the son of a sculptor and a midwife. He used to say that his art, like his mother's, was midwifery, the art of delivering children in the name of truth. The voice of Socrates was taken to be the voice of one's conscience. This indicates that he was considered a man of God and, to some extent, a mystic. He was also a devote citizen of Athens. He lived his adult life in Athens engaging in open philosophical discussion which often included questions of ethics, religion, and politics.

Socrates went against the traditional way of accepting the authorities of respected poets such as Homer, Hesiod and others as the proper foundations for answering questions about the aforementioned topics. He insisted, instead, that personal investigation and reasoned argument alone could constitute a proper basis for answering these questions. He believed that he had been given a divine mission for acquiring knowledge by questioning every so-called wise man or in other words the authority and traditions. His divine mission of search for knowledge by questioning wise men brought him into trouble. His search for knowledge led to him to the acceptance of one supreme God, which was not consistent with the then Greek notions of God. Social authorities considered this as destructive because, according to them, it involved subverting accepted beliefs. As a consequence he had to face trial before the popular court for the following three charges:

1. For denying the national gods
2. For setting up of new gods
3. For corrupting the youths.

Although he denied all these charges in defense, he was condemned to death in 399. The last words of this great Athenian Master were: "Now it is time that we were going, I to die and you to live, but which of us has the happier prospect is unknown to anyone but God."

4. 2 SOCRATIC PROBLEM

Although his opposition to the blind acceptance of tradition and authority allied him with Sophists such as Protagoras, Gorgias and Prodicus, he was far more committed to know the inner man than the Sophists. Unlike the Sophists, he was in search for the truth and knowledge about the universal validity of the moral laws. For Socrates, this search was intimately connected with the chief problem of knowing what man is. The inscription at Delphi, "man, know thyself" haunted him constantly.

"I can't as yet 'know myself', as the inscription at Delphi enjoins, and so long as that ignorance remains it seems to me ridiculous to inquire into extraneous matters. Consequently I don't bother about such things, but accept the current beliefs about them, and direct my inquiries, as I have just said, rather to myself." *Phaedrus* 230a.

Although for the Sophists *homo mensura* (man is the measure) was the maxim as to the acquisition of knowledge, the testimonies of Protagoras and Gorgias proved that no valid knowledge about the truth of the universal validity of moral laws was possible. Socrates was dissatisfied with this sophistic position. For Socrates knowing one's own self implied an extensive analysis of knowledge.

This analysis aims at determining three things.

1. The universal validity of moral principle;
2. The laws of the State;
3. The nature of religious faith.

With regard to these points Socrates did not accept any previous philosophical positions, predominantly that of the Sophists. Socrates accused the Sophists that instead of giving importance to reason, they gave importance to perception. He again charged that they did not

distinguish between reason and perception and reason and feeling. Consequently, Sophists ended up in skepticism and nihilism as regards epistemology and conventionalism in morality and politics. Hence, Socrates task was to present a far more universally valid knowledge as well as universally valid moral and political laws. The inquiry into the possibility of universal knowledge as well as universal moral and political laws led him to believe that that virtue is the knowledge of the good through concepts. Concepts are formed by reason which is one and the same for all people. Thus, he concludes that if virtue is the knowledge through concepts and if concepts are formed by reason which is one and same in all, then knowledge is universal; so are moral and political laws. But how do we attain this? In what follows we discuss his method of attaining universally valid knowledge.

4.3 SOCRATIC METHOD

Socrates insisted that personal investigations and reasoned arguments alone could constitute a proper basis for answering questions about the universality of knowledge as well as the universality of moral and political laws. In Socrates' case this personal investigations and reasoned arguments assume a conversational form i.e., a form of dialogue. This dialogue, however, was limited to ethical subject-matter alone, therefore it included the justice, virtue, knowledge, temperance etc. The principal aim of such a dialogue was to know his own self.

He called it the method of “elenchus,” the Greek for ‘putting to the test’ or ‘refutation.’ This dialogue consisted in skillfully questioning others who claim to be wise men and drawing out their views with regards to virtue, justice, and so on. The objective of such dialogue was to show the inadequacies of their views which would in turn reveal that those who claimed to know really did not know. Thus, Socrates believed that by such a method he could show that he was wiser than others inasmuch as he knew that he did not know. Socratic method has two particular dimensions. First, regarding its modus operandi, it is dialectical; second, regarding its aim, it is *maieutiké* or midwifery method.

DIALECTICAL METHOD

The dialectical method is an art of argument by skilful questions and answer, the aim of which is to arrive at answers with the fewest possible words which should be precise and to the point. The first stage of such a method usually started with a generally accepted statement with regard to the subject-matter. This generally accepted statement is called hypothesis. This is followed by an anti-thesis, which might show the absurd consequences of the hypothesis. At the second stage the dialectic method is supposed to lead to the contradiction of the hypothesis and its possible rejection. The rejection of one hypothesis, might lead to the acceptance of another hypothesis which contains less contradictions. Thus, by the dialectical method the investigator is led on to newer hypotheses with fewer and fewer contradictions. Socrates himself never found any absolutely correct answer to the questions about ethics and conduct of life. But it did not mean that the dialectical method was a fruitless one. For Socrates it was a passionate love of the philosopher of reaching absolute knowledge. For, according to Socrates, absolute knowledge lies in constant search and not in reaching and grasping one. Thus, it seems that the aim of the

dialectical method was to show that philosophy for Socrates is a search for wisdom and not to arrive at the absolute knowledge.

MIDWIFERY METHOD

Although he followed and advocated dialectical method, he called his method “midwifery”. Although it has allusions to his mother whose profession was midwifery, what he meant by this was his intention of getting others to produce true ideas in their mind, so that they might do right action. “He wanted to give birth to true ideas in the clear form of definition, not for a speculative but for a practical end.”

4.4 EPISTEMOLOGY

As we have seen, Socrates was dissatisfied with all branches of previous philosophy, particularly philosophy of knowledge. For him previous conceptions of knowledge were presumptive, relative and conventional. He opposed them and directed his capabilities to proving the emptiness of the previous scheme of knowledge. As we have seen already the Socratic problem was about to find out universal valid knowledge. At the same time his philosophical enquiry was ethical in character, which aims at the discovery of his own self. Hence, one could easily conclude that by knowledge Socrates meant the knowledge of justice, virtue and eternal or religious ideas. Socrates believed that real knowledge of justice, virtue and eternal ideas are already present in man. This knowledge is dormant and waiting to be recalled by skilful questioning. How this knowledge is present in man? This question led Socrates to believe in the immortality of the soul. For, he seemed to have believed that the immortality of the soul would enable man to have real knowledge about justices, virtue and eternal ideas. Since soul is immortal it “has seen all things both here and in the other world, has learned everything that is. So we need not be surprised if it can recall the knowledge of virtue or anything else which, as we see, it once possessed.” But, how do we become aware of this already present knowledge in us? Here we find the structure of Socratic epistemology. Aristotle categorically states in *Metaphysics* that we owe two things to Socrates: “inductive reasoning and universal definition.” Here we find the structure of Socratic epistemology: knowledge is achieved through inductive reasoning and universal definition. Thus, according to Socrates, both universal definition and inductive reasoning are the means of reawakening knowledge which is dormant in all human beings.

DEFINITION

We have seen that Socratic Method is conversational in which questions are put forward to get appropriate answers. When Socrates asks a question, he asks *What is*, for example justice. He is asking for a definition rather than a mere answer. To define a thing is to state what it is, its *essence*. Thus, definition leads to *essence*. Since definition leads to *essence*, knowing to define a thing means knowing that thing. It was a new approach to knowledge, which leads one to say what things are, to discover their *essence*. Such an approach was absent among previous thinkers, namely the Sophists, although the Eleatic philosophy held it be their prime concern. “From this point originates all the fertility of Socrates’ thinking, turning toward the quest of

truth, centered ...in the view point of being, from which the Sophists had turned away.” It is, thus, argued that in Socrates there is an attempt to return to study what realities really are.

INDUCTION

By Socratic induction is not meant what later logicians, such as Francis Bacon and John Stuart Mill, understood as induction. As has been already seen, in contrast to the Sophists, Socrates did not depend on perception alone as source of knowledge. Perceptive knowledge may lead to relative knowledge, according Socrates. His inquiry aims at the absolute knowledge and not relative one. Since for Socrates knowledge is achieved through concept, he made sharp distinction between perception and conception. By concept is meant the universal idea of a class, for example, cowness for the class of cows. But, mere observation of a number of particular things cannot yield the conception of cowness. Then, how do we form a concept of it?

A concept is formed by a recollection or intuition of the universal which may happen quite suddenly. In Plato’s *Phaedo* Socrates seems to suggest that this recollection takes place as if re-discovering a long-forgotten thing rather suddenly. Recollection is something like an intuition of a mystic. Socrates was really a mystic and for him knowledge is to be found in mystic intuition of universals. Although, perception plays the role of the prompting agent, he warns that senses are really more of hindrance than a help in the realization of universal idea.

“Surely the soul can best reflect when it is free of all distractions such as hearing or sight or pain or pleasure of any kind- that is, when it ignores the body and becomes as far as possible independent, avoiding all contacts and associations as much as it can, in its search for reality.”

He even held that only after leaving the body, a seeker of knowledge will have wisdom in its fullness and purity. Nevertheless, in this life one can attain true knowledge provided he leads a life of mortification of the body. Thus, Socrates even proposes a kind of asceticism for the attainment of true knowledge which enables one to conduct his life in the light of moral, religious and political laws.

4.5 SOCRATIC ETHICS

Socrates ethics is principally concerned with man. Although this concern was not new in the early Greek philosophical traditions, Socrates considered man from a different point of view. The core of Socrates’ ethics is the concept of virtue. Virtue, according to Socrates, is the deepest and most basic propensity of man. This virtue is *knowledge*.

“... if there exists any good thing different, and not associated with knowledge, virtue will not necessarily be any form of knowledge. If on the other hand knowledge embraces everything that is good, we shall be right to suspect that virtue is knowledge.”

If virtue is knowledge it can be known and consequently taught. This is the meaning of the imperative “know yourself.” Know yourself means bring your inner self to light. Through knowledge man gains possession of himself whereby he becomes his own master.

VIRTUE IS KNOWLEDGE

According to Socrates virtue is the highest aim and greatest good one has to seek in the life. He also insisted that if it is to be highest aim and the greatest good it must have universal consistence and be the same for all. Now, what is universally consistent and the same for all is knowledge which is obtained through concept by the use of reason which is common in all. The relation between virtue and knowledge is inseparable. For Socrates thinks that health, wealth, beauty, courage, temperance etc., which are customarily considered to be various forms of good, are good only if they are guided by wisdom; if guided by folly they could be considered forms of evil.

As has been already seen, concepts are given by reason and not by perception of particular facts. Since concepts are already in human mind, they need to be enkindled by questioning. If morality is the knowledge of the idea of good through concepts, then who can obtain this? Socrates held that the Sophists did not obtain it, because they depended on perception rather than reason. He believed that the seeker who follows the dictates of reason rather than perception attains it. One who follows the dictates of the reason recollects the concepts of good already present in the mind. For, as in his epistemology, the real concept of good is always a matter of recollection by means of reflection on the idea of good.

VIRTUE IS ONE OR THE UNITY OF VIRTUE

Ethics, according to Socrates, has yet another dimension. It does not stop at mere acquisition of the knowledge of the ideas of good. The knowledge of the idea of the good aims at controlling all other ideas and ultimately guides the whole man, including his will and feeling, and necessarily leads him to good actions. Hence ethical knowledge tends to culture the soul which ultimately leads the soul towards regaining its pure, pristine glory. For Socrates this is for this reason for believing that “no one does wrong knowingly” and “that knowledge is virtue.”

Socrates says that virtue or goodness is one, although practices differently in different forms of good. In Plato's *Protagoras* Socrates says that although wisdom, temperance, courage, justice and holiness are the principal forms of virtue, there is one single reality which underlies them all. Yet on another occasion, in Plato's *Meno*, we find Socrates looking for one virtue which permeates all other virtues.

Socrates explained this by means of an example of a healthy body. According to him all kinds of bodily excellence follow from one single health of the body, similarly, all kinds of virtue follow from the health of the soul. What is meant by the health of the soul? The soul has different functions. The health of the soul follows from orderly arrangement of these different functions. In Plato's *Gorgias*, we see Socrates saying that the functions of the soul are reasoning, temper, and desire. The function of reasoning aims at attaining wisdom, temper means the courage, and desire is the soberness. The health of the souls depends on the organized relation that these functions hold to each other. An orderly arrangement of these functions is something like the following. Wisdom commands and temper assists in the execution of these commands, while desire furnishes the material basis for the actualization of these commands. The aim of the

oneness or unity of the virtue is the ultimate happiness of the individual. "A successful functioning of the harmonious activities under the regulation of reason yields happiness." Thus the Socratic notion of virtue as one means "the self of a good man is an organic unity of all its functions."

The Socratic notion of virtue as one leads us finally to conclude that there is one Idea of the Good which underlies all the ethical activities of man which are intrinsically good. Socrates speaks in the *Republic* Plato that

...in the region of the known the last thing to be seen and hardly seen is the idea of good, and that when seen must need point us to the conclusion that this is indeed the cause for all things of all that is right and beautiful, giving birth in the visible world to light, and author of light and itself in the intelligible world being the authentic source of truth and reason, and that anyone who is to act wisely in private or public must have caught sight of this.

Check Your Progress I

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Discuss briefly on Socratic method.

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2. Write a short note on the Epistemology of Socrates.

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3. Explain the Socrates' philosophy of ethics.

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4.6 SOCRATIC SCHOOLS

Socrates' dream was to enlighten the minds of men so that they might be able to follow the dictates of their inner self through self-investigation and questioning all sources of knowledge. But he did not found any school nor did he write a single word so that his dream might be perpetuated either through institutions or through words. "But various thinkers, who had been disciples of Socrates to a greater or lesser extent, emphasized one or other point in his teachings, combining it also with elements culled from other sources" founded various schools in the name of Socrates. Although he did not found any school, he left behind a Socratic circle, among them his famous pupil Plato, who founded the Academy. If we leave aside Plato, the members of the Socratic circle who left a succession behind them are Antisthenes, Aristippus of Cyrene,

Euclides of Megara and Phaedo of Elis. They are considered respectively as the founders of Cynicism, Cyrenaic School, Megarian School, and Elian School. It is these groups that are traditionally known as the Socratic schools. In what follows, a brief sketch of each of these schools is given.

CYNICISM

Cynicism originated in the mid-fourth century BC and it was arguably the most original and influential branch of the Socratic tradition in antiquity. Antisthenes, a pupil of Socrates, and Diogenes of Sinope were considered to be founding fathers of Cynicism. Cynicism is noted for its radical re-examination of the animal nature of the human being. Cynics, which is a nickname self-imposed on the founders of Cynicism, literally means 'doglike' or 'disciples of the dog.'

Cynicism made use of innovative and influential literary tradition of satire, parody and aphorism in order to spoil the dominant ideologies of the time. It proposed a new morality mainly based on two things: first, by minimizing creaturely needs in pursuit of self-sufficiency and second, by maximizing both freedom of speech and freedom of action. The former is achieved by physical training and the later by open defiance of the well-established social taboos. They followed an anti-politics which sees existing governments as a betrayal of human nature. Cynics considered traditional culture as an obstacle to happiness. Cynics advocated an immediate relationship to nature and proposed that man is the 'citizen of the cosmos'.

The Cynics made concerted attempt to demonstrate that happiness does not depend on society or on any other circumstances, but wholly on the autonomous self which is achieved by Cynics' discipline based on exemplary acts and corporeal training. The Cynics defaced the value which philosophers attached to theoretical disciplines as well as the conventional value which society attached to such externals as money, status, family and political power.

If cynics had a different conception of morality and conditions for happiness, it was because they differed in their conception of the human being. Diogenes of Sinope gave a different picture of man than that had been traditionally held to be the ideal. Diogenes held an extreme version of cynicism. He believed that human beings are animals who have much to learn about freedom and self-sufficiency from their fellow creatures. It is argued that the use of animals as examples served to illustrate the intrinsic superiority of nature to culture. Diogenes even preferred to live like dogs. It was to demonstrate that this would enable man to test the limits of his species by living like a dog and to realize the unlimitedness of freedom that animals are enjoying.

THE CYRENAIC SCHOOL

Aristippus of Cyrene founded the Cyrenaic School. He was born about 435 B.C. In Cyrene he seems to have become acquainted with the teaching of Protagoras and afterward, while he was in Athens, he was in relation with Socrates.

Aristippus held that our sensation alone gives us certain knowledge. This is in sharp contrast to the Socratic notion that it is concepts of universals and not perceptions of particulars which provides us with certain knowledge. If sensation alone gives us certain knowledge, then the purpose of such knowledge should be to obtain pleasure.

Aristippus taught that sensation consists in movement. When the movement is gentle, the sensation is pleasurable; when it is rough, there is pain; when movement is imperceptible or when there is no movement at all, there is neither pleasure nor pain. The rough movement cannot be the ethical end. Ethical end cannot consist in the neutrality of the absence of movement. It consists in the gentle movement which produces pleasure. Thus, pleasure become the ethical end of human conduct.

Pleasure, then, according to Aristippus, is the end of life. What kind of pleasure constitutes the end of life? Aristippus says that positive and present pleasure is the end of life. The Cyrenaics believed that the bodily pleasure alone is the positive and present pleasure. If the Cyrenaics held that bodily pleasure alone is the end of life, then could they not be considered and pure hedonists? Indeed, as it seems from the earliest traditions, they were aware of this charge. Hence, Aristippus, admonishes his followers that “the wise man take cognizance of the future.” The wise man, in order to preserve cheerfulness and contentment, will limit his desires. This precautionary attitude of Aristippus points to the fact that although the pleasure is the ethical end of life, “wise man needs the judgment in order to enable him evaluate the different pleasures of life.”

Thus, we can find an apparent contradiction the teaching of Aristippus; a contradiction between the principle of pleasure and the principle of judgment. This contradiction led to a divergence of views among his disciples such as *Thoedorus the Atheist*, *Hegesias*, and *Anniceris*. All of them held different views and different interpretations of the original teaching of their master.

THE SCHOOL OF MEGARA

The Megarian school was founded by Euclides of Megara. He was intimate associate of Socrates, but prior to his association with Socrates he had been influenced by the Eleatic philosophy. Thus, the main doctrines of this school were both ethical and metaphysical. Their main ethical doctrine was the unity of good. Euclides held that “the good is one thing, called by many names: sometimes wisdom, sometimes god, and at other times intellect etc.” He denied the existence of its supposed opposites. It is argued that Euclides built this upon the Socratic ethical conception that virtue is one and Parmenidean “metaphysical thesis that all names, even those supposedly opposite to each other, in reality refer to a single being.”

THE ELIAN AND ERETRIAN SCHOOLS

According to reliable traditions, these schools were founded by one of Socrates’s associates, Phaedo of Elis and an Eretrian called Menedemus of Eretria. Hence the name the Elian and Eretrian School. Phaedo of Elis seems to have been influenced by the Megarian School in his use of dialectics, whereas Menedemus was primarily interested in the Socratic-Megarian ethics, holding the unity of virtue and knowledge.

For Socrates virtue is knowledge and knowledge is based of the Idea of Good. Thus, for Socrates “morality is the universal knowledge of the Good. For good is advantageous for man and contributes to his happiness.” What is happiness then? We are told that Socrates never said anything definite about Good and happiness. This ambiguity that Socrates had left behind led to various interpretations. We have already seen some of them. Yet, there are some traditions that bear remote affinity to Socrates, but in an extremely exaggerated manner. We mention two of them, namely, Stoicism and Epicureanism. The philosophers of Stoic school are intrinsically related to the earlier ethical philosophers in the Socratic tradition, especially to the Cynics. The centre of Stoic concern is man, the wise man. Epicureanism, on the other hand, is an extreme exaggeration of Socrates view of happiness as the end of ethics. They developed this notion in the hedonistic line.

Check Your Progress II

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Write a short note on Cynicism.

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2. What is the basic teaching of the Cyrenaic school?

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4.7 LET US SUM UP

As we have seen, Socrates was a Classical Greek philosopher. Credited as one of the founders of Western philosophy, he is an enigmatic figure known only through the classical accounts of his students. Plato’s dialogues are the most comprehensive accounts of Socrates to survive from antiquity. Through his portrayal in Plato’s dialogues, Socrates has become renowned for his contribution to the field of ethics, and it is this Platonic Socrates who also lends his name to the concepts of Socratic irony and the Socratic method, or *elenchus*. The latter remains a commonly used tool in a wide range of discussions, and is a type of pedagogy in which a series of questions are asked not only to draw individual answers, but to encourage fundamental insight into the issue at hand. It is Plato’s Socrates that also made important and lasting contributions to the fields of epistemology and logic, and the influence of his ideas and approach remains strong in providing a foundation for much western philosophy that followed.

4.8 KEY WORDS

Enigma: An enigma is a puzzle, something mysterious or inexplicable, or a riddle or difficult problem. The word can also be used to describe a mysterious or secretive person.

Cynicism: Cynicism originally comprised the various philosophies of a group of ancient Greeks called the Cynics, founded by Antisthenes in about the 4th century BC. The Cynics rejected all conventions, whether of religion, manners, housing, dress, or decency, advocating the pursuit of virtue in a simple and unmaterialistic lifestyle.

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4. 10. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Socratic method was called method of dialogue. He called it the method of "elenchus," the Greek for 'putting to the test' or 'refutation.' This dialogue consisted in skillfully questioning others who claim to be wise men and drawing out their views. The objective of such dialogue was to show the inadequacies of their views which would in turn reveal that those who claimed to know really did not know. It has two particular dimensions. First, regarding its modus operandi; it is dialectical; second, regarding its aim it is Maieutiké or midwifery method.

The dialectical method is an art of argument by skilful questions and answer, the aim of which is to arrive at answers with the fewest possible words which should be precise and to the point. The first stage of such a method usually started with a generally accepted statement (hypothesis) with regard to the subject-matter. This is followed by an anti-thesis, which might show the absurd consequences of the hypothesis. At the second stage the dialectic method is supposed to lead to the contradiction of the hypothesis and its possible rejection. The rejection of one hypothesis, might lead to the acceptance of

another hypothesis which contains less contradictions. Thus, by the dialectical method the investigator is led on to newer hypotheses with fewer and fewer contradictions.

- 2) Socratic problem was to find out universal valid knowledge. At the same time his philosophical enquiry was ethical in character, which aims at the discovery of his own self. Hence, one could easily conclude that by knowledge Socrates meant the knowledge of justice, virtue and eternal or religious ideas.

According to Socrates human soul is immortal and, therefore, it possesses knowledge of things of this world and the other world. The soul in its pristine glory knew concepts of goodness, justice, happiness, truth, beauty, and concepts about the essence of reality or being. Most of what the soul knew remain idle or in a dormant state. These concepts which the soul knew in its pristine purity are resurrected by the prompting of perceptual knowledge about the particular things. Thus, conceptual knowledge is a kind of recollection of ideas already existing in the immortal soul. "...what we learn is really just recollection." This recollection takes place as if re-discovering a long-forgotten thing rather suddenly. Recollection is something like an intuition of a mystic. Only after leaving the body, a seeker of knowledge will have wisdom in its fullness and purity. Nevertheless, in this life one can attain true knowledge provided he leads a life of mortification of the body.

- 3) Socrates held the universality of morality. Socrates argument is that as reason is one and the same in all, so moral laws are universally valid. Moral laws are not based on one's feeling and desires, but they are based on rational thought. Hence, there is an intrinsic connection between knowledge and ethics.

Socrates ethics is principally concerned with human. Its core is the concept of virtue. This virtue is *knowledge*. If virtue is knowledge it can be known and consequently taught. This is the meaning of the imperative "know yourself." Know yourself means bring your inner self to light. Through knowledge man gains possession of himself whereby he becomes his own master.

The knowledge of the idea of the good aims at controlling all other ideas and ultimately guides the whole man, including his will and feeling, and necessarily leads him to good actions. Hence ethical knowledge tends to culture the soul which ultimately leads the soul towards regaining its pure, pristine glory.

Check Your Progress II

1. Cynicism made use of innovative and influential literary tradition of satire, parody and aphorism in order to spoil the dominant ideologies of the time. It proposed a new morality mainly based on two things: first, by minimizing creaturely needs in pursuit of self-sufficiency and second, by maximizing both freedom of speech and freedom of action. The former is achieved by physical training and the later by open defiance of the well-established social taboos. They followed an anti-politics which sees existing governments as a betrayal of human nature. Cynics considered traditional culture as an obstacle to happiness.

2. Aristippus held that our sensation alone gives us certain knowledge. If sensation alone gives us certain knowledge, then the purpose of such knowledge should be to obtain pleasure. Pleasure is the end of life. Positive and present pleasure is the end of life. The Cyrenaics believed that the bodily pleasure alone is the positive and present pleasure. Hence, Aristippus, admonishes his followers that although the pleasure is the ethical end of life, “wise man needs the judgment in order to enable him evaluate the different pleasures of life.”



BLOCK-3 INTRODUCTION

None of the Socratic schools succeeded in constructing a comprehensive and integrated system of thought along lines indicated by the insights of Socrates. Yet his great achievements and the problems raised by him had to be thought out to the end. The solutions to the problems of the meaning of human life, human knowledge, human conduct, and human institutions depended on the meaning of reality interpreted by his pupils and followers, especially by Plato and Aristotle. Even the Hellenistic philosophy, in its origin, uses Socrates as its inspiration. However, the Socratic principle that ‘virtue is science’ is almost replaced with the opposite axiom ‘science is virtue’ by the philosophies of Hellenism and Neo-Platonism studied in this block.

Unit 1 is on “Plato.” In this Unit we occupy ourselves with the Philosophical thoughts of Plato, taking into consideration his historical background. In the course of the unfolding of the unit, we will be knowing various philosophical issues such as the problem of one and many, appearance and reality, and permanence and change from the perspective of Plato.

Unit 2 on “Aristotle” introduces Aristotle as one of the most important founding figures of Western philosophy. He was the first to create a comprehensive system of Western philosophy, encompassing morality and aesthetics, logic and science, politics and metaphysics. His works contain the earliest known formal study of logic. Aristotelianism had a profound influence on philosophical and theological thinking in the Islamic and Jewish traditions in the Middle Ages, and it continues to influence Christian theology, especially Eastern Orthodox theology, and the scholastic tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. All aspects of Aristotle's philosophy continue to be the object of active academic study today.

Unit 3 highlights the salient features of “Hellenism.” In this unit, we present the basic material required for an understanding of *Hellenistic Philosophy*. This includes the main features of the principal philosophical trends that came after the golden age in ancient Greek philosophy. The main currents of thought during this period are Epicureanism, stoicism, and skepticism.

The final Unit of this Block “Neoplatonism” was the last flowering of the Greek thought in late antiquity. The system was founded by Plotinus who understood it as authentic Platonism, an elaboration of the fundamental insights of Plato’s philosophy.

This Unit briefly examines the life and writings of Plotinus, the central themes of his philosophical system, the earlier philosophies from which his system borrowed ideas, some philosophical problems of the system, and the post-Plotinian developments of the system in various Schools of the ancient world.

These four units have passed in review the different philosophical movements, especially Hellenism and Neoplatonism, which succeeded the great systems of Plato and Aristotle. As you reflect on these philosophical systems and movements you will be surprised to know that they did not satisfy all types of mind. Greek philosophy during its final period made a desperate attempt to maintain itself in competition with the new Christian world-view but failed miserably losing its vitality. Its religious efforts to resuscitate polytheism and to save the old civilization were in vain.

UNIT 1**PLATO**

Contents

- 1.0. Objectives
 - 1.1. Introduction
 - 1.2. Philosophy of Plato
 - 1.3. Let Us Sum Up
 - 1.4. Key Words
 - 1.5. Further Readings and References
 - 1.6. Answers to Check Your Progress
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1.0. OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we explain the Philosophical thoughts of Plato, taking in to consideration the historical background. In the course of time, we too will be touching various philosophical problems of one and many, appearance and reality, permanence and change, etc. from the perspective of Plato.

By the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- understand ethics, politics, metaphysics or epistemology in historical and political context;
 - comprehend the necessary relation between ethics and politics;
 - move from ethical to metaphysical and gnosolgoical problems; and
 - understand his theory of knowledge, ideas, man, state, justice, etc.
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1.1. INTRODUCTION

The philosophic spirit of Socrates lived among his disciples, most of whom remain unknown, some remembered, but only Plato apotheosised him. To him the words of Socrates to Crito were a plan of life: “Do you then be reasonable, Crito, and do not mind whether the teachers of philosophy are good or bad, but think only of philosophy herself. Try and examine her well and truly, and if she be evil seek to turn away all men from her, and not your sons only: but if she be what I believe that she is, then follow her and serve her, you and your house, as the saying is, and be of good cheer.” Though more than two thousand years have passed since Plato lifted the intellectual life in Greece to new heights and drew all eyes toward the new Olympus of his academy, the character of any philosophy is still identified by the relation it has to that of Plato

PLATO’S LIFE AND WRITINGS

During the fourth or fifth year of Peloponnesian war (428/27 B.C), Plato was born in Athens. By birth he was an aristocrat. He was originally called Aristocles, and only later he was given the name Plato (broad). Whether this was because of his wide forehead, robust physique, or breath of literary expression is not known. At the age of twenty he came into contact with Socrates, and this was decisive in his life. After Socrates' death he went to Megara, where he studied Eliatic philosophy under Euclid. Later he returned to Athens, where he wrote his first works. Between 390 and 388 B.C., he travelled extensively to acquaint himself with the principle schools and to broaden his outlook. While visiting the court of Dionysius-I of Syracuse he outspokenly criticised the tyrant and was sold into slavery. Rescued from the market of Aegina by Anniceris, a stranger from Cyrene, he returned to Athens. About 387 B.C., he founded his famous school in the grove of Academus (whence the name "Academy") where he taught mathematics and philosophy by both lectures and dialogue. In 367 and 361 B.C., Plato interrupted his work in the Academy for further visits to Syracuse, presumably to assist in the realisation of his ideal state. After these frustrating attempts in practical statecraft, i.e., trying to establish his ideal state, Plato returned to Athens and devoted all his attention to philosophising, teaching and writing in the Academy. He died in 348/7 B.C. when he was 80/1 years old, and was buried in the grounds of the Academy. But his philosophy would live on and together with that of his own pupil Aristotle would lay foundations for all that would be called philosophy later. In a rather loose sense, everyone who thinks about philosophy at all either is a "Platonist" or an "Aristotelian." Not without cause did Alfred North Whitehead wrote that "the safest general characterisation of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists in a series of footnotes to Plato."

PLATO'S WRITINGS

The traditional Platonic canon, arranged in tetralogies by Tharasyllus, a contemporary of the Emperor Tiberius contains thirty-five dialogues and thirteen letters, which as a single group bring the total to thirty six works. The authenticity of some of these works is disputed.

Chronological development of his thought

Initial Socratic Period (399-388/7 B.C)

These dialogues recreate the spirit and mission of Socratic inquiry concerning arte` or ethico-political virtue and his analysis of moral concepts. As a group these writings are notably anti-sophistic and, in a manner characteristic of Socrates' "non-knowing" most of them emphasise the need for seeking further enlightenment by ending without reaching a definite conclusion.

1. Apology: Socrates' trial and defence.
2. Critio: Socrates' refusal to escape after the trial, and his adherence to principles.
3. Euthyphro: On the nature of piety and impiety, of which Socrates was accused.
4. Laches: On courage.
5. Ion: Against poets and rhapsodists.
6. Protagoras: The sophist's theory that *arte* can be taught Vs the Socratic *paideia* or theory that all virtue is one and cannot be taught.
7. Charmides: On temperance and moderation.
8. Lysis: On friendship.

Transitional Period (387-380 B.C.)

With the advancement of his intellectual and literary powers, Plato not only intensified his polemics against the Sophists, but built the Socratic concept into a metaphysical theory of ideas. Where the earlier dialogues had been limited to one face of virtue, the dialogues of this constructive stage broaden and deepen the speculation concerning the more important questions of knowledge and the good life. This is the beginning of his systematic philosophy.

9. *Georgias*: On Justice, and against the rhetoric and power politics of the sophists in the city-state.
10. *Meno*: On the question of “virtue-knowledge” by *anamnesis* or recollection.
11. *Ethydemus*: On Wisdom that brings happiness, and against the fallacies of later sophists.
12. *Lesser Hippias*: Comparison between those who err voluntarily and involuntarily.
13. *Greater Hippias*: On the beautiful, and a theory of language.
14. *Cratylus*: On language, and on the difference between immutable and nonsensical realities and mutable, sensible phenomenon.
15. *Menexenus*: Parody on rhetoric in a funeral oratio

Period of Maturity (380-361)

At the height of his genius, Plato fully evolved his own ontological theory of Ideas and expressed the ramifications of this doctrine in epistemology, psychology, ethics, politics, and aesthetics. Hence, the third group is made up of dialogues which either supply the speculative insights to new fields or subject them to new facts and difficulties that are raised from other points of view.

16. *Symposium (or Banquet)*: On inspiration by Eros (love) of the soul; its ascent from shadowy to the true beauty.
17. *Phaedo*: Clearer revelation of the theory of Ideas; the immortality and destiny of the soul - discussions set against Socrates' last days.
18. *Republic*: On ideal state, the primacy of Good, the four grades of cognition and the tripartition of the soul.
19. *Phaedrus*: Philosophic rhetoric, the soul, its transmigration, vision of Ideas in pre-existence, anamnesis and the structure of the world of Ideas.
20. *Theaetetus*: The relation of knowledge to unchanging objects and to other cognitional experiences, such as sense-perception and right opinion.
21. *Parmenides*: defence of the theory of ideas and introduction of mathematical and axiological concepts; the problem of one and many.
22. *Sophist*: Critical consideration of Ideas and of change, life, soul, intellection, analytic search for a definition of Sophist.

Period of Old Age

In the later period of philosophic maturity, as his dramatic powers declined and his critical acumen increased, Plato was moved by reflection upon new problems and socio-political changes to refine his philosophy. With brilliant intellectual apperception, he critically elaborated on his logic, and found new interest in the questions of the cosmos,

23. *Statesman (or Politicus)*: Definition of a statesman by the method of division; importance of knowledge in the true ruler.

24. Philebus: Development of Plato's ethical doctrine by attention to concrete conditions of pleasure to good; enhancement of the theory of Ideas by further study of unity and multiplicity.
25. Timaeus: Cosmological discourse on the origin of the physical world and the role of the Demiurge.
26. Critias: Contrast of the ideal state to Atlantis with its imperialist sea power.
27. Laws: Modification of the Republic's ideal state according to concrete conditions of life.
28. Epinomis: Continuation of the Laws; on the wisdom of the ruler and divine cult.
29. Letters VII and VIII: Politics and the relevance of Ideas.

THE PLATONIC ENCOUNTER

From the question of Thales to the time of Plato different problems had risen in philosophical speculation. Such as:

- The problem of one and many
- The problem of appearance and reality
- The problem of permanence and change
- The mysticism and mathematics of Pythagoreans
- Physis and nomos
- The scepticism of the sophists.

Politically too changes had taken place such as;

- Decline of Athens
- Corruption and nepotism
- The emergence of democracy and
- Condemnation of Socrates.

Plato realises that there is some truth in all the positions held by his predecessors; all of them had valid intuition to the nature of reality.

SITUATION

Plato encountered problems of human, the world, and the divine within the ethico-political context of the Greek city-states. "When I was young," Plato wrote in his mid-seventies in the manifesto to the Friends and Associates of Dion, "my experience was the same as that of many others. I thought that as soon as I became my own master I would immediately enter into public life. But it happened that fateful change occurred in the political situation." Plato went on to describe the state of affairs: the tyranny of the Thirty, the unjust condemnation of Socrates by the "democrats," the abandonment of "the principles of our forefathers," the increase of "corruption in legislation and custom" in fine, "everything disintegrating around me." Struck by this all-inclusive decline of Athens and the other city states, "I came to the conclusion that one and all they are badly governed."

TRANSITION FROM ETHICAL TO METAPHYSICAL AND GNOSEOLOGICAL PROBLEM

Plato saw that no real reform of the fundamentals of politics could take place without a corresponding reform of man's conceptions about nature and reality itself.

Do absolute justice or courage, infect, exist, or only individual just and courageous acts exist? What is really good, beautiful etc.? What is reality?

He was deeply impressed by the mathematical proportion and harmony in the universe.

Check your progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) In short describe the life of Plato and enumerate his important works.

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2) What were the concerns that gave rise to Plato's philosophical thinking?

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1. 2. PHILOSOPHY OF PLATO

THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Plato, first of all, argues negatively that knowledge cannot be mere sensation for even the dog, which has sensation, would have knowledge then. His positive theory of knowledge is given in the famous allegory of the cave. (The Republic, Book V, ch. XXV)

THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE

Plato begins his presentation by describing a scenario in which what people take to be real would in fact be an illusion. He asks Glaucon to imagine a cave inhabited by prisoners who have been

chained and held immobile since childhood: not only are their arms and legs held in place, but their heads are also fixed, compelled to gaze at a wall in front of them. Behind the prisoners is a fire, and between the fire and the prisoners is a raised walkway, along which puppets of various animals, plants and other things are moved. The puppets cast shadows on the wall, and the prisoners see these shadows. They hear echoes off the wall from the noise produced from the walkway. It is reasonable to think that the prisoners would take the shadows to be real things and the echoes to be real sounds.

Suppose that a prisoner is freed and sees the things that had cast the shadows, he would not recognize them; he would believe the shadows on the wall to be more real than what he sees. Suppose further that the men were compelled to look at the fire, he would be struck blind and try to turn his gaze back toward the shadows, as toward what he can see clearly and hold to be real. Suppose someone forcibly dragged such a man upward all the way out into the sunlight, he be distressed and unable to see anything at all. Slowly he could see reflection of stars etc., in a pool of water in front of him. After some time on the surface, however, the freed prisoner would acclimate. He would see more and more things around him, until he could look upon the sun. He would understand that the sun is the "source of the seasons and the years, and is the steward of all things in the visible place, and is in a certain way the cause of all those things he and his companions had been seeing".

THE MEANING OF THE ALLEGORY

The allegory of the cave symbolises four grades of knowledge through which the mind can ascend to the Ideas, each level being represented by the particular state of men inside and outside the cave.

Men in chains: Conjecture

This is the first level of knowledge. The shadows and echoes are only reflections of other things. People in this situation are subjected to prejudices, passions, and sophistry, grasping even the fleeting shadows in an inadequate manner. Chained and without desire to escape they cling on to their distorted visions.

The men unbound in the cave: Belief

The men unbound but remaining in the cave symbolise the second stage of knowledge - belief. When the prisoners turn toward the fire, a visible figure of the sun, and see physical bodies along the way, they recognise that the shadows are merely for dreamers.

Men out of cave: Reasoning

When one leaves the realm of cave he finds the third degree of knowledge - reasoning. The objects of reasoning, symbolised in the reflections on water of the stars and sun are primarily geometric and arithmetic entities.

Men fully liberated -Understanding

Men who fully free their minds from the bonds of changing sensibilities and of particular intelligible ascend to the highest grade of knowledge -*noesis* or understanding.

The Four grades of cognition

<p>Men fully liberated Knowledge (<i>Noesis</i>): understanding without images- dialectic Ideas (universals) Sun: Good</p>
<p>Men beyond Cave Knowledge (<i>Dianoesis</i>): reasoning with images – Mathematics Mathematics (particulars)</p>
<p>—(Dividing Wall)————— Entrance to the cave —(Dividing Wall)—————</p>
<p>Men Unbounded in Cave Opinion Fire: Sensible sun Images of Ideas (natural and artificial things)</p>
<p>+++++</p>
<p>Men in chains Conjectures: Shadow – sensation Opinion Reflections of images (Shadows and echoes)</p>
<p><u>Inside the Wall</u></p>

Plato puts forward the theory that knowledge is nothing but remembering of what we have contemplated before our birth.

THE PROCESS OF REMEMBRANCE

We pass through four basic steps and eventually arrive at perfect knowledge: full remembrance - an explanation which Plato develops by way of the simile of the line, also in the Republic. At first our knowledge of things are but vague, shadowy and blurred. Then we gradually pass from inferior knowledge through our “imagination” to clearer, more direct experience of objects. This is the level of firm assent of faith. Next is the stage where our faculty of reasoning comes into play, as we begin to argue and make comparisons. Finally, the highest level of knowledge, the realm of pure intellectual activity, where we contemplate the Ideas and their interconnections. In all this process, it is love which provides the essential dynamism and impulse in our ascent to the contemplation of the beautiful. This latter idea is constructed in the *Symposium*.

THE THEORY OF IDEAS

The basic inspiration for this celebrated theory was Plato’s observation that there are various individuals who share a common form of basic nature. Thus there are various individuals men, horses, plants, minerals. He also got the idea from watching artisans at work following a model or ‘type’ that each individual was fashioned after an ideal type or pattern or model which some ‘demiurge or active spirit made use of in fashioning the world around us.

Where later thinkers would give these “forms” a mere existence, Plato conceived of them as really existing somewhere, in another mysterious world of “shining light” Each ideal form is ideal in every sense of the term: that is, it is perfect, and all we see in the world around us are but poor imitations or “shadows” of it, as he preferred to say. For some time, Plato seemed to hesitate to say that there existed an “ideal form” of everything in this world, including such mundane realities as dirt and mud. Finally, he accepted the logical demands of that theory and admitted that these too had their place in the ideal World of Forms.

Participation

As he went deeper into this theory, Plato began to remark that the ideas in themselves are not completely unrelated and unconnected. Thus for instance, the idea of dog would participate (literally “take part of” or “have part”) in the idea of mammal, the idea of sparrow in the idea of a bird and both in turn in the idea of animal. Ultimately all the ideas participate in the Supreme Idea of Form that of the Good. The artists are copiers of copies. Plato would banish them from his ideal state.

Check your progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Describe in your own words the allegory of the cave.

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2) Describe Plato’s theory of Ideas.

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PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN

PRE-EXISTENCE OF SOULS

Before birth, the souls of humans used to contemplate the pure and perfect forms in the ideal world. Due to some mysterious fault (fall?) they are born here, imprisoned in the body and prevented from soaring up to the contemplation of those ideas. Knowledge is when we are able to triumph over forgetfulness and recall - be it ever so dimly - those forms we had once contemplated.

THE TWO HORSES

Plato noticed the evident fact of conflict within the depths of human beings. And in *Phaedrus* he gives his classic comparison of the charioteer who struggles to control two troublesome steeds who tend to pull in different ways. The character is the rational element in man which struggles to bring about a harmony between opposing pulls of the spiritual and appetitive elements in man, the two horses. The spiritual element is really a good horse: it is docile and is obedient to reason and would lead straight up to the Good. But appetitive element is unbridled and unruly and can only be driven by the whip.

THE AFTER LIFE

If the body is the prison of the soul, then death is the moment of its joyful release. It is the moment when the soul is set free at last from the body. The immortality of the soul is argued from the fact that it is, unlike the body not made of parts. In the myth of *Er* in the *Republic* Plato presents his eschatology. He believed in the transmigration of souls and finally settles for an ultimate and irrevocable retribution where the good enter a kind of paradise and the recalcitrant are consigned to the torments of Tartarus.

PHILOSOPHY OF GOD

The world is becoming and that must have a cause, thus he argues to a demiurge. The demiurge, makes things after the model of the eternal ideas. Plato speaks of the highest form, the Form of Good and Beautiful. He does not explicitly call this form God.

PHILOSOPHY OF MORALS AND POLITICS

From Socrates, Plato inherited the great problem of determining the foundation of ethical life. Was it nature (*physis*) or convention (*nomos*)? In earlier days they were considered to be of nature, they were supposed to have divine origin, but the all too human gods could no more provide it. The Sophists had suggested that laws were made by men and might as easily be unmade. Slowly these ideas gained momentum. The storms of social unrest that arose in its wake undermined the stable moral traditions on which the orderly development of the city-state largely depended. As the influence of the anthropomorphic gods declined, the regeneration of the city-state required some new transcendental principles as a basis for the order of its political structure and the validations of its laws.

THE NATURE OF LOVE

In *The Symposium* Plato describes the nature of Love. He asks the question; who is a lover? A lover is someone who lacks that which will make him or her happy. What will make the lover happy is to possess the beautiful and the good forever. And the lover is resourceful (Love is the

son of Poverty and Resource) in seeking what he or she lacks. It is the resourcefulness propelled by longing that moves the lover up the ladder of love. At each stage the lover is only partially satisfied and is therefore powerfully motivated to discover whether there might be something still more satisfying. Being in the world one starts with the beauty that he or she sees in the world. A beautiful girl or boy falls in love. But discovers that this beauty is not unique. Slowly the lover moves to the more beautiful soul, character, the beauty of laws and institutions and finally the idea of Good itself.

JUSTICE

In his philosophy Plato gives a prominent place to the idea of justice. Plato was highly dissatisfied with the prevailing degenerating conditions in Athens. The Athenian democracy was on the verge of ruin and was ultimately responsible for Socrates' death. Sophistic teaching of the ethics of self-satisfaction resulted in the excessive individualism also induced the citizens to capture the office of the State for their own selfish purposes. According to the Sophists rules of justice are mere conventions. Ideal justice according to them is 'high-minded foolishness'. What is just is what is advantageous to the self, most profitable to one's life seems to be the view held by many. Plato however holds the view that there is an ideal of Justice which we should try to appropriate. The condemnation of Socrates though legal was not just according to him. In the myth of the Ring of Gyges the shepherd boy who went to the underworld and found a ring on a corpse which would make him invisible when turned towards himself and visible when turned outside had adultery with the wife of the King, killed the King and later took over the kingdom. The shepherd boy was not just; he had no control over his desires. The ideal society according to Plato is one in which "Justice" reigned supreme. The nature of justice as propounded by Plato is the fundamental principle of a well-ordered society. According to Plato justice is a 'human virtue' that makes a person self-consistent and good; socially, justice is a social consciousness that makes a society internally harmonious and good.

THE STATE

Plato's philosophical views had many societal implications, especially on the idea of an ideal state or government. Some of the most famous doctrines are contained in the *Republic* as well as in the *Laws* and the *Statesman*. Plato asserts that societies have a tripartite class structure corresponding to the appetite/spirit/reason structure of the individual soul. People differ in their abilities and capacities. They can be grouped into three classes:

1. Some best suited to be labourers, carpenters, farmers etc. In them the appetite dominates.
2. Others who are adventurous, strong, brave and in love with danger, these form the protective part of the state, in them spirit dominates.
3. Some who are intelligent, rational, self-controlled, in love with wisdom, the governing part, rational part of the soul.

According to this model, the principles of Athenian democracy (as it existed in his day) are rejected as only a few are fit to rule. Instead of rhetoric and persuasion, Plato says reason and wisdom should govern. As Plato puts it:

Until philosophers rule as kings or those who are now called kings and leading men genuinely and adequately philosophize, that is, until political power and philosophy entirely coincide, while the many natures who at present pursue either one exclusively are forcibly prevented from doing so, cities will have no rest from evils,... nor, I think, will the human race. (*Republic* 473c-d)

HIS CRITICISM OF DEMOCRACY

The rulers in democracy are not chosen because of their character, but because of their manners, voice, handsome appearance etc. They are like cooks who claim to know what the best food is needed for a patient, whereas a physician must be the one to decide it.

However Placing supreme power in the hands of a specially trained elite would be desirable only (1) there were irreducible difference in men's intellectual capacities, (2) if these differences could be discovered early in life, (3) if there is a truth about politics that can infallibly be known; and (4) the elite, knowing what is good for all, would act on its knowledge. As we know there is very little chance of this and Plato's ideal state will always remain a utopia whose ideal is questionable.

PHILOSOPHY OF ART

The theory of art is also determined by the theory of forms. A thing is beautiful to the extent it participates in the form of beauty. Order anywhere in the universe for him was beautiful. The artist who glorifies the imitation is like the cook and the rhetorician, who by tickling men's fancy palms off inadequate imitations on an unsuspecting public. The paintings that we prize as works of art are but shadows of shadows.

1.3. LET US SUM UP

- Augustine based his philosophy on Plato.
- Aquinas took Augustine's philosophy and combined with Aristotle, which in turn became the official philosophy of the Church.
- Augustine's *Two Cities*, Thomas Compenellas's *City of the Sun*, Thomas More's *Utopia* and even *The Manifesto* of Karl Marx show the influence of Plato.

Whitehead's statement that "the European philosophical tradition is ... a series of footnotes to Plato" is a delightful hyperbole. It would be more exact to say that every page of the history of European philosophy reflects the undiminishing brilliance of Platonic thought. Platonism is the image of Plato the philosopher and the extension of his personality. Whatever be one's personal appraisal of Plato's reflections, it can hardly be doubted that *the Dialogues* contain one of the most exalted philosophies envisioned by the human mind. Nor can it be questioned that Plato himself is one of the most noble embodiments of the philosophical ideal. He unites the thoughts of his predecessors in one profound mind, and their myriad concepts in one supreme harmony.

For Emerson, it is so true that “Plato is philosophy, and philosophy is Plato”. He said of the Republic: “Burn the libraries, for their value is in this book.”

Check your progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What is Plato’s theory of love?

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2) Discuss the Platonic concept of ideal state and government.

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1.4. KEY WORDS

Ideal (Platonic): Ideal means the universals that exist independently of particulars in a world of its own.

Universal: A universal is anything that can be predicated of a particular.

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1. 6. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Plato was born around 428/27 B.C., in Athens. At the age of twenty he came into contact with Socrates, and this was decisive in his life. After Socrates' death he studied Eliatic philosophy in Megara. Later returning to Athens, he wrote his first works. Between 390 and 388 B.C., he travelled extensively to acquaint himself with the principle schools. He was sold into slavery by Dionysius-I of Syracuse for criticising him. Rescued from the market of Aegina by Anniceris, he returned to Athens. About 387 B.C., he founded his school in Academus (whence the name "Academy") and taught mathematics and philosophy. In 367 and 361 B.C., he interrupted his teaching and visited Syracuse, presumably to assist in the realisation of his ideal state. After these frustrating attempts he returned to Athens and devoted himself to philosophising, teaching and writing in the Academy. He died in 348/7 B.C. when he was 80/1 years old.

Some of his works are Apology, Critio, Euthyphro, Laches, Ion, Protagoras, Charmides, Lysis, Georgias, Meno, Etydemus, Lesser Hippias, Greater Hippias, Cratylus, Menexenus, Symposium (or Banquet, Phaedo, Republic, Phaedrus, Theaetetus, Parmenides, Sophist, Statesman, Philebus, Timaeus, Critias, Laws, Epinomis ,and LettersVII and VIII.

- 2) The philosophical concerns that gave rise to Plato's philosophical thinking are the followings:
 - The problem of one and many
 - The problem of appearance and reality
 - The problem of permanence and change
 - The mysticism and mathematics of Pythagoreans
 - Physis and nomos

The scepticism of the sophists.

The political concern that gave rise to Plato's philosophical thinking are the followings:

- Decline of Athens
- Corruption and nepotism
- The emergence of democracy and
- Condemnation of Socrates.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) The cave is inhabited by prisoners whose hands and legs are chained and their heads are fixed, compelled to gaze at a wall in front of them. Behind the prisoners is a fire, and between the fire and the prisoners is a raised walkway, along which puppets are moved. The puppets cast shadows on the wall, and the prisoners see these shadows, hear the noise from the echoes of the wall and take the shadows to be real things and the echoes to be real sounds. Suppose a prisoner is freed and sees the things that caused the shadows, he would not recognize them; he would believe the shadows to be more real than what he sees.
- 2) According to Plato, various individuals share a common form of basic nature. Each individual is fashioned after an ideal type or form by some 'demiurge or active spirit. These "forms" really exist somewhere, in another mysterious world. They are perfect, and all we see in the world around us are but poor imitations or "shadows" of it. The ideas in themselves are not completely unrelated and unconnected. Thus for instance, the idea of dog would participate (literally "take part of" or "have part") in the idea of mammal, the idea of sparrow in the idea of a bird and both in turn in the idea of animal. Ultimately all the ideas participate in the Supreme Idea of Form that of the Good.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) According to Plato, a lover is someone who lacks that which will make him or her happy. What will make the lover happy is to possess the beautiful and the good forever. And the lover is resourceful (Love is the son of Poverty and Resource) in seeking what he or she lacks. It is the resourcefulness propelled by longing that moves the lover up the ladder of love. At each stage the lover is only partially satisfied and is therefore powerfully motivated to discover whether there might be something still more satisfying. Being in the world one starts with the beauty that he or she sees in the world. A beautiful girl or boy falls in love. But discovers that this beauty is not unique. Slowly the lover moves to the more beautiful soul, character, the beauty of laws and institutions and finally the idea of Good itself.
- 2) Plato asserts that society and its people can be grouped into three classes corresponding to the appetite/spirit/reason structure of the individual soul: Some best suited to be labourers, carpenters, farmers etc. In them the appetite dominates; Others who are

adventurous, strong, brave and in love with danger, these form the protective part of the state, in them spirit dominates; Some who are intelligent, rational, self-controlled, in love with wisdom, the governing part, rational part of the soul. According to this model, Plato rejects the then principles of Athenian democracy and advocates the rule of a philosopher king. Philosopher king is the one who loves truth. He has the moderate love for wisdom and the courage to act according to wisdom. Wisdom is knowledge about the Good or the right relations between all that exists.



UNIT 2

ARISTOTLE

Contents

- 2.0. Objectives
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- 2.2. Life
- 2.3. Works
- 2.4. Aristotle and Plato
- 2.5. Aristotle's Philosophy: Logic
- 2.6. Philosophy of the World
- 2.7. First Philosophy
- 2.8. Philosophy of God
- 2.9. Philosophy of Human
- 2.10. Ethics
- 2.11. Art and Literature
- 2.12. Slavery
- 2.13. Let Us Sum Up
- 2.14. Key Words
- 2.15. Further Readings and References
- 2.16. Answers to Check Your Progress

2.0. OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we will be dealing with one of the greatest founding fathers of Western Philosophy, Aristotle. We will explain his philosophy, encompassing morality and aesthetics, logic and science, politics and metaphysics. The study of Aristotle's philosophy is important because Aristotelianism had a profound influence on philosophical and theological thinking in the Islamic and Jewish traditions in the Middle Ages, and it continues to influence Christian theology, especially Eastern Orthodox theology, and the scholastic tradition of the Roman Catholic Church.

By the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- understand Aristotelian logic, systematisation and definition;
- comprehend his philosophy of the world; and
- clarify his metaphysical and ethical position.

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Together with Plato and Socrates, Aristotle is one of the most important founding figures in Western philosophy. He was the first to create a comprehensive system of Western philosophy, encompassing morality and aesthetics, logic and science, politics and metaphysics. His works

contain the earliest known formal study of logic, which were incorporated in the late nineteenth century into modern formal logic. In metaphysics, Aristotelianism had a profound influence on philosophical and theological thinking in the Islamic and Jewish traditions in the Middle Ages, and it continues to influence Christian theology, especially Eastern Orthodox theology, and the scholastic tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. All aspects of Aristotle's philosophy continue to be the object of active academic study today.

2.2. LIFE

The year was 384 B.C. Socrates has been dead for fifteen years; Plato had begun his Academy three years earlier. In northern Thrace, not far from the border of Athens at Stageira, a child born to a physician in the royal court of Macedonia. This child named Aristotle was destined to be the second father of Western philosophy. His father Nicomachus was both a doctor and advisor to Amyntas III king of Macedonia, but the date of his father's death and, consequently, the extent of Aristotle's stay at court are not certain. At the age of eighteen Aristotle was sent for advanced study to Plato's Academy at Athens. He spent twenty years (367-347) there imbibing the spirit of Platonic philosophy. As the death of Socrates has been the catalyst for Plato's development as an independent thinker, so the death of Plato signalled the beginning for Aristotle of a second and more independent period (347-336). He started his own academy at Assos in Mysia. He traveled with Xenocrates to the court of his friend Hermias of Atarneus in Asia Minor. While in Asia, Aristotle traveled with Theophrastus to the island of Lesbos, where together they researched the botany and zoology of the island. Aristotle married Hermias's adoptive daughter (or niece). She bore him a daughter, whom they named Pythias. Soon after Hermias' death, Aristotle was invited by Philip of Macedon to become tutor to Alexander the Great in 343 B.C. Alexander succeeded to the throne in 335/4 B.C. Inspired by Plato and seasoned by his own teaching experience, Aristotle returned to Athens for third and culminating period of his life (335-332). He founded the Lyceum. The members of the Lyceum came to be called the peripatetic, from the peripatos, of covered walk, in which they gathered.

Aristotle not only studied almost every subject possible at the time, but made significant contributions to most of them. In physical science, Aristotle studied anatomy, astronomy, economics, embryology, geography, geology, meteorology, physics and zoology. In philosophy, he wrote on aesthetics, ethics, government, metaphysics, politics, psychology, rhetoric and theology. He also studied education, foreign customs, literature and poetry. His combined works constitute a virtual encyclopedia of Greek knowledge. It has been suggested that Aristotle was probably the last person to know everything there was to be known in his own time.

2.3. WORKS

The prodigious dimensions of Aristotle's works are eloquently manifested by more than two hundred known titles.

1. Dialogues

- a) Brief works: On Rhetoric, On the Soul, and Exhortation to Philosophy etc.
- b) Quasi Treatises: On wealth, on Prayer, On Good Birth, On Pleasure, On Friendship, On Kingship, Alexander (On colonists).

- c) Works of more than one book: Politics, On Poets, On Justice, On the Good, On Ideas, and On Philosophy.
 - d) On Other philosophers: On Democritus, On the Pythagoreans, and On the Philosophy of Archytas
 - e) From Other Philosophers: From Plato's Laws, From the Republic.
 - f) *Treatises*
2. Logic (The "Organon"): Categories, On Interpretation, Prior Analysis, Topics, On Sophisticated Refutation.
3. Natural Philosophy
- a. The physical world: physics, On the Heavens, On Generation and Corruption, Meteorology
 - b. The Living: On the Soul
The history of Animals, Movement of Animals. Progression of Animals, and Generation of Animals.
4. Metaphysics
5. Ethics: Eudemian Ethics, Nicomachian Ethics, Politics, and Magna Moralia.
6. Poetics: Rhetoric and Poetics.
7. Collection of Facts

During his stay at the Lyceum, Aristotle directed extensive projects of group research, collecting data in widely diverse fields and wrote the following:

The history of Animals.

The History of Plants.

The Politics, collection of lists of the names of the winners in the Pythian and Olympic games and collections of the History of Literature.

2.4. ARISTOTLE AND PLATO

Plato was born to an aristocratic family with a long history of participation in political life. Aristotle's father was a doctor.

Otherworldliness: For Plato all that is perfect belong to the otherworld but Aristotle is satisfied with this world.

The objects of knowledge: Plato is a rationalist and a mystic. Mathematics seems to be the ideal science yet reason is not sufficient to grasp reality so he uses myths and mysticism. Aristotle is much more down to earth and for him language is quite sufficient to express the truth of things.

Human Nature: For Plato the real person is the soul. For Aristotle the human person is the rational animal.

Relativism and Scepticism: Plato's main concern was to refute scepticism. The problem does not seem to worry Aristotle. For him the problem is to analyse the process by which we attain knowledge and to set out the basic features of the realities disclosed.

Ethics: Plato wants and thinks we can get the same kind of certainty in rules of behaviour that we have in mathematics. Dialectic, reasoning about the Forms can lead us to moral truths. For Aristotle in matters of practical decision we cannot get mathematical certainty. Each case has to be dealt with separately.

2.5. ARISTOTLE'S PHILOSOPHY: LOGIC

The Sophist claim to teach pupils “to make the weaker arguments appear stronger” has been satirized by Aristophanes, scorned by Socrates, and repudiated by Plato. But until Aristotle does his work on Logic, no one gives a good answer to the question, just what makes an argument weaker or stronger?

We regard those among us the wisest who know not only what something is but also why it is so. Wisdom, then, either is or at least involves knowledge. And knowledge involves both statements (that something is so) and reasons (statements why something is so). Furthermore, for the possession of such statements to qualify as wisdom, they must be true. As Plato pointed out falsehood cannot make up knowledge. It is Aristotle's intention to clarify all this, to sort it out, put it in order, and show how it works. So he has to do several things. He has to (1) explain the nature of statements how, for instance, they are put together out of simpler units called terms; (2) explain how statements can be related to each other so that someone can give “the reason why” for others; and (3) give an account of what makes statements true or false. These make up the logic.

Aristotle is a real pioneer in the field of logic. Even today his logic is followed. Logic according to Aristotle is the art of right thinking and thereby attaining truth. As such it does not have any special object as do other disciplines, but is their instrument and tool.

SYSTEMATISATION

Aristotle did a lot of systematisation in Logic. He was one the first to notice that the mind has a certain basic structure and method and tried to detail what those were and how it functioned. The ultimate elements of the working of the mind were three: concept, judgement and reasoning.

He defined concept as that “into which the premise is resolved, i.e., both the predicate and that of which it is predicated.” He then went on to reduce the concept to its 10 categories or different types. Thus a concept may be predicated of a subject so as to indicate its essence, or quantity, quality, relation, place, time, situation, “habitus”, action or passion.

Substance - man or horse

Quantity - two feet long, three feet long

Quality - white or literate

Relationship - double, half, or greater.

Place - in the Lyceum, in the market place

Time - yesterday, last year.

Posture - reclining at table, sitting down. (situation)

State - having shoes on, being in armour (habitus)
Doing something - cutting, burning (action)
Undergoing something - being cut, being burnt (passion)

He carefully examined what happens when we make a judgement, observed that it alone is the source of the true or false. Then he investigated their quality (affirmative and negative) quantity (universal, particular, and singular) and modality (factual, necessity and possibility) He also studied the convertibility of judgements. As to reasoning, he reduced the syllogisms to their basic types and exposed the commonest fallacies and reasoning. Finally he sought to explain how universal premises are formed and how scientific knowledge may be further developed through induction, dialectic, demonstration and solution of *aprioris* or difficulties.

DEFINITIONS

Confusion of meaning of terms is one of the factors that had been responsible for disagreements etc. Aristotle drew up rules for a good definition, and even gave us some very good examples of this.

Motion: “the fulfilment of what exists potentially, in so far as it exists potentially, is motion.”

Time is “measurement of movement according to before and after.”

2.6. PHILOSOPHY OF THE WORLD

Aristotle advances several arguments against the theory of subsisting ideas of Plato. According to Plato’s theory there must be forms of negations and relations. According to Aristotle the theory of Ideas is useless. It is an impossible theory that the substance and that of which it is the substance must exist separately.

SUBSTANCE AND ACCIDENTS

This is a distinction we make without looking into the metaphysical roots. A substance is that “which is not predicated of a subject, but of which everything is predicated.” Or to put it another way, it is “that which is primarily and to which all the other categories of being are referred.”

Accidents are whatever “attaches to something and can truly be asserted, either of necessity or usually.”

THE THEORY OF ACT AND POTENCY

This theory provides the profound metaphysical basis to answer the difficulties raised by Parmenides against movement and multiplicity. Parmenides and others would speak of being and non-being, allowing of no other category and implying that a thing, to exist must, be either pure and simple being or non-being. Basically, the theory is founded on the situation that a thing can “be” in two ways: it can be able to be such and such (potency) or it can be such and such. Every

change implies, first, that the subject of that change had potency as regards that change. Finally, a change implies the actualization of the potency in question. Potency, then, is a capacity with regard to actualization (or act), whereas act (or actualization) is a perfection or quality of some sort. A potency can be passive, e.g., a sound is capable of being heard, i.e., the passive potency of being heard. An active potency is a power or capacity to act. (E.g. The ear has an active potency of hearing). It should be noticed, however, that even a passive potency implies, in some way, a pre-disposition on the part of the thing concerned.

For example, a sound has a passive potency of being heard, whereas colour has not. This theory of act and potency has many implications in Aristotelian philosophy.

A being can be pure act, it has no potency yet to be realized; it is perfection itself. Such a being would be God. At the other end of the spectrum you have mere potency - prime matter. In between come the mixed acts of our daily experience. These have some perfections actually realized, but there are also many potencies in them - capacities to acquire or lose perfections. This is the way out of the difficulties raised by Parmenides and his school against motion and multiplicity.

THE FOUR CAUSES

The study of the causes involves another application of the theory of act and potency. He feels that humans can be satisfied only when they have acquired knowledge about a thing when they can understand “why”. He then points out that everything we observe has four principles or causes which influence it. First there are two intrinsic causes, so called because they are inadequately distinct from the effect. These are the material cause (that out of which some thing is made, e.g. wood of a table) and the formal cause (that which makes a thing to be what it is, e.g. the form of wood makes wood to be wood). Then there are two extrinsic causes distinct from their effect. The efficient cause (the one who makes or initiates the effect, e.g., the carpenter with regard to the table) and the final cause (the reason for which the effect is produced) the carpenter to get money with regard to the table. Aristotle showed how that material cause is in potency with regard to the formal cause, as mater and form.

2.7. FIRST PHILOSOPHY

“It is from a feeling of wonder that men start now, and did start in the earliest times, to practice philosophy.”

Practising philosophy is not the basic activity of human beings. It is for the satisfaction of the wonderment that one feels. Familiar as we are with the world of nature, we wonder whether that is all there is. If there is no other substance apart from those that have come together by nature, natural science will be the first science. But if there is a substance that is immovable, the science that studies it is prior to natural science and is the first philosophy. It is the business of this science to study *being qua being*, and to find out what it is and what are its attributes qua being. So first philosophy, also called metaphysics, looks for the ultimate principles and causes of all things. What are they?

NOT PLATO’S FORMS

The forms are supposed to be what many individuals of the same kind have in common. Yet they are supposed to be individual realities on their own. But says Aristotle, these requirements conflict, if the Forms are indeed individual substances, it makes no sense to think of them as being shared out among other individual substances. Finally, there is no way to understand how the Forms, eternally unchanging, account for changes. They are supposed to be the first principles and causes of whatever happens in the world.

WHAT OF MATHEMATICS?

The most convincing arguments for the forms seem to be mathematical in nature. Is mathematics dealing with square in itself, triangle in itself? There is no argument, Aristotle holds, from mathematics to the reality of Platonic Forms independent of the world of nature. Mathematics is a science, like natural science, has the world of nature as its only subject. But it does not study it as nature; it studies only certain abstractions from natural things, without supposing that such abstractions are themselves things. What happens in mathematics or geometry is conceptually separating attributes for the sake of understanding.

SUBSTANCE AND FORM

Substance is *what is* in the basic, fundamental, primary sense. What is it that makes a given object a substance? Natural things are composed of **matter and form**. Could it be matter that makes an object a substance? No. Matter, considered apart from form, is merely potentially something. Prime matter cannot be anything at all on its own. It cannot have an independent existence, it exists as formed. So it cannot be matter what makes a thing what it is. Could it be the form? According to Aristotle it is.

The form responsible for the substantiality of substances he calls the **essence** of the thing. Essences are expressed by **definitions** telling us what things are. So form is the substance of things. But substance is what can exist independently and as an individual entity. This raises a very interesting possibility. Might there be substances that are no compounds of matter and form? Might there be substances that are pure form? All of nature is made up of material substances in which matter is made into something definite by the presence of form within it.

2.8. PHILOSOPHY OF GOD

In the world of nature, the best things would be those that come closest to these ideals. Aristotle believes these are the heavenly bodies that move eternally in great circles. But even such eternal motion is not self-explanatory. In *Metaphysics* Aristotle says that there is something that is always being moved in an incessant movement, and this movement is circular...and so the first heaven will be eternal. There must then, be something that moves it. But since that is moved, as well as moving things, is intermediate, there must be something that moves without being moved, will be something eternal, it will be a substance, and it will be an actuality.

In the world of nature, containing the eternal movements of the heavenly bodies is there an eternal and ultimate mover? There must be, Aristotle argues, otherwise we could not account for the movement of anything at all. Not all movers can be “intermediate” movers. If they were, that

series would go on to infinity, but there cannot be any actually existing collection of infinitely many things. There must, then, be ‘something that moves things without being moved.’

Moreover, we can know certain facts about it. It must itself be eternal, since it must account for the eternal movement of the heavenly bodies and so cannot be less extensive than they. It must be a substance, for what other substances depend on cannot be less basic than they. And, of course, it must be fully actual; otherwise, its being what it is would cry out for further explanation - for a mover for it. For Aristotle, this mover is the final cause. This conclusion is driven home by an analogy.

Now, the object of desire and the object of thought moves things in this way: they move things without being moved. The ultimate cause of all things is a final cause; it is what all other things love. Their love for it puts them in motion. As the final cause and the object of the “desire” in all things it must be the best. So God must enjoy this life in the highest degree. God then, is an eternally existing, living being who lives a life of perfect thought.

Aristotle called his first mover God. In his view there is no divine providence. He does not create the universe, for it is eternal. It is true that he cause motion, but only as a beautiful picture might cause a man to purchase it. For Aristotle God is a metaphysical necessity, but not an object of worship.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Discuss the contribution of Aristotle to Logic.

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1.) How does Aristotle establish the necessity of a first cause?

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2.9. PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN

Aristotle seems to have started with Plato’s ideas concerning human beings. There are three types of psyche:

1. The nutritive psyche
2. The sensitive psyche
3. The rational psyche

The soul of animals is characterised by two faculties (a) the faculty of discrimination which is the work of thought and sense, and (b) the faculty of originating local movement.

(1) Mind is that which calculates means to an end, i.e. mind practical (it differs from mind speculative in the character of its end);

(2) appetite is in every form of it, relative to an end; for that which is the object of appetite is the stimulant of the mind practical; and that which is last to the process of thinking is the beginning of the action,

- Objects are experienced by animals not simply as neutral but also as good and bad, as objects of avoidance or pursuit.
- The motion in lower animals by a sense object is relatively stereotypic.
- For the lower animals the good is identical with pleasure, the bad with pain. For them there is no consideration other than present satisfaction.
- For the animal there is usually, in any given situation, only one thing to do.
- Humans usually perceive alternatives. They must make choices and that means that they should make use of some criteria for choices.

2.10. ETHICS

Ethics is the science of conduct (what are the criteria for the good life? corresponding to logic (what are the criteria for correct thinking?) It is not a mere science of knowing but also practical. It deals not merely with 'What is the good?' but also 'How can I be good?' But ethics is not psychology though connected with it. Ethics grows out of the need of choosing among the multiple courses of behaviour that the human soul perceives as options at any given time. The good, whatever it is, is the good for man and therefore can be ascribed only by discovering what man is. The study of psychology is valuable in pedagogy and especially in the learning of good behaviour and attitudes.

For Aristotle there is one end for man, happiness. Happiness is something everyone chooses for its own sake; **it** is not a means to something else. Happiness then is something final and self-sufficient; it is the end of action. Happiness is the name for that longer-range, more complete, more stable satisfaction that reason gives men the possibility of achieving, but whose achievement it at the same time is more difficult because of the alternatives men have. This possibility is undreamed by the relatively simple sensitive souls. The possibility of more ignominious failure than any animal is capable of is the risk the rational soul must run for the possibility of much greater fulfilment.

CONTEMPLATION IS PERFECT HAPPINESS

Happiness, then, is what we experience when we are living at our best and fullest, when we are functioning in accordance with our nature, whenever end is realising itself without impediment, when our form is being actualised. And since man's activities are many, the best and highest activity, that is, the activity that most completely, expresses and realises human nature is the activity of contemplation. In contemplation - in the cognition of the supreme truths about the universe - lies the greatest happiness of which man is capable.

TRANSITION FROM ETHICS TO POLITICS

No one is sufficient to oneself; humans cannot live well without community. Thus human beings live in communities, cities. In his work on ethics, Aristotle addressed the individual; in *Politics* he deals with life in the City. Aristotle's conception of the city is organic, and he is considered one of the first to conceive of the city in this manner. Aristotle considered the city to be a natural community. Moreover, he considered the city to be prior to the family which in turn is prior to the individual, i.e., last in the order of becoming, but first in the order of being. He is also famous for his statement that "man is by nature a political animal." Aristotle conceived of politics as being like an organism rather than like a machine, and as a collection of parts none of which can exist without the others.

VIRTUES

Aristotle speaks of intellectual and moral virtues. The intellectual virtues are those that help us to attain truth, ultimately the highest of all truths, the Truth - God. However, to reach this sublime Goal, we must cultivate the moral virtues. These help us in this and in so far as they, by keeping in check our passions, enable us to perform right actions. In this context it is clear how Aristotle came to the conclusion that a moral virtue is "a mean between two vices that which depends on excess and which depends on defect".

2.11. ART AND LITERATURE

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle answered, in effect, Plato's criticism of tragedy and his desire to outlaw poets from his republic, on the grounds that they would disturb and weaken the will-power and moral strength of the statesmen and warriors preying on their emotions. Aristotle made use of the famous theory of **catharsis** to show that through the emotions of pity and fear (aroused by tragedy), the soul and its passions would be replaced and purified. This would bring about a certain feeling of pleasure and peace.

2.12. SLAVERY

According to Aristotle every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind always act in order to obtain that which they think good. But, if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good. The state is made up of households and households are made of master and slave, husband and wife, father and children. Some hold that the rule of a master over slaves is contrary to nature, and that the distinction between slave and freeman exists by law only, and not by nature; and being an interference with nature is therefore unjust. Aristotle argues that property is part of the household and a slave is a living possession, an instrument which takes precedence of all other instruments. The master is only the master of the slave, he does not belong to him, whereas the slave is not only the slave of his master, but wholly belongs

to him. And a possession may be defined as an instrument of action, separable from the possessor.

But is there any one intended by nature to be a slave, and for whom such condition is expedient and right, or rather is not all slavery a violation of nature? In living creatures the soul rules over the body, the body appears to rule over the soul in corrupt ones. Again, male is by nature superior, and the female inferior, and the one rules, and the other is ruled in principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind. Where there is such a difference as that between soul and body, or between men and animals. Slaves are those whose business is to use their body, because they can do nothing better, the lowest sort are by nature slaves and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master. For he who can be, therefore is, another's, and he who participates in rational principle enough to apprehend, but not to have such a principle, is a slave by nature.

2.13. LET US SUM UP

Twenty-three hundred years after his death, Aristotle remains one of the most influential people who ever lived. He was the founder of formal logic, pioneered the study of zoology, and left every future scientist and philosopher in his debt through his contributions to the scientific method. Despite these accolades, many of Aristotle's errors held back science considerably. Bertrand Russell notes that "almost every serious intellectual advance has had to begin with an attack on some Aristotelian doctrine". Russell also refers to Aristotle's ethics as "repulsive", and calls his logic "as definitely antiquated as Ptolemaic astronomy". Russell notes that these errors make it difficult to do historical justice to Aristotle, until one remembers how large of an advance he made upon all of his predecessors.

Aristotle is referred to as "The Philosopher" by Scholastic thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas. See *Summa Theologica*. These thinkers blended Aristotelian philosophy with Christianity, bringing the thought of Ancient Greece into the Middle Ages. It required a repudiation of some Aristotelian principles for the sciences and the arts to free themselves for the discovery of modern scientific laws and empirical methods.

The Italian poet Dante says of Aristotle in the first circles of hell,
*I saw the Master there of those who know,
Amid the philosophic family,
By all admired, and by all revered;
There Plato too I saw, and Socrates,
Who stood beside him closer than the rest.*

Aristotle was a product of his time. We cannot accept his justification of slavery nor the inferior position he assigns to women. Martin Heidegger elaborated a new interpretation of Aristotle, intended to warrant his deconstruction of scholastic and philosophical tradition. More recently, Alasdair MacIntyre has attempted to reform what he calls the Aristotelian tradition in a way that is anti-elitist and capable of disputing the claims of both liberals and Nietzscheans. Ayn Rand considered Aristotle to be her only significant influence. According to Whitehead everyone is

either, by temperament a Platonist (the mystical, contemplative type) or an Aristotelian (the scientific, active type).

Check Your Progress II

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Explain Aristotle's philosophy of human beings.

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2) Discuss the ethical philosophy of Aristotle.

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2.14. KEY WORDS

Pedagogy: Pedagogy is the art or science of being a teacher. The term generally refers to strategies of instruction, or a style of instruction. Pedagogy is also sometimes referred to as the correct use of teaching strategies.

Syllogism: A syllogism is a kind of logical argument in which one proposition (the conclusion) is inferred from the two others (the premises) of a certain form.

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2.16. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Logic according to Aristotle is the art of right thinking and thereby attaining truth. Wisdom at least involves knowledge. And knowledge involves both statements (that something is so) and reasons (statements why something is so). Furthermore, for the possession of such statements to qualify as wisdom, they must be true. To clarify all this, he has to (1) explain the nature of statements how, for instance, they are put together out of simpler units called terms; (2) explain how statements can be related to each other so that someone can give “the reason why” for others; and (3) give an account of what makes statements true or false. These make up the logic.
- 2) Aristotle believes these are the heavenly bodies that move eternally in great circles. There must then, be something that moves it. But since that is moved, as well as moving things, is intermediate, there must be something that moves without being moved, will be something eternal, it will be a substance, and it will be an actuality.

In the world of nature, containing the eternal movements of the heavenly bodies is there an eternal and ultimate mover? There must be, Aristotle argues, otherwise we could not account for the movement of anything at all. Not all movers can be “intermediate” movers. If they were, that series would go on to infinity, but there cannot be any actually existing collection of infinitely many things. There must, then, be ‘something that moves things without being moved.’”

Check Your Progress II

- 1) According to Aristotle there are three types of psyche: The nutritive psyche, the sensitive psyche, and the rational psyche. The soul of animals is characterized by two faculties (a) the faculty of discrimination which is the work of thought and sense, and (b) the faculty of originating local movement.

Objects are experienced by animals not simply as neutral but also as good and bad, as objects of avoidance or pursuit. The motion in lower animals by a sense object is relatively stereotypic. For the lower animals the good is identical with pleasure, the bad with pain. For them there is no consideration other than present satisfaction. For the animal there is usually, in any given situation, only one thing to do. Humans usually perceive alternatives. They must make choices and that means that they should make use of some criteria for choices.

- 2) Ethics is the science of conduct (what are the criteria for the good life? corresponding to logic (what are the criteria for correct thinking?) It is not a mere science of knowing but also practical. It deals not merely with 'What is the good?' but also 'How can I be good?' For Aristotle there is one end for man, happiness. But the achievement it is more difficult because of the alternatives men have. In contemplation - in the cognition of the supreme truths about the universe - lies the greatest happiness of which man is capable.



UNIT 3

HELLENISM

Contents

- 3.0. Objectives
 - 3.1. Introduction
 - 3.2. Stoicism
 - 3.3. Epicureanism
 - 3.4. Skepticism
 - 3.5. Let Us Sum Up
 - 3.6. Key Words
 - 3.7. Further Readings and References
 - 3.8. Answers to Check Your Progress
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3.0. OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we present the basic material required for an understanding of Hellenistic Philosophies. This includes the main features of the philosophical trends that came after the golden age in ancient Greek philosophy. The golden age is known also as the classic or Hellenic period. The main currents of thought during this period are stoicism, Epicureanism and Skepticism, with which some of the older currents of thought intermingle.

Note: Most dates are approximate. Dates are written backwards, w.g.99-55, refer to BC.

After completing this study, the student must be able to:

- outline the doctrines of the various trends followed by philosophers during Hellenistic period;
 - illustrate the similarities and differences between Stoicism and Epicureanism;
 - critically evaluate at least some of the theories and doctrines; and
 - acquaint themselves with the most outstanding figures and trend-setters.
-

3.1. INTRODUCTION

We are dealing here with what is known as Hellenistic Philosophy because it corresponds roughly to the Hellenistic period in Greek history. The Hellenistic period in Greek history is ushered in by the conquests of Alexander the Great, whom, for a while, Aristotle had been trying to tutor. Till then, Greece had been divided into many number of city states, each with its own autonomy in matters of civil and military. Some were democratic, others aristocratic or oligarchic. But they were all Hellenes, which was another name for Greeks. It was during the Hellenic period that the great Socrates, Plato and Aristotle flourished. Greek or Hellenic culture was more or less restricted to Greece and its colonies.

After Alexander the Great deprived these city states of their autonomy and independence, and welded them into his empire which extended to the Middle East far beyond the shores of Greece, Greek culture spread to Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and all around the Eastern Mediterranean.

This new phase of Greek history is known as the Hellenistic (or all Greek) period. Greek culture became widespread during this period in the Mediterranean world. Politically, the period begins with the death of Alexander in 323 BC and ends with the beginning of the reign of Augustus in 30 BC, around which time the Romans completed the process of their conquest of Greece.

Though the history of philosophy has to take general chronology into account, let us not forget that ideas and currents of thought are not born and do not die like kings and emperors nor do they change, or rise and fall with political regimes. Pre-Hellenistic philosophies will influence Hellenistic currents at some stage or other of their formation. For instance, the Cynics, the Cyrenaics, the Academy of Plato, the Peripatetics, the Pythagoreans, and others, are still alive and active during the Hellenistic.

3.2. STOICISM

Stoicism was one of the three principle systems of Hellenistic philosophy. Its beginnings were in Athens, during the life-time of Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum. It survived the conquest of Greece by the Romans in the second century, migrated to Rome and other regions, and influenced the thought of at least one Roman emperor in the second century of the Christian era.

ZENO, THE FOUNDER (334-262)

Stoicism derives its name from "*Stoa poikile*" or painted colonnade, in the Athenian market-place where Zeno of Citium and his companions, the Zenonians, used to meet and discuss the meaning of life and human existence. Zeno, who had studied under Crates, the Cynic, had absorbed some of the ideas of Socrates, about whom he had read in the Memorabilia of Xenophon. Socrates became the hero of Zeno.

The Cynics in the previous century had been among the minor Socratics who made a distinction between "nature" and convention". "Nature" was the home of plants and minerals, animals in the forests, and birds in the air, and fish in the seas - under skies and stars. "Convention" was man-made laws and law-courts, and other products of human agreement - merely conventional matters.

Zeno, however, in the true spirit of philosophy, did not follow the Cynics nor Socrates blindly. Human beings must indeed follow nature, but not in the way that animals do. For human beings to act in accordance with nature, they must act in accordance with reason. To act in accord with reason brings virtue and happiness.

LOGIC AND EPISTEMOLOGY

The English word “logic” comes from the Greek “Logos” which was so important and central in Stoic thought. Logos, translated in Latin as Ratio and in English, as Reason, was also their word for God.

Human reason was a spark of that Reason. Human reason undergoes a process of growth and development. Initially, the soul is a *tabula rasa* of blank board or slate, on which through sensations, impressions are received of individual objects. It is the impressions that we know, rather than the objects themselves.

These particular impressions are progressively generalized as the person’s reason reaches maturity when she or he is about fourteen. Progressive generalization leads to scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge needs some criterion of truth. Clarity of impression itself generating indubitable conviction can be the criterion of truth. Some Stoics tried to design arguments, which, irrespective of their contents would lead to true conclusions.

To the conceptual or term-centered logic of Aristotle, they preferred conditional propositional syllogisms of the type:

If p, then q - If he is human, he is mortal.

But: P - He is human

Therefore: q. - So: He is mortal.

This type of Stoic logic was a forerunner of today’s symbolic logic.

PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE

For their understanding of “nature”, the Stoics turned chiefly to the pre-Socratic, Heraclitus of Ephesus, for whom Fire was the principal element, and all natural reality through all its changes was governed by the Logos.

The Stoics, of course, did not adopt Heraclitean views without adapting them. They observed how wonderfully nature organizes the elements, and arranges them, and how well she plans her products, so that they can be useful and beneficial to human beings. This evidence led them to conclude that there is a Logos or Reason or Law immanent in Nature - and that is God, Who the active principle constantly is working on matter, which is the passive principle. This is the law of Nature, which all must obey. Zeno, however, could not think of God as spiritual but seems to have considered Him as subtly material. God or “Logos” or Reason is considered the Soul of the universe, which is governed by His infinitely good Providence. Hence, Stoicism has fostered an optimistic approach to human existence. However, the theory of recurrence of worlds and conflagrations, with each individual repeating his/her previous performance in each existence suggests that some Stoics believe in Fate rather than Providence.

Humans while being microcosms, are considered parts of the material universe which is characterized by cyclic recurrence and ends in a universal conflagration. Human souls also seem to perish in the universal conflagration, since souls also are thought to be made of some warm, breathy, material stuff.

The Stoics maintain that the Logos imposes laws on nature, and these laws impose necessity on nature. They don’t see incompatibility between this determinism in nature, on one hand, and

ethical freedom and responsibility, on the other. Humans are free to assent to, or to refuse the route planned by nature.

IDEA OF GOD

As already explained above, the Stoics thought of God as the inner, immanent, benevolent principle designing and governing Nature's products and performances for the benefit of mankind.

Cleanthes (c. 331-229) the successor of Zeno and second head of the school, is famous for his Hymn to Zeus which begins with the lines:

O God most glorious called by many a name
Nature's great King, through endless years the same ...

This God was an ethereal fiery vapour, called Logos in which the forms of all individuals to be were contained. They were called rational or logical seeds. From that fire came the air, followed by water, part of which turned into earth, and another part, into the elemental earthly fire. In human beings they were sparks of the divine. The Stoics took for granted the God and the soul should be corporeal because they had material, physical, corporeal effects. Moreover, the Stoics believed that only bodies can "exist".

Chrysippus (c. 279-209), third head of the school, took up the challenge of solving the problem of evil. He argued that imperfections of particulars would contribute to the perfection of the whole. Another reason he gave was that if one of two contraries is removed, both are lost. It is natural that where there is possibility for pleasure, there should be possibility for pain. A toothache may be painful, but isn't it good to be warned before the tooth is decayed?

STOIC ETHICS

Ethics is the most important focus of Stoic philosophy which aims at bringing into the individual human soul, the peace and harmony, order and beauty, regularity and constancy that is apparent in the cosmos. This perfect state is achieved through apatheia or apathy which is perfect passionless-ness.

Zeno had earlier been influenced by the Cynics, whose principle was live according to nature. Life according to nature, became also the aim of Stoicism. However, the meaning given to these words was entirely different. For the Cynics, like Diogenes of Sinope, life according to nature, was life according to senses and instincts. For the Stoics, living according to nature meant life according to reason. So, whereas the Cynics seem to have thought of animal "nature", the Stoics referred to human nature. Whereas the Cynics thought of natural as opposed to artificial and conventional, the Stoics thought of natural as rational. Moreover, by being rational, human beings are obedient to Cosmic Reason or Logos.

By nature human beings are duty-bound to love themselves; and since they are social, self-love extends itself to their families and friends; and finally to slaves, to enemies and to all mankind. Stoic ethics favours cosmopolitanism. Stoics claim to be citizens of the world.

It is behaviour in accordance with human nature that is important for human happiness, and this behaviour is to be interwoven with the routine of daily duties: respect for parents, faithfulness to friends, healthy patriotism, constancy, consistency, fortitude.

Zeno had laid the foundations of Stoic ethics according to which the four basic virtues are: prudence, which includes sound judgment; justice, which respects the rights of others; temperance or self-control, which fosters self-control and fortitude which is the ability to endure.

These virtues stand or fall together: the possession of all. Likewise, a person who has one vice is likely to have all the vices.

The question might arise: how can a human being really practice virtue, if he is merely a part of nature, a mere cog in the cosmic machine? Notwithstanding the determinism in nature, Stoics maintain that freedom of choice is possible. Indeed Zeno emphasizes that a man is master of his destiny and can do whatever he chooses with his life. True, like everything else in nature, choice too is caused. But the act of choosing is its own cause.

OUTSTANDING REPRESENTATIVES

Historically, the Stoic movement is divided into the (i) early (ii) middle, and (iii) later Stoa. The chief representatives of the early Stoa are Zeno, Cleanthes and Chrysippus whose basic views have been set forth above. They were centered in Athens and emphasized the importance of apatheia or passionlessness.

The Middle Stoa does not take that apatheia so seriously. The chief representatives of this period are Panaetius of Rhodes (c.185-110) and his disciple, Poseidonius of Apamea (c. 135-51). The former was the last head of the school at Athens; the latter taught at Rhodes. Both favoured the importing of pre-Stoic ideas into Stoicism. Both had great admiration for Plato, and absorbed some of his ideas into their own system.

Middle Stoicism- the Stoicism of especially the second and first centuries BC - became a bridge between early Greek Stoicism and the later Roman Stoicism that followed. Panaetius and Poseidonius tended, as we have seen to eclectism, the tendency to choose from other schools or systems, what appeals to one's own common sense. Cicero, who had heard the lectures of Poseidonius, was an eclectic.

Later Stoicism - which is part of Roman philosophy -- is represented chiefly by Romans rather than by Greeks. Seneca of Cordoba (d.65 A.D) was a wealthy and influential courtier who was for a time, the tutor of the Roman emperor, Nero.

For Seneca, philosophy was the science and art of living according to nature. This is the same as virtuous living. Virtue is good; vice is evil; everything else is indifferent. He noted the

struggle between reason and the passions; he noted also the freedom of the will. He believed God would help those who help themselves. He believed also, unlike the early stoics, that God transcended matter.

Epictetus of Hierapolis (c.50-138) had once been the slave of one of the bodyguard of Nero, who, after being set free, founded a school in Nicopolis and lectured there. He taught that regular examination of conscience would help people to bring their passions under the government of reason. People should also get a correct view about the nature of the gods; and then obey them willingly.

Marcus Aurelius, Roman emperor from 161 to 180, was also a Stoic philosopher, who insisted on the forgiveness of enemies. Just as eyes and ears are find contentment in seeing and hearing, human beings should find contentment in being kind to others, since that is what they were made for.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The Stoic philosophy of nature, with God as part of nature, and man as part of nature, can be criticized on many counts, as the subsequent history of philosophy will testify. Some of the contemporary skeptics raised objections against them which students of philosophy must consider and evaluate. One general label applied to them categorized them as dogmatists.

However, Stoic ethics has been influential and also some of its terminology. The Influence of Stoicism was quite remarkable. Since Stoic ideas were scattered abroad all around the Mediterranean, it is not surprising to find their terms adopted by followers of other systems, and believers in other doctrines.

Note: similarity, however, does not necessarily show dependence. Even before the Stoics, the term was central to the thought of Heraclitus.

Philo of Alexandria I(20 BC=40 AD), a Jewish, Hellenistic philosopher, was the first known scholar to attempt a harmonization of Greek philosophy with the Bible. He considered the Logos an intermediary between God and the world.

But Christians gave to the word Logos a radically new meaning. St. Paul himself met Stoics and Epicureans in the Areopagus (Acts, 17). He sometimes seems to use terms used by the Stoics, and name virtues recommended by the Stoics.

John's Gospel in its very first lines says: In the beginning was the Logos; and the Logos was with God; and the Logos was God." This statement, using a term that is central to Stoicism, has quite another meaning in Christianity. St. Justin, Martyr who had studied something of Stoicism before his conversion to Christ, claimed without hesitation, basing himself on John 1, 9 that the true Logos illumined also the minds of philosophers.

Early Church Fathers, who seem to have borrowed some ideas from the Stoics, are Clement of Alexandria, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, and others, among whom was Tertullian. To whom is

attributed the saying: Anima humana naturaliter Christiana or The human soul is naturally Christian.

When the Discourses of Epictetus were re-discovered and translated in the fifteenth century, Stoicism won more admirers during the Renaissance and later.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Discuss the Logic and Epistemology of Zeno.

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2) What is Stoics' law of nature?

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3) Explain Stoic's ethical principles.

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3.3. EPICUREANISM

The goal of the Epicureans, like that of the Stoics, was peace of mind. They, too, made a tripartite division of philosophy: epistemology or logic, philosophy of nature, ethics. The means, however, appear different.

EPICURUS, THE FOUNDER

Epicurus, born at Samos in 342, having heard Platonist and Democritean lectures, came to Athens, first for military service, and then settled there, and opened a school there in his garden

in 306. In his life-time, his school was known as the School of the Garden; later it was called Epicureanism.

Epicurus was a prolific writer and is said to have written 300 books, but practically nothing is extant, apart from two letters and a few fragments. It is from these and from other surviving works that historians manage to get an idea of the philosophies of this period.

Epicurus was highly honoured in his life-time, and considered almost divine; hence, few of his disciples dared to question him, or to depart from orthodoxy. He continued as head of his school, till his death in 270.

THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

What is called the canon or canonic deals with the theory of knowledge, or doctrine of truth. The first principle of Epicurean epistemology is that all and their representations sensations are true. Errors begin to be committed at the levels further from sensations, i.e. at the levels of propositions and judgments.

Repeated experiences engender “anticipation”. Repeated anticipations are equivalent to general concepts. In this way, Epicurus invents a theory of universals distinct from those of Plato and Aristotle. This theory will later be known as nominalism.

Similarly, feelings are the criteria for conduct. Pleasure is good; pain is bad. Sensations therefore, and feelings are the criteria of truth.

PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE

People should study nature and the universe with a view to acquire peace of soul. In Democritean atomism, Epicurus found a natural philosophy that - with a few modifications - would fit in well with his ethical views. Physical reality consists ultimately of atoms and the void. Showers of atoms coming down through space sometimes collide with one another, or get hooked on to one another and form bodies and objects, and also souls --- since nothing is spiritual at least on earth. The atoms are characterized by weight, shape or form, size and they are moved by blind mechanistic forces which bring about effects without any intended purpose. Epicureans speak of the possibility of a “swerve” because they wish to avoid complete determinism and make room for free choice and also for change and evolution in nature, since there are no governing principles.

The death of living things is explained by the dissolution of bodies and their return of the compounds into their constituent atoms. That’s why human beings should not fear death. “When death is there, you are not there; when death is there, you are not there.”

IDEA OF GOD

Epicurus seems to have treated belief in polytheism rather casually, as superstition. He did not deny explicitly their existence, but used the popular anthropomorphic beliefs to get across his

own ideas. Gods are supposed to have all they want. Hence, they have happiness. Mortals should therefore imitate them.

ETHICS

What is the meaning of human life and the goal of existence? Good is to be done and evil avoided. The greatest good is pleasure; the greatest evil is pain. All beings seek pleasure: animals seek pleasure, and so do children. Before Epicurus, the Cyrenaics, under the leadership of Antisthenes had maintained that pleasure was the goal of human life; but they had been too sensual. Epicurus adds a bit of intellectualism to the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. He invites his disciples to look at things more holistically, not just at the here and now. A long-range view is to be taken. There's no fun in enjoying for a day and suffering for a life-time. There is no fun in giving pleasure to the body, if that causes pain or shame to one's mind. Pleasure therefore is our natural innate goal to which all other values are subordinate, including virtue. Hence, Epicureanism is hedonistic.

Absence of pain, freedom from anxiety, tranquility of soul and friendship are – for Epicurus – the greatest joys in life. Friendship is the greatest of the joys available to human beings. Epicurus appreciates the virtues recommended by Plato and Aristotle, but those virtues are only means to the pleasures just mentioned. Health and wealth, too, are worthless if they are not used as a means to pleasure and friendship. Indeed, the Epicureans highly esteemed independence from external goods.

Mortals must imitate the immortal gods, who are not concerned at all about mortals, because such concern would disturb their happiness. Mortals should not worry about life after death, because there is no life after death. The soul does not survive the body.

OUTSTANDING REPRESENTATIVES

Metrodorus of Lampsacus, a member of the original group, was elevated to special honours by the founder, who conferred on him the title of “Wise” with the authority of making authentic statements of doctrine.

Colotes of Lampsacus another immediate disciple, authored a book to explain that the teachings of other philosophers, simply “...make life impossible.”

Hermaphorus of Mytilene (d. 250 BC), successor of Epicurus as head of the school, wrote 22 “books” on Empedocles; he challenged Plato and Aristotle.

Philonides, a later member of the school, which flourished till the first century BC. could boast of being among the friends of Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria (175-164.)

Lucretius (99-55) was a Roman admirer of Epicurus and his philosophy. His poem, *De Rerum Natura* (On the Nature of Things) is considered one of the most coherent presentations of Epicurean materialism. In 7,400 lines Lucretius unfolds the chief Epicurean doctrines: the nature of reality as constituted of atoms; the theory of knowledge, as resulting from images emanating from

objects, through atoms which cause sensations on meeting the atoms of the mind; and also the ethical teaching of Epicurus.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The Epicureans were apparently sincere searchers for the meaning of human existence and the goal of human life. As rationalists and seekers of truth, they had established for themselves a canonic to guide them as a criterion of truth. They felt compelled to resist the superstitions, and unreasonable recourse to divination and other such practices of which the Greek world was full. They rejected the fatalism to be found in some of the Stoics.

Is their emphasis on pleasure right or wrong? That depends on their meaning and intention. It appears their intention was good because by “pleasure” they clearly don’t mean sensual pleasure, as did the Cyrenaics in the preceding Hellenic period. They meant absence of pain”. Logically they would say: “Avoid those bodily pleasures that cause pain to the mind.”

3.4. SKEPTICISM

Skepticism is the third major philosophical trend prevailing during the Hellenistic period. Whereas the two previously described philosophies may be called dogmatic systems or schools, skepticism cannot afford to be dogmatic, nor can it be called one school at this period, though some leaders of Plato’s Academy did turn skeptics, as we shall see.

The skeptics, while having few teachings of their own, criticized others, especially the Stoics dogmatists who do not know that they do not know.

Historically, the Hellenistic skeptics are distinguished into two classes because of their different sources: one being Pyrrho; the other, Plato’s Academy during the Hellenistic period. The two currents will merge in the course of time.

PYRRHONISM

Pyrrho of Elis (c. 360-270) who is said to have accompanied Alexander the Great on his campaign to India is regarded as the founder of this movement, though he may have written nothing. His disciple Timon of Phlius is the one who did the writing, some of which consists of ridiculing Homer, Hesiod and great philosophers – except, of course, his master, Pyrrho.

Influenced apparently by the Democritean theory of primary and secondary qualities, by sophist relativism, and by the Cyrenaic theory of knowledge, the Pyrrhonians denied the possibility of certainty in knowledge. Common experience tells us that people look at the same things in different ways. Contradictory opinions can be upheld with equally good arguments.

Aenesidemus of Knossos, the greatest Pyrrhonian dialectician, had, in the first century BC, drawn up a list of ten types of such contradictory or antithetical arguments.

The theoretical conclusion is that the wise man must try to withhold or suspend judgment. What about practical affairs? In practical affairs, customs and laws are to be followed.

Sextus Empiricus (c.150-210) was a medical doctor and the head of a Pyrrhonian school, who has left us the most comprehensive extant account of Greek skepticism. In his view, endless battles between dogmatists and their opponents had been disturbing people for centuries, and there was no sure criterion for deciding who was right. Reason is such a trickster. Even the syllogism cannot be trusted! Sextus thinks the syllogism is a vicious circle.

Aristotle may argue: All men are mortal
Socrates is a man;
Therefore he is mortal.

This argument is circular, says Sextus, because it presupposes what it should prove.

(i) Arguments are used to prove that one is right; (ii) other “dogmatists” become opponents and refuse to agree, insisting that the first party is wrong; Sextus calls this “antithesis”); (iii) Suspension of judgment. This is the Pyrrhonian solution. It balances the two arms of the antithesis. (iv) Peace of soul - ataraxia.

ACADEMIC SKEPTICISM

Arcesilaus of Pitane (314-240) became head of Plato’s Academy in 265 BC. Historians, dividing the history of the Academy into three periods – Old, Middle, New – consider Arcesilaus founder of the Middle Academy.

Arcesilaus was influenced by Socrates who had sometimes posed as a skeptic, maintaining he knew nothing with certainty. Arcesilaus, going a step further said that he was not even certain about whether he knew nothing with certainty. He was also influenced by the Pyrrhonians, and joined them in criticizing the Stoics for making subjective certainty the criterion of truth. Agreeing with Plato that sense-knowledge is only opinion, Arcesilaus used dialectic to uphold suspension of judgment.

Carneades (213-128) was another leader of the Academy who opted for skepticism. His skepticism went beyond that of Arcesilaus. It is said he never accepted an invitation to dinner, because that would impede his work. Around 156 BC, he is said to have accompanied an Athenian delegation to Rome in order to appeal for the remission of some penalty. An expert in rhetoric, he made two speeches: one, praising the qualities of justice as a duty imposed by natural law; the other, proving that justice was nothing but utility.

He criticized the Stoics for making kataleptic representations criteria for truth. (These representations –according to the Stoics –were so convincing, that they could be regarded as self-authenticating.) Being subjective, how can such representations be criteria for truth?

The Stoics accused the skeptics of harming society by teaching people to suspend judgment, since some knowledge is necessary for action. Carneades replies that the skeptics are not impeding action, good works or virtue, because for practical of moral action, certainty is not necessary, probability is sufficient.

3.5. LET US SUM UP

Hellenistic philosophy is not one but many. It is more correct to speak of Hellenistic philosophies. The principal philosophies characteristic of the Hellenistic period are Stoicism, Epicureanism, Skepticism and Jewish Hellenistic thought. Hence, these will be the main concern of the following pages. The Stoics, Epicureans and Academic Skeptics, all had their schools in Athens till 87 BC, when the Romans attacked Athens. After this date, Hellenistic philosophers migrated to other centres, especially to Alexandria. In Alexandria, too, which had been named for Alexander the Great, there was a Jewish community that could not escape the influence of Greek culture.

Philosophers, especially in Athens, were public figures and often engaged in public debates and lively inter-school discussions. The Academic skeptics were constantly criticizing the other schools especially the Stoics. The Epicureans were a relatively private philosophic community. One common aim of these philosophies – underlying all these differences – was the attainment of “ataraxia” i.e. tranquility, happiness and peace of mind.

The skeptics did a great service to philosophy by pointing out the limits of human certainty. The word “skeptic” comes from a Greek word which means “doubt” but a doubt that spurs on to further investigation.

Some of their criticisms of the Stoics in particular and of philosophers inclined to dogmatism are quite valid. Those of their works that were re-discovered and translated in the Renaissance period, exercised enormous influence on European thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Pure skepticism, of course, which denies the possibility of all certainty, will land its followers into many self-contradictions.

Check Your Progress II

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What is theory of knowledge according to Epicureanism?

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2) Explain Epicureans’ Philosophy of nature

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3) Write a short note on the Ethics of Epicureans

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3.6. KEY WORDS

Impression: Impression is the overall effect of something.

Life: Life is a characteristic of organisms that exhibit certain biological processes such as chemical reactions or other events that results in a transformation. Living organisms are capable of growth and reproduction, some can communicate and many can adapt to their environment through changes originating internally.

Reason: Reason refers to mental faculties that consciously create explanations. Such narratives are a peculiar characteristic of the way humans think about things and events - judging, predicting, concluding, generalizing, and comparing for example. A reason is an explanatory or justificatory factor. In the context of explanation, the word 'reason' can be a synonym for 'cause.' The concept 'reason' is closely related to the concepts of language and logic, as reflected in the multiple meanings of the Greek word "logos", the root of logic, which translated into Latin became "ratio" and then in French "raison," from which the English word "reason" was derived.

3.7. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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3.8. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) The English word "logic" comes from the Greek "Logos" which means Reason. Human reason is a spark of that Reason. Human reason undergoes a process of development. Initially, the soul is a *tabula rasa*, on which through sensations, impressions are received of individual objects. It is the impressions that we know, rather than the objects themselves.

These particular impressions are progressively generalized as the person's reason reaches maturity. Progressive generalization leads to scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge needs some criterion of truth. Clarity of impression itself generating indubitable conviction can be the criterion of truth.

- 2) The Stoics observed how wonderfully nature organizes the elements, and arranges them, and how well she plans her products, so that they can be useful and beneficial to human beings. This evidence led them to conclude that there is a Logos or Reason or Law immanent in Nature - and that is God, Who the active principle constantly is working on matter, which is the passive principle. This is the law of Nature, which all must obey. Zeno, however, could not think of God as spiritual but seems to have considered Him as subtly material. God or "Logos" or Reason is considered the Soul of the universe, which is governed by His infinitely good Providence.
- 3) Stoic ethics aims at bringing into the individual human soul, the peace and harmony, order and beauty, regularity and constancy that is apparent in the cosmos. This perfect state is achieved through apatheia or apathy which is perfect passionless-ness.

Life according to nature became also the aim of Stoicism. For the Stoics, living according to nature meant life according to reason. By being rational, human beings are obedient to Cosmic Reason or Logos.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) The first principle of Epicurean epistemology is that all and their representations sensations are true. Errors begin to be committed at the levels further from sensations, i.e. at the levels of propositions and judgments. Repeated experiences engender "anticipation". Repeated anticipations are equivalent to general concepts. This theory will later be known as nominalism.
- 2) According to Epicurus, physical reality consists ultimately of atoms and the void. Showers of atoms coming down through space sometimes collide with one another, or get hooked on to one another and form bodies and objects, and also souls. The atoms are characterized by weight, shape or form, size and they are moved by blind mechanistic forces which bring about effects without any intended purpose. Epicureans speak of the possibility of a "swerve" because they wish to avoid complete determinism and make room for free choice and also for change and evolution in nature, since there are no governing principles. The death of living things is explained by the dissolution of bodies and their return of the compounds into their constituent atoms.
- 3) The meaning of human life and the goal of existence is pleasure. The greatest good is pleasure; the greatest evil is pain. All beings seek pleasure. Epicurus adds a bit of intellectualism to the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. He says, a long-range view is to be taken. There's no fun in enjoying for a day and suffering for a life-time. There is no fun in giving pleasure to the body, if that causes pain or shame to one's mind.

Pleasure therefore is out natural innate goal to which all other values are subordinate, including virtue. Hence, Epicureanism is hedonistic.



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4.0. OBJECTIVES

The originality of Plotinus lies basically in the elaboration of a harmonious system out of the main insights that he took from his predecessors. After the death of Plotinus, Neoplatonism continued to flourish in the Syrian School especially, in the School of Athens, in the School at Pergamum and in the Alexandrian school. The influences of Platonism can be seen in the early Christian theologians like St. Augustine.

In this unit we shall briefly examine

- the life and writings of Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism,
- the central themes of his philosophical system,
- the earlier philosophies from which his system borrows ideas
- some philosophical problems of the system and
- The post-Plotinian developments of the system in various Schools of the ancient world.

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Neoplatonism was the last flowering of the Greek thought in late antiquity. Its birth place was Alexandria, that great city which was founded by Alexander the Great in Egypt and which became a major centre of intellectual activity of the ancient world. Situated at the intersection between the East and the West, Alexandria became the crucible in which the Eastern religious and mystical tendencies freely intermingled with Greek philosophical thought. This cross-cultural fecundation had given birth to Jewish Hellenistic philosophy (founded by Philo) and Neopythagoreanism. And in the third century A.D. the same tendencies gave birth to Neoplatonism.

The system was founded by Plotinus. The name Neoplatonism is of later origin; it was in the eighteenth century that this name was given to Plotinus's system. He himself understood it as authentic Platonism, an elaboration of the fundamental insights of Plato's philosophy. Basically it is a metaphysico-religious system which attempts to give a holistic picture of reality with the soteriological aim of attaining salvation through the practice of asceticism. The system has been

so pervasively and profoundly influenced by Neopythagoreanism, Platonism and Stoicism that some scholars consider it yet another eclectic attempt of late antiquity.

4. 2. THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF PLOTINUS

Plotinus's distinguished pupil Porphyry has written a biography of his master. Plotinus was born in 205 A.D. in Lycopolis, Upper Egypt. It was at the age of twenty-eight that he came to philosophy. We do not know much about his life before this period; Porphyry says his master was reticent about this period of his life. He came to philosophy in search of truth. None of his early teachers was able to satisfy his inner thirst. He changed teachers one after the other. At last one of his friends led him to Ammonias Saccas. He was deeply impressed by the philosophy of Zaccas and remained with him for eleven years. Then motivated by the desire to obtain first hand knowledge about Persian and Indian wisdom, he joined expedition against the Persians led by Emperor Gordianus. However, the Emperor was assassinated in Persia, and the expedition came to naught. Plotinus fled from the army to Antioch and in the same year reached Rome. In Rome he set up his school and began to teach philosophy. After ten years he began to write. He gained the confidence of emperor Gallienus. Wanting to set up a commune where the members would live together practicing philosophy and asceticism in search of salvation, he approached the emperor for the grant of land. The emperor himself was positively disposed, but some influential courtiers prevented the royal grant of land to Plotinus. It is said that towards the end of his life he became a leprosy patient. He spent his last days in the estate of his friend of Arabic origin accompanied only by one pupil and a physician. He died in 270.

All his works were composed in a span of sixteen years beginning in 253. They have come down to us in an edition prepared by his illustrious pupil Porphyry. He arranged the entire work of Plotinus into six sections; each section is called an *Ennead*, because it contains nine treatises.

4. 3. THE PHILOSOPHY OF PLOTINUS

As it is already mentioned that Plotinus did not think of himself as the founder of a new school of thought, Neoplatonism, but as a genuine Platonist, that is, as an interpreter and follower of Plato. For him Plato possessed the truth in its entirety. Therefore it is only to be expected that certain insights of Plato form the backbone of his philosophical system. The other influences such as Aristotle, Neopythagoreanism and Stoicism are combined with the dominant thought of Plato without sacrificing its kernel.

Central to Plato's thought is the doctrine that besides the sensible world there exists a world of the intelligible. The latter is a world that is inhabited by Ideas, which are immaterial and eternal. This world alone has the true being (*ousia*); the world of the senses has no real existence; it is a mere shadow. The doctrine of an intelligible world in separation from and in opposition to the sensible world is central also to the system of Plotinus. However, Plotinus's world of the intelligibles is richer than that of Plato: it consists of three *hypostases* or three strata of realities.

THE REALM OF THE INTELLIGIBLE: THE THREE HYPOSTASES

Plotinus's philosophy begins with the question about the origin of all things. In a throwback to the Aristotelian theory of the existence of a First Cause of all things Plotinus holds that there is a source from which everything that exists originates. Then he speculates about the nature of this first principle. He calls the primal source of everything the One (*Monos*). From the One proceeds, through a process of emanation, Intelligence (or Mind) and from Intelligence proceeds the Soul. These three together make up the world of the Intelligibles. At the lower level of reality is the matter, the world of the sensibles; it also proceeds ultimately from the One. Thus in Plotinus we have a picture of reality that is unified in so far as everything that exists proceeds from one single principle, is sustained by it in being finally returns to it. The question of the One and Many that puzzled the Greek mind from the inception of philosophy is taken up once again and answered in a novel way.

The One (*Monos*): The origin of everything, the first principle is what Plotinus calls 'the One'. But what is the nature of this principle? How to conceive of it with more definiteness? He speculates that it must be beyond being, because the original must be outside the derived; and whatever is derived is being. Thus the primal source of everything is not a being but lies beyond being. It is also beyond thought. He rejects Aristotelian view that the First Cause of all is a self-thinking thought. For him to attribute thought to the source of all things is to abrogate its primacy, because with Parmenides he equates thought and being: "to think and to be are the same thing". Thus if the source of everything is beyond being it should also be beyond thought. The One does not think, neither of itself nor of other things. He derives the absolute absence of thought in the primal source also from the fact that it is a perfect unity, a One having no plurality or multiplicity whatever. The lack of plurality and multiplicity in the primal source is asserted on the ground that if it has to be the ultimate source of everything there should not be anything else besides itself. If that is granted then it can be also argued that there is no thought in him, because to think is to think of something and therefore implies plurality. There is also no volition in the One, for willing too implies the distinction between the one who wills and that which is willed. It has no qualities, for qualities imply the distinction between subject and predicate. Nothing can be predicated of it; even to say that "it is One" or that "the One is", is false, because it is beyond all being and essence. No name can be applied to it; it eludes all definition and knowledge. It is neither in movement nor at rest. Since it has no parts, it is without structure and without form.

The One is not only the source of everything, but is also the ultimate goal towards which everything else strives. Therefore, Plotinus calls it also the Good.

Intelligence:

Plotinus uses the Greek word *Nous* to refer to the second hypostasis. It is variously translated, as "Intelligence," "Intellect," "Mind," "Spirit" etc. It is the first to emanate. Being an emanation from the One it is lower than the One. It is Being, thought and multiplicity.

It is in fact the first and the highest Being, since the One, though prior to it, is not a being but something that lies beyond being. This highest Being thinks or is thought itself. But its thought is not discursive thought, but intuition or contemplation. While discursive thought proceeds in time (the premises are thought first and then the conclusion is derived from it) intuitive thought is timeless; it is immediate apprehension. The object of Intelligence's thought is two fold. On the

one hand it thinks of the One; but even this most perfect thought is unable to get a uniform idea of the One. On the other hand, like Aristotle's First Cause it thinks of itself.

Plotinus's Intelligence roughly corresponds to Plato's world of Ideas. It is in Intelligence that the Ideas or Forms exist. In holding this view he departs from Plato for whom Ideas are self-subsisting entities which do not need a thought or intelligence to exist. He explicitly argues against Longinus who defended the view that ideas can exist outside thought. However, on this point Plotinus has predecessors in Platonic school, especially in Antiochus of Ascalon who had interpreted Ideas as thoughts of God. In yet another departure from Plato Plotinus holds that there are Ideas corresponding not only to each species but also to each individual. Plotinus also conceives of these ideas as active forces with life or as spirits. He further identifies Ideas with numbers.

Plotinus also maintains that some kind of matter, which he calls 'Intelligible matter', exists in Intelligence. This kind of matter is different from sensible matter, which comes into existence only at the end of emanation. It is difficult to pinpoint with any degree of accuracy why Plotinus introduced intelligible matter into his system. Some scholars like Eduard Zeller holds that it is to account for the plurality or multiplicity in Intelligence: it is on account of intelligible matter that the Intelligence is resolved into different Ideas. However, according to some other scholars Plotinus introduced intelligible matter to explain the interconnected unity of the ideas within Intelligence.

In spite of the multiplicity and plurality in Intelligence it remains a unified whole. In it everything is contained in everything else without losing its identity. It is like the unity of a deductive system: every theorem contains all the others, and thus, the totality of the system.

The third and the last stratum of the Intelligible world is the *Soul*. It proceeds directly from Intelligence, but ultimately from the One. The emanative process which is conceived by Plotinus as the radiation of light fades further as it comes out of Intelligence; the result is a new realm of being, namely, the Soul. This realm is therefore, less perfect than Intelligence.

The realm of the Soul consists of the higher or the first World-Soul, the lower or the second World-Soul and the individual souls of gods, stars, demons, humans, animals and plants. The first to emanate from Intelligence is the World-Soul or the Universal Soul. It does not communicate directly with matter. This task is performed by a second World-Soul which proceeds from the first. This second or lower World-Soul combines with matter and becomes the soul of the phenomenal world; Plotinus calls it nature (*physis*). Thus according to Plotinus the entire world is an ensouled being. Then ensues the emanation of a plurality of individual souls, namely, the souls of gods, of stars of demons and the earthly beings of humans, animals and plants. With the production of the individual souls the lowest limit of the Intelligible world is reached. When the Divine descends still further, matter is created as its most imperfect manifestation.

Prior to the production of matter the souls exist without intermingling with the material universe, forming a unified realm by themselves in the Intelligible world. The World-Soul comprehends within itself all the individual souls which are connected with it as their origin. This realm forms

a connecting link between the Intelligible world and the sensible world. It not only looks upward towards Intelligence from which it emanated but also looks downward towards the sensible world.

Check your progress I

Note: a) use the space provided to write your answer

b) check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is Neo-Platonism? Explain.

.....
.....

2. In Plotinus' view What is 'One' and what are its characteristics?

.....
.....

THE REALM OF THE SENSIBLE WORLD

Light as it travels farther and farther away from its source fades away gradually until it becomes complete darkness. In the same manner emanation as it continues its journey after the realm of the soul, becomes weaker; it becomes complete darkness. For Plotinus this total darkness at the far end of emanation is matter. It emanates from the lower World-Soul. It is the fundament of the sensible world. In itself it is totally indeterminate: it is formless and without quality; it is mere potentiality for being and not being; it is a mere shadow. The physical universe is born when the lower World-Soul illuminates and informs this matter, with itself and the seminal ideas (*logoi spermatikoi*) that exist in it. The soul pours itself first into heaven. So the noblest and purest souls dwell there. They have ethereal bodies. Stars are created next, whom Plotinus conceives of as ensouled beings. Plotinus calls them invisible gods; their souls too are noble. They transcend time and change. The space between the stars and the earth is the dwelling place of demons. On the earth dwell the souls that have taken human, animal and plant bodies. Thus according to Plotinus not only man but also animals and plants are ensouled beings.

RELIGION AND SALVATION OF THE SOUL

As we mentioned above Plotinus's is a metaphysico-religious system. Its metaphysics is closely associated with the religious idea of the salvation of the soul. It is metaphysics in service of salvation of the soul. Philosophy is not just a matter of intellectually knowing the real, but its final goal is to liberate man.

But how does Plotinus conceive of salvation? Existence in the body is not a happy existence for the soul. Like the Pythagoreans and the Orphics, Plotinus conceives of the embodied state of the soul as an 'imprisonment'. In dungeon of the body it does not enjoy full freedom and happiness. Matter is evil and any entanglement with it makes the soul miserable. Salvation is primarily

liberation from the body; it is the return of the soul to its original abode, which is the supernatural world where it contemplates the One and becomes united with it.

Since the original and the natural abode of the soul is the supernatural world, it can find happiness only by returning to it. But unfortunately it finds itself entangled in the material universe. It has inclinations towards the sensual. To attain its original state of happiness, it has to resist these inclinations and free itself from the body and everything that is connected with it. In other words, it has to undergo purification (*catharsis*). To effect this purification Plotinus advocates several things, Firstly one should practice virtues. Secondly, one should practice mediate thought and dialectic. This thinking has to do with the truly real, with ideas and the essences of things. In the third place comes immediate thought or contemplation of the divine *Nous*. But this level is not sufficient. Still there is the distinction between the contemplator and the contemplated. The highest point is ecstasy. Here we are raised above thought. We are filled with the divine light and become one with the One: all distinctions disappear. Plotinus himself attained this ecstatic experience four times in his life.

RE-INCARNATION

Plotinus believed in the re-incarnation of the soul. Souls that have not attained complete purification at the time of the death of the body cannot go to its original supernatural abode. They transmigrate to other bodies. They will have to take lower or superior bodies depending on their level of purification. Some migrate into plant bodies; others into animal bodies and others into other human bodies.

PLOTINUS AND HIS DEBT TO TRADITION

In order to place Plotinus's philosophy in perspective, it is important to note how much his system is indebted to the thought of his predecessors. He is profoundly and pervasively influenced by his predecessors. He is deeply rooted in a long and complex philosophical tradition that begins with the Pre-socratics. He borrowed from Plato, Aristotle, Neopythagoreans and Stoics. His originality lies in his building up of a harmonious system out of the various disparate ideas that he borrowed from his predecessors.

Plato

Plotinus understood himself as a true Platonist; therefore it is only to be expected that we find Plato's influences on him. Plato's establishment of a supernatural world above the natural world becomes crucial for Plotinus's system. His characterization of the supersensibles as the true being and sensibles as mere shadows, are directly borrowed from Plato.

Aristotle

Porphyry tells us that Plotinus's "writings are full of the concealed Stoic and Peripathetic doctrines; Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in particular is concentrated in them (Vita Plotini, 14, 4-7). Aristotle had presented his Uncaused Prime Cause as the thought thinking itself. For him it was the highest being. Plotinus's Intelligence (*Nous*) is nothing but Aristotle's First Cause, made subordinate to the Platonic One. He thinks of Intelligence as the self-thinking thought (*Nous*) and

as the highest being. Perhaps, in making his Ideas contents of Intelligence, Plotinus is making concessions to Aristotle who had attacked Plato's conception of Ideas as self-subsisting entities.

Stoics

Though Plotinus constantly attacks the materialism of the Stoics, he has also borrowed much from them. His third hypostasis (the Soul) possesses many characteristics of the Deity of the Stoics. For Stoics the Deity is the *logos* (reason); it is immanent in the universe; it holds together 'in sympathy' all the parts of the physical universe. Stoics believed in the omnipresence of the Divine in the universe. Plotinus's lower World-Soul is immanent in the physical universe forming its animating principle. However, it should be noted that for Plotinus this immanent principle also transcends the world, while for Stoics it is fully immanent in the world.

SOME TENSIONS WITHIN PLOTINUS'S SYSTEM

It is not entirely correct to say that Plotinus managed to harmonize seamlessly all the elements that were borrowed by him from other sources into his system. There are certain unresolved tensions within it. Firstly, there is a tension between the doctrine of emanation and the doctrine of the fall of the soul. According to Plotinus's descriptions the emanation is an entirely involuntary process; it does not involve a will. What is full must overflow and what is mature must beget. If it is an involuntary process then it is wrong to impute guilt and fault to the emanating entity. And yet often Plotinus speaks of the emanation as a whole and, in particular the production of matter by the soul and its entanglement with it as an apostasy and fall. He says that it is recklessness and the desire to belong to nobody but oneself that cause Intelligence to break away from the One. The Soul is motivated to break away from Intelligence by the desire to govern; by a craving for that which is worse; by a will to isolation. Soul produces matter because of its wish to belong to itself. Moreover, he calls the lowest kind of soul "the most foolhardy".

This tension is already present in Plato. Plotinus was trying to do justice to some of the passages of Plato's writings. On the one hand the myth of *Phaedrus* implies that the souls fall by some kind of failing. In *Phaedo* Plato stresses that the soul must try to flee the body and be polluted as little as possible by it. But on the other hand, in *Timaeus* Plato holds that the first incarnation is the work of the Demiurge and thus a blameless event. And according to the myth of the *Republic* embodiment is the result of a universal necessity. However, Plotinus was not unaware of the contradiction. His responses to it are varied. Sometimes he attempts to prove that there is no contradiction. But finding this attempt unsuccessful he introduces an innovative theory to overcome the problem. According to this theory a true fall has never taken place. Actually, even when in a body the soul still lives its original celestial life and remains unseparated from Intelligence. Only the soul is not aware of this hidden life of its. In other words we are partly unconscious of what happens in our minds. What is true of the Soul in relation to Intelligence is even truer of the relation between our embodied selves and Intelligence. Not even when present in us does Intelligence discontinue its activity.

Secondly, there is also a tension between the two ways in which Plotinus speaks of matter. In the main, matter is spoken of the emanation from the soul; however, sometimes he speaks as though matter was already present for the soul to enter into it.

Thirdly, as all pantheistic systems, Plotinus's system too is unable to account for the existence of evil in the world. Plotinus situates all evil in matter; evil is utter privation; since matter is utter privation it is the source of all evil. But matter is an emanation ultimately from the One-Good. How can the Good be the source of evil?

Fourthly, Plotinus's theory of emanation too is not free from problems. The problem with the theory is that he has not enunciated this doctrine with any degree of conceptual clarity.

4.4. NEOPLATONISM AFTER PLOTINUS

The various schools that adopted Neoplatonism are the School of Plotinus in Rome, the Syrian School, School of Pergamum, the Alexandrian School and the Athenian School.

The School of Plotinus

Most prominent among the exponents of Neoplatonism in the Plotinian School was Porphyry. He studied under Plotinus for eleven years. In his interpretations of Neoplatonism he laid great stress on the soteriological aspect. The main business of philosophy is to attain the salvation of the soul. He stressed the element of will and guilt on the part of the soul in getting involved with the world; there is also a subsequent stress on the ascetic practices such as abstinence from meat, celibacy, avoidance of theatrical performances and similar entertainment to purify oneself from this guilt. He also devoted many of his writings to the defense of popular religious practices such as the worship of gods and heroes, magic etc. He denied that human souls pass into the bodies of animals after death, as animals do not have reason.

The Syrian School

Iamblichus (d. 330) was the most prominent member of the School. The maxim "Doubt no divine miracle, nor any religious belief" is attributed to him. He was more of a speculative theologian than a philosopher. In his speculations on Plotinian system he divided the first principle into two: one lies beyond all principles and is utterly inexpressible; the second corresponds to the One of Plotinus; we can think and speak about it. Similarly, he divided the Intelligible of Plotinus into two realms: the realm of the Intelligibles (i.e. of the Ideas) and the realm of the Intellectual, that is, of living beings. He also holds the theory of the eternity of the world. He agreed with Porphyry's view that human souls do not enter into animal bodies. Among the other members of the Syrian School are Theodorus of Asina, Edesius, Sopater, Dexippus etc.; but very little is known about them.

The School of Pergamum

It was founded by Edesius of Cappadocia. The other members were Eusebius, Maximus and Chrysanthius. All of them were tutors of the emperor Julian (332-363). This school was also devoted to the defense of popular religion of the time, especially against the criticisms of the emerging new religion, Christianity.

The Athenian School

The final modifications of Neoplatonic philosophy took place under the influence of a renewed study of Aristotle, and interestingly it was the Platonic School in Athens that became the chief centre of the resurgence of interest in Aristotle and the consequent modifications of

Neoplatonism. In this school Aristotelianism was combined with Iamblican theology. The Neoplatonism of the 5th and 6th centuries is the result of this combination. It was this brand of Neoplatonism that came to influence Christianity. The main figures of the School are Plutarch of Athens, Syrianus and Proclus. The most influential of them was Proclus. He attempted to unify the whole mass of theological and philosophical doctrines available to him from his predecessors into a uniform system, which in later times served as model for Muslim and Christian Scholasticism. Merenius was the pupil, successor and biographer of Proclus. Damascius followed Merenius at the headship of the school.

The Alexandrian School

In Alexandria, the birthplace of Neoplatonism, it survived till the end of the ancient world, till the Arab conquest of this city in 642. In contrast to the enthusiastic following of the religious and mystical aspect of it in other Schools, the Alexandrian School remained sober and busied itself with scientific investigations rather than with theological speculations. The anti-Christian feelings were not present in it. Therefore, both Christian and non-Christian scholars studied and worked in the School. Among its distinguished members the name of a woman philosopher is prominent. She is Hypatia, the daughter of the mathematician Theon.

Check your progress I

Note: a) use the space provided to write your answer

b) check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Explain the idea of mysticism and salvation in the teachings of Plotinus and its relation to the popular religions.

.....

2. State some of the unresolved issues in the philosophy of Plotinus.

.....

4. 5. LET US SUM UP

Neoplatonism was the last grand philosophical effort of the Greek tradition in the ancient world. Plotinus has gathered up the legacy of nearly eight centuries of Greek philosophy into a magnificently unified synthesis. True, in it the great Greek philosophical impulse of rational-critical inquiry atrophies, to some extent, in favour of an irrational mystical impulse. True again, in it the eclectic spirit predominates over the spirit of original inquiry. Therefore Eduard Zeller’s verdict that “this last attempt of ancient thought to fashion our knowledge of the world into a philosophic system bore from the beginning the marks of senility upon its countenance” might contain some element of truth. Yet it will be naïve to dismiss it as a piece of history with only curiosity value. Some of the problems it grapples with are of perennial philosophical interest.

4.6. KEY WORDS

Asceticism: Asceticism (from the Greek: *áskēsis*, “exercise”) describes a life-style characterized by abstinence from various sorts of worldly pleasures (especially sexual activity and consumption of alcohol) often with the aim of pursuing religious and spiritual goals.

Eclecticism: Eclecticism is a name given to a group of ancient philosophers who, from the existing philosophical beliefs, tried to select the doctrines that seemed to them most reasonable, and out of these constructed a new system.

Ecstasy: Ecstasy is a trance or trance-like state in which an individual transcends normal consciousness.

Soteriology: Soteriology is the branch of theology that deals with salvation.

4.7. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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Lloyd P. Gerson, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*. 1996. Cambridge University Press.

4.8. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress I

1. Neoplatonism was the last flowering of the Greek thought in late antiquity. Basically it is a metaphysico-religious system which attempts to give a holistic picture of reality with the soteriological aim of attaining salvation through the practice of asceticism. The system has been so pervasively and profoundly influenced by Neopythagoreanism, Platonism and Stoicism that some scholars consider it yet another eclectic attempt of late antiquity. The originality of Plotinus lies basically in the elaboration of a harmonious system out of the main insights that he took from his predecessors. After the death of Plotinus, Neoplatonism continued to flourish in the Syrian School especially, in the School of Athens, in the School at Pergamum and in the Alexandrian school. The influences of Platonism can be seen in the early Christian theologians like St. Augustine.

2. He calls the primal source of everything the One (*Monos*). From the One proceeds, through a process of emanation, Intelligence (or Mind) and from Intelligence proceeds the Soul. The One (*Monos*): The origin of everything, the first principle is what Plotinus calls ‘the One’. But what is the nature of this principle? How to conceive of it with more definiteness? He speculates that it must be beyond being, because the original must be outside the derived; and whatever is derived in being. Thus the primal source of everything is not a being but lies beyond being. It is also beyond thought. He rejects Aristotelian view that the First Cause of all is a self-thinking thought. For him to attribute thought to the source of all things is to abrogate its primacy, because with Parmenides he equates thought and being: “to think and to be are the same thing”. Thus if the source of everything is beyond being it should also be beyond thought. The One does not think, neither of itself nor of other things. He derives the absolute absence of thought in the primal

source also from the fact that it is a perfect unity, a One having no plurality or multiplicity whatever. The lack of plurality and multiplicity in the primal source is asserted on the ground that if it has to be the ultimate source of everything there should not be anything else besides itself. If that is granted then it can be also argued that there is no thought in him, because to think is to think of something and therefore implies plurality. There is also no volition in the One, for willing too implies the distinction between the one who wills and that which is willed. It has no qualities, for qualities imply the distinction between subject and predicate. Nothing can be predicated of it; even to say that “it is One” or that “the One is”, is false, because it is beyond all being and essence. No name can be applied to it; it eludes all definition and knowledge. It is neither in movement nor at rest. Since it has no parts, it is without structure and without form.

The One is not only the source of everything, but is also the ultimate goal towards which everything else strives. Therefore, Plotinus calls it also the Good.

Check your progress II

1. The core religion for him was the attainment of this ecstatic union with the Ultimate in a mystical experience. The popular religion of his time was a matter of worshipping the various gods with sacrifices, magical practices etc. It cared less about mystical experiences. And yet Plotinus did not assume a critical attitude towards it. He accommodated the gods of popular religion in his system. He was very critical of those people, especially the Christians who refused honour to the gods. He also attempted to give ‘rational’ interpretations of idolatry, prophecy and magic.

3. There are certain unresolved tensions within it. Firstly, there is a tension between the doctrine of emanation and the doctrine of the fall of the soul. Secondly, there is also a tension between the two ways in which Plotinus speaks of matter. Thirdly, as all pantheistic systems, Plotinus’s system too is unable to account for the existence of evil in the world. Fourthly, Plotinus’s theory of emanation too is not free from problems.

BLOCK -4 INTRODUCTION

In this Block you will understand that the Western medieval philosophers are the successors of the philosophers of antiquity. The influx into Western Europe of the first Latin translations of Aristotle transformed medieval thought dramatically. The medieval philosophy developed in dialogue with the texts of ancient philosophy and the early Christian tradition. Christianity's texts and ideas provided rich subject matter for philosophical reflection. Although most of the greatest thinkers of the period were highly trained theologians, their work addresses perennial philosophical issues. Medieval philosophy was also shaped by the Latin language, which remained the exclusive language of intellectual discourse in Western Europe throughout Middle Ages and into the Renaissance. It was also shaped by the growth of universities at centres such as Oxford, Paris, Bologna, Salerno.

The Unit 1 on "Early Medieval Philosophers" exposes the role of the Apologists who defended faith against various heresies in the early history of medieval period. We explore their philosophical contribution to formation of faith. Thus we can learn faith and reason are not contradictory but complementary in our pursuit. By studying this unit, we get convinced to place reason and faith playing an important role in human enrichment without any prejudice.

Unit 2 is on "Augustine" who synthesized the best elements of Greek philosophy, especially those from Plato, into a system of Christian thought. He is generally acclaimed as the *Plato of Christianity*. He is remembered as the philosopher of interiority. His single-minded quest for truth is a model for all thinkers. His arguments against the sceptics are very formidable and interesting for a student of philosophy in search of truth. His epistemological theory of illumination has exerted enviable influence on later thinkers. Augustine did give sufficient attention to the problem of evil.

Unit 3 aims at exploring the philosophy of "Aquinas." The Thomistic philosophy has made an influential imprint in the successive philosophical trends. The Medieval philosophy remains incomplete without discussing the role of Aquinas in philosophical pursuit. In order to instil the spirit of Medieval philosophy in the minds of the students, this unit discusses the salient features of the philosophical contribution of Aquinas.

Unit 4, "Duns Scotus and William of Ockham," explains briefly that the thirteenth century was the golden age of scholastic speculation. With the beginning of the fourteenth century the signs of a speculative decline or disintegration became obvious. What hastened this decline is the overemphasis on language and logic, together with an increasing scepticism about the power of reason confidently proposed by Aquinas. In the late scholastic period or in the post-Thomistic period two Franciscans beckon our attention: John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham. What is common to both is their disagreement with Thomas Aquinas.

The final Unit "Jewish and Islamic Philosophers" is an attempt to show that during the medieval centuries a new epoch slowly developed and a new political, social, intellectual and religious order arose. After the patristic and the scholastic philosophies, the new epoch reached its climax in the emergence of the Jewish and Islamic philosophers. Thus, you may know that the medieval

philosophy is not only of those who were ardent members of the Church like Popes, bishops, priests and monks but of luminaries from other religions too, of Judaism and Islam.

The content of the above mentioned 5 units will communicate to you the fact that the medieval philosophy was simply the outcome of a long process of evolution that began with the Greek philosophers themselves. Scholasticism itself had been the result of a longing for rational thought that justifies faith. Of course, it is true that the goal of philosophy was almost fixed by faith and philosophy served as its handmaid. However, within its circumscribed limits human reason had an important role to play.



UNIT I**EARLY MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHERS**

Contents

- 1.0. Objectives
- 1.1. Introduction
- 1.2. Early Medieval Philosophers
- 1.3. End of the Early Medieval Philosophy
- 1.4. Let Us Sum Up
- 1.5. Key Words
- 1.6. Further Readings and References
- 1.7. Answers to Check Your Progress

1.0. OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we expose the role of the Apologists who defended faith against various heresies in the early history of medieval period and we explore their philosophical contribution to formation of faith. Thus we can learn that:

- faith and reason are not contradictory but complementary in our pursuit
- how reason and faith played an important role in human enrichment without any prejudice
- that early Medieval philosophers were not only Christian saints but also those who contributed a lot to the philosophical foundation
- how Medieval philosophers used the ancient philosophers in their arguments and contributions

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Early Medieval Philosophy begins with the Patristic era which starts immediately after the death of the last Apostle John, which marked the end of the Apostolic era. The term 'patristic philosophy' covers all of these activities by the 'fathers' (patres) of the Church. Obviously this term was at first attributed by some Christians to their bishop and which soon was extended to all bishops. Around 4th cent, the term "Father" began to be applied to men, who, even if they were not bishops, distinguished themselves because of their doctrinal authority. This period refers to any of the great bishops and other eminent Christian teachers of the early centuries whose writings remained as a court of appeal for their successors, especially in reference to controversial points of faith or practice. The early Patristic philosophers are commonly referred to as the apologists because they devoted most of their attention to apologetics, a philosophical defense of the Christian faith against the claims of secular philosophy and gnosticism. An effective defense required the apologists to merge rational philosophy with Christian doctrines

based on faith. The early medieval philosophers, thus, struggled to explain their faith in philosophical terms.

1. 2. EARLY MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHERS

MARCIANUS ARISTIDES

Marcianus Aristides, a philosopher of Athens', wrote an Apology dated A.D.140 and is addressed to the emperor Antoninus Pius. At the beginning of his work, Aristides declares that he is 'amazed at the arrangement of the world moved by the impulse of another who is more powerful than that which is moved- that mover is God himself'. Aristides identifies the designer and mover of the world with the Christian God who is eternal, perfect, incomprehensible, wise, good.

FLAVIUS JUSTINUS (JUSTIN)

In his dialogue with Trypho Justin declares that philosophy is a most precious gift of God designed to lead human to God. Its true nature and unity have not been recognised by most people, as is clear from the existence of so many philosophical schools. He prized the Platonic doctrine of the immaterial world and of the being beyond essence, which he identified with God who revealed himself in and through Jesus Christ. He was one of the most important of the Greek philosopher-Apologists in the early Christian church. His writings represent the first positive encounter of Christian revelation with Greek philosophy and laid the basis for a theology of history.

Of the works bearing Justin's authorship and still deemed genuine are two Apologies. In the first part of the First Apology, he defends his fellow Christians against the charges of atheism and hostility to the Roman state. He then goes on to express the core of his Christian philosophy: the highest aspiration of both Christianity and Platonic philosophy is a transcendent and unchangeable God; consequently, an intellectual articulation of the Christian faith would demonstrate its harmony with reason. Such a convergence is rooted in the relationship between human reason and the divine mind, both identified by the same term, logos (Greek: "intellect," "word"), which enables man to understand basic truths regarding the world, time, creation, freedom, the human soul's affinity with the divine spirit, and the recognition of good and evil.

TATIAN

Very little is known of Tatian's life, and even less of his death (ca. A.D. 165/175). He was by birth a Syrian, born into paganism. His wanderings brought him to Rome, where he was a pupil of Justin. **Work:** *Diatessaron; Address to the Greeks*. Tatian declares that we know God from his works. He holds a doctrine of the Logos, distinguishes soul from spirit, teaches creation in time and insists on free-will. He recognised the human mind's ability to prove God's existence from creatures by using philosophical notions and categories, as when he maintains that the Word, proceeding from the simple essence of God, does not fall into the void as human words do, but remains in its subsistence and is the divine instrument of creation. "By His simply willing it, the

Word springs forth: and the Word, not proceeding in vain, becomes the first begotten work of the Father. We know Him to be the beginning of the World”.

ATHENAGORAS

Athenagoras (- 180) was a Christian philosopher of Athens. He had a very attractive style of Greek. **Work:** *Supplication for the Christians*. Athenagoras argues that there cannot be a multitude of material gods. God, who forms matter, must transcend matter. Matter is one thing and God another, and that there is a great difference between them. The cause of perishable things must be imperishable and spiritual.

THEOPHILUS OF ANTIOCH

Theophilus (-ca.185/191) was the seventh bishop of Antioch, the sixth successor of Peter. Little is known of him. He was born near the Euphrates, and was converted from paganism to Christianity as an adult. He died between the years 185 and 191 A.D. **Work:** *To Autolycus*. After emphasising the fact that moral purity is necessary for anyone who would know God, Theophilus further speaks of the divine attributes such as incomprehensibility, power, wisdom, eternity, immutability. As the invisible soul of human is perceived through the movements of the body, so the invisible God is known through his providence and works.

IRENÆUS

Irenaeus (ca. 140-202) was the second bishop of Lyons. He was a native Asia Minor, of Smyrna, where he was a pupil of Polycarp. **Work:** *Adversus hereticorum*. Irenaeus, writing against the Gnostics (Gnosticism professed to substitute knowledge (*gnosis*) for faith, offered a doctrine of God, creation, the origin of evil, salvation, to those who liked to look upon themselves as superior persons in comparison with the ordinary Christians.) in his *Adversus Hereticorum*, affirms that there is one God, the Creator of heaven and earth. He appeals to the arguments from design and universal consent. God freely created the world out of nothing without any previously existing matter. Though the human mind can know God through reason and revelation, it cannot comprehend God who transcends the human intelligence. To pretend to know the ineffable mysteries of God and to go beyond humble faith and love is mere conceit and pride.

MINUCIUS FELIX

Biographical details of Minucius Felix (ca. 218/235) are utterly lacking. We can say of him only that he was a Christian, a layman, a Roman, and a rather distinguished member of the legal profession in that city. **Work:** *Octavius*. Arguing that God’s existence can be known with certainty from the cosmic order and the design involved in the organism, particularly in the human body, Minucius affirmed that Greek philosophers, too, recognised these truths. While Aristotle recognised one Godhead and the Stoics had a doctrine of divine providence, Plato spoke in almost Christian terms of the Maker and Father of the universe.

TERTULLIAN

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus (ca. 155/160-240/250) was born in Carthage of pagan parents between the years 155 and 160. He was a lawyer of considerable repute. Within the span of nearly twenty-five years, his numerous writings fall into three fairly distinct periods: his Catholic period, semi-Montanist period, and Montanist period. **Work:** *Apology; The Shows; The Demurrer against the Heretics; Prayer; Patience; Baptism; Repentance; To My Wife; Against the Jews; Against Hermogenes; The Veiling of Virgins; Against Marcion.*

Tertullian was the first outstanding Christian Latin writer whose works contained contempt for pagan philosophy. However, in spite of his contempt for it, he himself developed philosophical themes influenced by the Stoics. He holds that the existence of God is known with certainty from his works. Everything, including God, is corporeal, bodily.

ARNOBIUS

Arnobius of Sicca (-ca. 327) was born a pagan and was for many years a vigorous opponent of Christianity. Finally, warned in his dreams, he was converted to Christianity. **Work:** *Against the Pagans.* Arnobius makes some curious observations concerning the soul. Although he affirms creationism, he makes the creating agent a being inferior to God. He also asserts the gratuitous character of the soul's immortality, denying a natural immortality. He also asserts the experiential origin of all our ideas with one exception of the idea of God. For example, a child brought up in solitude, silence and ignorance would know nothing by 'reminiscence,' as thought by Plato.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

Clement was born around 150 A.D. of a pagan family, either in Athens or Alexandria. He received an excellent education in Greek literature and philosophy. He was a student of Pantenus, the famous doctor who taught at the Alexandrian catechetical school. With the spell of his eloquence and the fervor of his piety, Clement's teaching attracted many students. When the persecution of Septimus Severus broke out, Clement took refuge in Cappadocia where he continued his priestly ministry. He died in exile around the year 215. **Work:** *Quis dives salvetur?; Protrepticus; Paedagogus; Stromata.*

Animated by the attitude which was later summed up in the formula, *Credo ut intelligam*, Clement sought to develop the systematic presentation of the Christian wisdom. He looks upon the Greek philosophers' work as a preparation for Christianity, an education of the Hellenic world for the revealed religion, than as a folly and delusion. Given that the divine Logos has always illuminated souls, he believed that just as the Jews had been enlightened by Moses and the Prophets so had been the Greeks by their philosophers. Thus philosophy was to the Greeks what the Law was to the Hebrews.

He was a Christian Apologist, missionary theologian to the Hellenistic (Greek cultural) world, and second known leader and teacher of the catechetical school of Alexandria. In a series of allusive writings, he presented a Hellenized Christianity along with the philosophical syncretism of his age: Stoic ethics, Aristotelian logic and especially Platonic metaphysics. Just as Paul saw the Hebrew prophets and law as a preparation for the Gospel, Clement saw Christianity as

making possible a confluence of Plato and the Old Testament, both offering anticipations of Jesus' teaching. Clement's fusion of Platonism and Christianity vehemently opposed the dualism and determinism of Gnostic theosophy, and stressed free choice and responsibility as fundamental to moral values. Central to his writing is the vindication of faith as the foundation for growth in religious knowledge by philosophical contemplation and biblical study.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Explain briefly the core of Justin's Christian philosophy

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2) What is Gnosticism? How did Irenaeus fight against the Gnostics?

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ORIGEN

Origen was born around 185, probably in Alexandria, of a Christian father, Leonid. In order to complete his education, his father placed him in Clement's catechetical school at Alexandria. He also studied philosophy under Ammonius Saccas, the greatest representative of Platonism at that time. Meanwhile began Origen's first battles with his bishop Demetrius, who condemned Origen at a synod of Egyptian bishops and priests. The church of Rome ratified the condemnation. During the persecution of Decius (250) Origen was arrested and tortured. This led to his reconciliation with the Bishop of Alexandria, who rehabilitated Origen and accepted his return to the diocese of Alexandria. Soon after (about 253) Origen died. **Work:** *The exapla; De principiis; Contra Celsum.*

Attempting to defend theological beliefs which had hitherto been accepted through faith alone, Origen asserted the rational argument that God, as pure spiritual essence (in perfect unity and absolute changelessness), is not only above everything else in the universe (and all beings) but also the eternal creator of all things. Matter is changeable and perishable, but the unchangeable God is everlasting. Although human reason cannot encompass or truly comprehend God's attributes, it can discern certain divine characteristics such as the absolute causality of God's will, or, in other words, God's eternal creativity. God's creativity must be regarded as eternal because as the eternal God he has forever been (and will continue forever to be) ceaselessly active. He disagreed sharply with the Greek philosophers (for example, Plato and Aristotle) who claimed that God is the architect that formed the world out of eternally existing matter. Origen insisted that God created matter itself, that he willed the universe into being and pre-determined its nature. Not matter, then, but creativity is co-eternal with God. Owing to God's unchangeableness, and to the changeability and perishability of matter, God himself does not

directly make the phenomenal world, but allocates this function to his image, the *Logos*, begotten by God. However, the *Logos* is not the God (God himself), but a subordinate divinity. This second God is the Son of God who participates in creation by bringing into being the transitory and perishable world of matter. The *Logos* is a personal copy of the Father God, though inferior to God himself. The relationship of the *Logos* to God is the same as the relationship which the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost) bears to the Son of God; nevertheless, one is not temporally prior to the other, for all are co-eternal. The *Logos* is the world's prototype, the idea or 'blue print' according to which everything is created by edict of the divine will. Eventually all spiritual beings will know God as his Son does, and they will then become sons of God comparable to the *Logos*, his only begotten Son.

Origen maintained that human's spirit existed prior to one's body, that human became an earth creature as a consequence of one's sins, but also that human and all other spiritual beings, including even Satan, will finally find salvation, a state of divine blessedness in which each partakes of the divine essence. He held that human was made out of (or imprisoned by) material substance as punishment for sin but now has the power to achieve redemption through purification. Human's fall is attributed to misuse of one's freedom of the will. Even after one's fall, human still possesses the freedom to choose between good and evil. The material world is in itself good, for God created it; only human's perverted will causes one to sin and results in chaining one to substance (materiality) so that the soul is incorporated into flesh. Non-human spirits (e.g., angels, stars, and evil demons) occupy their different places or ranks in the material world. Human, though in a fallen state, aspires through use of one's free will to attain salvation, to return to one's divine origin through emancipation from matter. With the assistance of the *Logos*, i.e., the sinless soul of Jesus, human (whose spirit is eternal) may progress through two ascending stages of redemption, namely, faith – whereby one achieves understanding of the sensory world through religious knowledge – and knowledge of the *Logos* until one reaches the highest state of absolute absorption into God, liberated entirely from material existence by virtue of this combination of grace and freedom. All spirits find their perfection in the third stage of redemption. Ultimate reality consists of personalities, together with their interpersonal relationships with one another and with the infinite person, God.

EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA

Eusebius (ca. 263-340), a scholar of Church History, was born at Caesarea in Palestine about the year 263. He studied under Pamphilus. In 313 he was made bishop of Caesarea. **Work:** *The Chronicle; History of the Church; Preparation for the Gospel; Proof of the Gospel; Ecclesiastical Theology.*

Plato, for Eusebius, is a prophet of the economy of salvation as he had borrowed the truths from the Old Testament; but at the same time he is willing to admit the possibility of Plato having discovered the truth for himself or of his having been enlightened by God. But Plato did not himself enter into the promised land of truth, though he approached near to it. He stood only on the threshold of truth. It is Christianity alone which is the true philosophy. Plato's philosophy was highly intellectualist, cavalier for the multitude, whereas Christianity is for all, so that women and men, poor and rich, unlearned and learned, can be philosophers.

GREGORY OF NYSSA

Gregory, younger brother of Basil, another luminary of eastern Patristics, was born in Nyssa around 335. At the age of sixteen he entered a monastery to dedicate himself to contemplation. When his brother became metropolitan at Caesarea and asked him also guide a diocese, Gregory consented to being consecrated Bishop of Nyssa. Around 380 he was chosen metropolitan of Sebastis, and in the council of 381 he was one of the greatest supporters of orthodoxy. The emperor Theodosius assigned him various official duties in order to win the battle against Aryanism, and he brought him to Constantinople to celebrate the funeral of his daughter Pulcheria and his wife Flacilla. Gregory died not long after 394. **Work:** *Contra Eunomium; Oratian Catechtica; De anima et resurrectione; De hominis opificio.*

Gregory of Nyssa realised that the data of revelation are accepted on faith and are not the result of a logical process of reasoning. The mysteries of faith are not philosophical and scientific conclusions. If they were, then supernatural faith and Greek philosophy would be the same. On the other hand, the Faith has a rational basis. The acceptance of mysteries on authority presupposes the ascertainability by natural reasoning of certain preliminary truths, especially the existence of God, which are capable of philosophical demonstration. While maintaining the superiority of faith, it is only right to invoke the aid of philosophy. Ethics, natural philosophy, logic, mathematics, are not only ornaments in the temple of truth but these also contribute to the life of wisdom and virtue. They are not to be despised or rejected. Nevertheless, divine revelation must be accepted as a touchstone and criterion of truth since human reasoning must be judged by the word of God and not the other way about.

He went on to give the trinity of persons in the one Godhead. God must have a Logos, a word, a reason, as He cannot be less than human, who also has a Logos, a reason. But the divine Logos has to be eternal, just as it must be living, unlike the fleeting internal word in human. The Logos is one in nature (Being) with the Father since there is but one God. The distinction between the Logos and the Father is a distinction of relation. Similarly, his theory that the word 'human' is primarily applicable to the universal and only secondarily to the individual human was an attempt render the mystery more intelligible, that the word 'God' refers primarily to the divine essence, which is one, and only secondarily to the three divine Persons, so that the believers cannot be rightly accused of tritheism.

Under the influence of Platonism, Gregory also distinguishes between the ideal human and the earthly human. The ideal human exists only in the divine idea without any sexual determination; whereas the earthly human is a creature of experience, sexually determined by his creative act. Moreover, God freely created the world out of abundance of his goodness and love, in order that the creatures might participate in the same goodness. God created human free - with a soul that is living, simple, spiritual and immortal - permitting one to choose evil if one so wills. Evil is the result of human's free choice, and God is not responsible for it though God, in his foreknowledge, permits it. He knew also that he would in the end bring all humans to himself. He thus accepted the Origenist theory of the 'restoration of all things'.

Contemplating the sensible objects, the human mind can know something of God and his attributes. However, the sensible objects are not fully real. They are mirage and illusion except as

symbols or manifestations of immaterial reality towards which human is spiritually drawn. The consequent tension in the soul – as the soul is drawn towards God leaving its natural objects of knowledge behind without being able to see the God to whom it is drawn by love – leads to a state of despair, which is the birth of mysticism. It enters into the darkness or the ‘cloud of unknowing.’ There are two movements in the soul: that of the indwelling of the triune God and that of the soul’s reaching out beyond itself , culminating in ‘ecstasy’ or ecstatic love which is the summit of the soul’s endeavour.

AMBROSE

Born at Treves (ca. 333-397), Ambrose was the son of the Pretorian Prefect of Gaul. His father died young. He was trained both in rhetoric and in the legal profession. About the year 370 he was made Consul of Liguria and Emilia, with his official residence in Milan. He was consecrated bishop of Milan on December 7, 374, just a week after his baptism. He was an exemplary bishop both in his public and in his private life. On a popular level he is best remembered as the author of several liturgical hymns. *Works: Letters; Sermons; Commentaries on Scripture.*

St. Ambrose showed an active interest in practical and ethical matters under the influence of Cicero without much liking for metaphysical speculation. His divisions and treatment of the virtues are infused with the Christian ethos complemented by the final ideal of eternal happiness in God.

JOHN DAMASCENE

John Damascene (ca. 645-749), born at Damascus, was educated by a ceratin Cosmas. With a thorough knowledge of Arabic and Greek and proficient also in Islam, he served the Caliph’s government for a time. Later he resigned the job on account of the Caliph’s anti-Christian policies and became a priest. **Work** (chief work): *Fount of Wisdom*. John Damascene’s chief work is the *Fount of Wisdom*, in the first part of which he gives a sketch of the Aristotelian logic and ontology. In this part, he opines that philosophy and profane science are the instruments or handmaids of theology – the view of Clement of Alexandria, the two Gregories and Philo of Alexandria, the originator of this view.

Check Your Progress II

Note:

- a) Use the space provided for your answer.
- b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Explain briefly Origen’s concept of God.

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2) What is the difference between ideal human and earthly human according to Gregory of Nyssa?

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1.3. THE END OF THE EARLY MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

After Christianity became a licit religion in the fourth century, philosophical activity among Christians expanded. The task of theological self-articulation became increasingly significant as Christianity grew in the fourth and fifth centuries towards majority status within the Empire, with imperial support. In this later period the range and sophistication of Christian thought increased significantly, due in part to the influence of pagan Neo-Platonism, a movement that included a number of the finest philosophers active since the classical period of Plato and Aristotle.

Later patristic philosophy had a defining influence upon medieval Christian thought through such figures as Boethius and Dionysius, establishing both the conceptual foundations and the authoritative warrant for the scholasticism.

ANICIUS MANLIUS SEVERINUS BOETHIUS (480–525)

He is an aristocratic Roman noble man, a scholar, Christian philosopher, and statesman, author of the celebrated *De consolazione philosophiae* (*Consolation of Philosophy*), a largely Neo-Platonism work in which the pursuit of wisdom and the love of God are described as the true sources of human happiness.

Boethius' logical works have been the subject of recent studies by scholars, and his theological treatises on the Trinity contain passages of philosophical interest; but throughout history he has been best known for a single work, *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Boethius' earlier works have been the preserve of more specialized readers, especially concerned with the history of ancient philosophy. His stated original intention was to educate the West by translating all of Plato and Aristotle into Latin and to supply explanatory commentaries on many of their writings.

About 520 Boethius put his close study of Aristotle to use in four short treatises in letter form on the ecclesiastical doctrines of the Trinity and the nature of Christ; these are basically an attempt to solve disputes that had resulted from the Arian heresy, which denied the divinity of Christ. Using the terminology of the Aristotelian categories, Boethius described the unity of God in terms of substance and the three divine persons in terms of relation. He also tried to solve dilemmas arising from the traditional description of Christ as both human and divine, by deploying precise definitions of "substance," "nature," and "person."

Boethius is able to distinguish between random chance and human choice, but he accepts that free human choice, even if not random, is difficult to reconcile with the existence of God who foresees everything that is to happen. "If God foresees all and cannot in any way be mistaken, then that must necessarily happen which in his providence he foresees will be". This is called God's foreknowledge that means God's knowing what humans will do or not do. Boethius accepts that a genuinely free action cannot be certainly foreseen, even by God, and he takes refuge in the notion of divine timelessness, saying that God's seeing is not really a foreseeing.

For Boethius, There are two kinds of necessity. a) Plain or straightforward necessity as ‘Necessarily, all men are mortal’ and b) Conditional Necessity as ‘Necessarily, if you know that I am walking, I am walking.’ The future events which God sees as present are not straightforwardly necessary, but only conditionally necessary. Boethius has been called ‘Last of the Romans, first of the scholastics’. Certainly, in his work he links classical philosophy with the technical philosophy of the medieval schools, more even than Augustine does.

PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS (AD 500)

He is probably a Syrian monk who, known only by his pseudonym, wrote a series of Greek treatises and letters for the purpose of uniting Neoplatonic philosophy with Christian theology and mystical experience. These writings established a definite Neoplatonic trend in a large segment of medieval Christian doctrine and spirituality—especially in the Western Latin Church—that has determined facets of its religious and devotional character to the present time. He presented himself as Dionysius the Areopagite, an Athenian converted by St Paul. This pretence - or literary device - was so convincing that Pseudo-Dionysius acquired something close to apostolic authority, giving his writings tremendous influence throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance.

Cardinal points of Pseudo-Dionysius’ thought are the transcendence of a first cause of the universe, the immediacy of divine causality in the world and a hierarchically ordered cosmos. The treatises “On the Divine Names,” “On Mystical Theology,” “On the Celestial Hierarchy,” and “On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy” comprise the bulk of the Dionysian corpus of writings. Their doctrinal content forms a complete theology, covering the Trinity and angelic world, the incarnation and redemption and provides a symbolic and mystical explanation of all that is. God’s transcendence above all rational comprehension and categorical knowledge ultimately reduces any expression of the divinity to polar pairs of contraries: grace and judgment, freedom and necessity, being and nonbeing, time and eternity. The incarnation of the Word or Son of God, in Christ, consequently, was the expression in the universe of the inexpressible, whereby the One enters into the world of multiplicity. Still, the human intellect can apply to God positive, analogous terms or names such as The Good, Unity, Trinity, Beauty, Love, Being, Life, Wisdom, or Intelligence, assuming that these are limited forms of communicating the incommunicable.

With regard to the giving names or attributes to God, the Pseudo-Dionysius provided the classic method of the three ways. There is first the positive way or the way of affirmation (Via Affirmationis). It consists of affirming of God all perfections found in creatures which are compatible with his spiritual nature such as goodness or wisdom. Some creaturely perfections which involve materiality, such as height and extension, are obviously incompatible with the spiritual nature of God and so cannot be affirmed of him according to this way. Next we must make use of the negative way, (Via Negationis). In this way, we exclude from God all the imperfections that are involved in creatures. Thus he is not Life in the sense of our vegetative and sensitive life which involves certain perfection tied up with matter. Finally we must also use the way of eminence (Via Eminentiae) whereby we add that God does not merely possess life or wisdom in a superior degree than we, by that it is of a qualitatively superior kind. Thus we should say that he is super-essential Life or super-essential Wisdom. Careful attention to all this would show that ultimately the Pseudo-Dionysius emphasises what is known as negative theology, that is, he holds that we can more easily say what God is not, rather than what he is.

The “Divine Names” and “Mystical Theology” treat the nature and effects of contemplative prayer—the disciplined abandonment of senses and intelligible forms to prepare for the immediate experience of “light from the divine darkness” and ecstatic union—in a manner and scope that make them indispensable to the history of Christian theology and piety. His treatises on the hierarchies, wherein he theorized that all that exists—the form of Christian society, the stages of prayer, and the angelic world—is structured as triads that are the images of the eternal Trinity, introduced a new meaning for the term hierarchy. At the end of the fifth century, a collection of writings by Dionysius aroused great interest and exerted a profound influence on medieval thought.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Explain the two kinds of necessity taught by Boethius

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1.4. LET US SUM UP

In establishing the fundamental doctrines and the triumph of religious doctrines, there began a period of philosophical construction devoted to the elaboration of a philosophy in which the subject-matter and guiding principles were determined by religious perspectives. This religious outlook – which constitutes the largest part of the philosophy of the early middle ages – had for its aim the exposition, systematization, and demonstration of the religious dogmas and the construction of a theory of the world and of life on that basis. The thinkers who ventured this service were called patristic thinkers, early medieval philosophers. Scholastic philosophy derived its doctrinal commitments from these early medieval philosophers who also in some way inspired the religious thinkers of Judaism, Islam and Christianity, but cast these in a philosophical mould of dialogue which bore the stamp of the methods and concepts of Greek philosophy.

1.5. KEY WORDS

Evil: Evil is the privation of perfection due to a being.

Apology: An apology is a justification or defense of an act or idea.

1.6. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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1.7. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Of the works bearing Justin's authorship and still deemed genuine are two Apologies. In the first part of the First Apology, he defends his fellow Christians against the charges of atheism and hostility to the Roman state. He then goes on to express the core of his Christian philosophy: the highest aspiration of both Christianity and Platonic philosophy is a transcendent and unchangeable God; consequently, an intellectual articulation of the Christian faith would demonstrate its harmony with reason. Such a convergence is rooted in the relationship between human reason and the divine mind, both identified by the same term, *logos* (Greek: "intellect," "word"), which enables man to understand basic truths regarding the world, time, creation, freedom, the human soul's affinity with the divine spirit, and the recognition of good and evil.
2. Gnosticism professed to substitute knowledge (*gnosis*) for faith, offered doctrine of God, creation, the origin of evil, salvation, to those who liked to look upon themselves as superior persons in comparison with the ordinary Christians. Irenaeus, writing against the Gnostics in his *Adversus Hereticorum*, affirms that there is one God, the Creator of heaven and earth. He appeals to the arguments from design and universal consent. God freely created the world out of nothing without any previously existing matter. Though the human mind can know God through reason and revelation, it cannot comprehend God who transcends the human intelligence. To pretend to know the ineffable mysteries of God and to go beyond humble faith and love is mere conceit and pride.

Check Your Progress II

1. Origen asserted the rational argument that God, as pure spiritual essence (in perfect unity and absolute changelessness), is not only above everything else in the universe (and all beings) but also the eternal creator of all things. Matter is changeable and perishable, but the unchangeable God is everlasting. Although human reason cannot encompass or truly comprehend God's attributes, it can discern certain divine characteristics such as the absolute causality of God's will, or, in other words, God's eternal creativity. God's creativity must be regarded as eternal because as the eternal God he has forever been (and will continue forever to be) ceaselessly active. He disagreed sharply with the Greek philosophers (for example, Plato and Aristotle) who claimed that God is the architect that formed the world out of eternally existing matter. Origen

insisted that God created matter itself, that he willed the universe into being and pre-determined its nature.

2. Under the influence of Platonism, Gregory also distinguishes between the ideal human and the earthly human. The ideal human exists only in the divine idea without any sexual determination; whereas the earthly human is a creature of experience, sexually determined by his creative act.

Check Your Progress III

1. For Boethius, There are two kinds of necessity: a) Plain or straightforward necessity as 'Necessarily, all men are mortal' and b) Conditional Necessity as 'Necessarily, if you know that I am walking, I am walking.' The future events which God sees as present are not straightforwardly necessary, but only conditionally necessary.



UNIT 2

AUGUSTINE**Contents**

- 2.0. Objectives
- 2.1. Portrait of the Philosopher
- 2.2. Main Works
- 2.3. Augustinian Conversion
- 2.4. Augustine: A Personal Thinker
- 2.5. Relation between Faith and Reason
- 2.6. Theory of Knowledge
- 2.7. Philosophy of God
- 2.8. Philosophy of the World
- 2.9. Ethics
- 2.10. Philosophy of History
- 2.11. Time
- 2.12. Let Us Sum Up
- 2.13. Key Words
- 2.14. Further Readings and References
- 2.15. Answers to Check Your Progress

2.0. OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we deal the philosophical positions of St. Augustine in whom the Patristic Philosophy culminates. Hence, we explain Augustinian conversion, his theory of knowledge, theory of god, ethics, evil and history.

By the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- Relate faith and reason;
- Understand the final end of man;
- Find a solution to the problem of evil; and
- Comprehend the Christian philosophy of history.

2.1. THE PORTRAIT OF THE PHILOSOPHER

He was born in the small city of Tagaste in Roman Africa (today's Souk-Ahras in eastern Algeria) on Nov.13, 354 A.D. His father, Patricius, was a pagan and his mother, Monica, was a Christian. He is an African by descent but Roman in culture and language. Augustine was brought up as a Christian but was not baptized as a child. His early education was in his native city and then in the nearby city of Madaura. Later he was sent to Carthage to study rhetoric. Carthage was a metropolitan center and there Augustine got acquainted with the many

intellectual currents of that time. He abandoned Christian teachings as illogical and became a Manichaeian. According to Mani (Manes), the founder of Manichaeism, world is governed by two principles: of light and darkness or of good and evil. Augustine accepted it as an answer to the problem of evil. While in Carthage he became the father of a son (Adeodatus) from a mistress. He settled in Carthage and opened a school of rhetoric.

Gradually he began to feel the insufficiency of Manichaeism. In 383 we find him in Rome and then in Milan. In 389 he became professor of rhetoric in Milan. During this time he came under the influence of skepticism. In Milan he heard the sermons of St. Ambrose and began reading Neo-Platonic writings, especially the *Enneads* of Plotinus. "Augustine took over the philosophy of Plotinus. No other philosopher had so great an influence on him. He seldom mentions Aristotle. He had no knowledge of Plato, whom he identified with Plotinus." These studies taught him that true reality is spiritual and not material as the Manichaeians taught. Later, he will speak of the teachings of the Platonists as preparing his way to Christianity.

Though he admired the Neo-Platonists, their doctrines did not satisfy his spiritual quest. The reading of *The Sacred Scripture*, especially the Letters of St. Paul, made him convinced that it is not philosophy, but only the grace of God that can provide salvation for fallen man. Augustine's spiritual crisis came to a culmination when resting under a tree in the garden of his house at Milan, praying for divine help, he heard a child voice: *tolle et legge* (take up and read). He opened *The Holy Bible* and got Rom.13, 12-14. He was filled "with a light of certainty, and all shadow of doubt disappeared". (*Confessions*, 8:12) He decided to become a Christian. The consciousness of a direct encounter with God transformed the very heart of his existence, all his impulses and aims. The conversion brought him the certainty of standing on solid ground. On Holy Saturday of 386 St. Ambrose baptized him.

On the way back to Africa, his mother died at Ostia. In 387 he reached Tagaste. There he founded a religious community with friends. In 391 he was ordained. In 395 he became an auxiliary bishop. The controversy over his sincerity, which emerged at this time, may have been a deciding factor in his writing the *Confessions* (397-401): a prose-poem of penitence for his past and of praise for God's loving providence. The book remains as one of the boldest and most frank investigation of the self in western literature. In 396 he became bishop of Hippo (present day Bône/Annaba in Algeria). He died in 430. He is known as *doctor gratiae* (doctor of grace).

2.2. MAIN WORKS

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| 1. Attack on Academic Sceptics | 2. On the Immortality of the Soul |
| 3. On the Teacher | 4. Confessions |
| 5. On the Trinity | 6. The City of God |

2.3. AUGUSTINIAN CONVERSION

Augustine underwent two conversions: *intellectual* (philosophical) and *volitional* (moral). His intellect was turned away from the material world toward the spiritual world that had been hidden from him during his Manichaeian period. Neo-Platonic philosophy was the chief agency

in bringing about this development. Reading has played the major role in this conversion or to put it directly, it was a conversion through books. On reading Cicero's *Hortensius*, he was enthralled by the ideal of wisdom. It was this book that changed his interests and gave his life a new direction and purpose: the search for wisdom. In this book happiness was linked to the quest for wisdom, which is life according to what is highest in man, the mind. This book enkindled in Augustine a burning desire for truth and made him feel that all his worldly ambitions were misplaced. *The Bible*, the book of books, was the final tool of his conversion. Secondly, his will was converted from its desire for worldly honours, wealth and sense pleasures to the love of Christian virtues of chastity, poverty and detachment from the world.

2.4. AUGUSTINE: A PERSONAL THINKER

Philosophical systems have their genesis in human lives and individual perspectives. St. Augustine is a personal thinker. "I became a question to myself," he wrote. His only desire is to know God and the soul. "Let me know myself, let me know thee" (*Noverim me ut noverim te*). The vital products of Augustine's thinking never allow us to forget their source in his personal life, from which they spring forth like the blossom from its root and stem. His philosophical approaches are the results of his personal quest for wisdom and happiness. This personal quality in his speculation gives it a universal appeal.

2.5. RELATION BETWEEN FAITH AND REASON

Believing is *to think with consent (cum assensione cogitare)*. It is an assent to something without full rational clarity. The function of faith in Augustine's philosophy is simply to serve as a beginning, to put one's feet on the right way in the quest for understanding.

Faith is always the necessary prerequisite for correct understanding. *Credo ut intelligam* – I believe that I may understand. Faith is the starting-point of all growth in understanding and the gateway to truth: "Understanding is the reward of faith. Seek therefore not to understand in order that you may believe, but to believe in order that you may understand". (It is based on Is.7,9). Augustine was fond of writing *intellige ut credas* (you must understand in order to believe). He was also fond of writing the antithesis *crede ut intelligas* (you must believe in order to understand). Faith seeks; understanding finds (*fides quaerit, intellectus invenit*). A being that cannot think can also not believe. Therefore, love reason (*intellectum valde ama*). Reason is in faith, faith in reason. They are not two sources that meet at some point.

Thus, faith for Augustine is superior to reason in the sense that without faith, reason is powerless to attain its object, happiness. But it is also inferior to reason in so much as faith is a blind assent, whereas rational understanding is a kind of vision, an intellectual insight. Hence, to remain content with *mere* faith would amount to decisive mutilation of human rationality. "It is now my conviction that what I want most is to grasp the truth, not by belief alone but also by understanding."

Faith requires the work of understanding. Philosophy plays an important part in the attempt to achieve deeper insight into the content of faith. It belongs to our intellectual ability to try to penetrate into the truth revealed by God. *Fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking

understanding) is the spirit of Augustinianism. Understanding is for the mind what seeing is for the senses; it is intellectual sight. "Thinking is a way, but only one way, by which to confirm and elucidate what faith has already made certain."

2.6. THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Augustinian theory of knowledge has the specific purpose of identifying the path that will lead man to happiness. "Man has no reason for philosophizing except in order to attain happiness". (*City of God*, 19,1) This does not mean that what is true is what makes one happy but rather that knowledge of truth will make one happy. Only the wise man can be happy and wisdom postulates knowledge of truth. All men desire happiness. He defines happiness as *gaudium de veritate* (joy of truth). The problem of happiness amounts to this: to know what one should desire in order to be happy, and to know how to obtain it.

AGAINST SCEPTICS

Augustine's first epistemological objective was to destroy the sceptical assertion that true knowledge is impossible. Defending the knowability of truth, Augustine is defending the attainability of happiness. If wisdom implies happiness and happiness implies God, the sceptic can possess neither God, nor happiness, nor wisdom. In Augustine we find a relentless fight against scepticism and relativism in all their forms. Augustine points to a range of facts, the truthness of which even the sceptics cannot deny.

We know the law of non-contradiction: if something is true, its opposite cannot be true at the same time and in the same respect. P cannot be both true and false at the same time and in the same respect. Augustine sates that dialectical (logical) truths are propositions of which we have absolute certainty. As examples he mentions various propositions of the forms, "not (p and not-p)", "p or not-p". Mathematical truths also have this highest degree of certainty. That $3+3=6$ is a necessary truth of which we are absolutely certain; that the sum of the angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles, too, is a necessary truth of which we are absolutely certain.

I know that I exist. My existence is undoubtable. I exist, even if I err (*Si fallor, sum*). This refutation is found in *On Free Will* (ii.3.vii) and in *The City of God* (xi.26). He writes in the *City of God*: "...I am certain that I am, that I know that I am, and that I love to be and to know. In the face of these truths, the quibbles of the sceptics lose their force. If they say; 'what if you are mistaken?' – well, if I am mistaken, I am. For, if one does not exist, he can by no means be mistaken. Therefore, I am, if I am mistaken. ... For, just as I know that I am, I also know that I know. And when I love both to be and to know, then I add to the things I know a third and equally important knowledge, the fact that I love."

LEVELS OF KNOWLEDGE

Augustine speaks of three levels of knowledge. The *lowest level* is that of sense-knowledge, dependent on sensation. He regards sensation as *an act of the soul using the senses as its instruments*. The *highest level* of knowledge is the contemplation of eternal objects by the mind

alone without the intervention of sensation. There is a *middle level* of knowledge where the mind judges corporeal objects according to eternal standards. This is the *rational level* of knowledge.

SENSE KNOWLEDGE

Augustine does not accept sense objects as suitable objects of true knowledge. But, he does not dismiss the senses and sense objects as fully deceptive. It is a fact that we sometimes err in our sense based judgements. That does not mean that our senses cannot be sources of true knowledge. It is one thing to admit the possibility of error in sense knowledge and another to refuse to give any credence to the senses.

This Augustinian epistemological outlook is Platonic in character. There is the same Platonic depreciation of sense-objects in comparison with eternal and immaterial realities and the almost reluctant acceptance of sense knowledge as a practical necessity of life.

KNOWLEDGE OF ETERNAL TRUTHS

How eternal truths and our knowledge of eternal truths are to be accounted for? The world of the senses does not provide us with eternal truths. The human mind, which is temporal and mutable is incapable of providing it either. Augustine agrees with Plato that just as finite truths are truths about finite objects of the sensible world, so also eternal truths are truths about eternal and immutable objects. These eternal objects are independent of the world of senses and of the human mind. Augustine identifies such objects, referred to by Plato as forms, as *ideas in the eternal, immutable mind of God*. They are the contents of the divine mind.

How eternal truths are accessible to the human mind? Reason alone is not enough to account for our knowledge of eternal truths. The human mind, in seeking eternal truths, is seeking something beyond its natural reach. Hence, there is the need of an extraordinary help. Such help comes to man from God himself in the form of *divine illumination*. Here, Augustine's philosophy is becoming *trans-philosophical*. The ideas in the mind of God are not known through reminiscence.

Augustine presents knowledge as a *form of seeing*. Just as the senses see material objects when the sun illumines them, so also human intellect *sees* eternal truths when illumined by the divine light. "The nature of the intellectual mind is structured in such a way that it sees the things which belong to the intelligible order according to the natural design disposed by the Creator; it sees them in an immaterial light of its own mind, as the corporeal eye sees in corporeal light the objects that surround it." (*De Trinitate*, Bk XII, ch.15, no.24).

2.7. PHILOSOPHY OF GOD

In his attempt to prove the existence of God, it was the dynamic tendency of the human soul towards God that interested him. The construction of philosophical arguments leading to theoretical conclusion was not his intention. He who possesses God possesses happiness. Desire for God is the only path that leads to happiness.

Augustine bases his theory of God on the argument derived from the immutability and permanence of the object of our intellectual knowledge. Man seeks the truth and strives for the good. Nothing is absolutely true or good except in so far as it participates in the absolute truth and goodness of Him who never changes. The existence of God is, therefore, the essential condition of intellectual and moral life.

God's existence can be affirmed from His creation. In *The City of God* he asserts: "The very order, disposition, beauty, change and motion of the world and of all visible things silently proclaim that it could only have been made by God, the ineffably and invisibly great and the ineffably and invisibly beautiful". (11,4,2)

Augustine gives also the argument from universal consent (*consensus gentium*): "Such is the power of the true Godhead that it cannot be altogether and utterly hidden from the rational creature, once it makes use of its reason. For, with the exception of a few, in whom nature is excessively depraved, the whole human race confesses God to be the author of the world".

Even if a man thinks that a plurality of gods exist, he still would attempt to conceive 'the one God of gods', as 'something than which nothing more excellent or more sublime exist. All concur in believing God to be that which excels in dignity all other objects'. It was these words that inspired St. Anselm to formulate his *ontological argument*.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Explain the relation between faith and reason according to Augustine.

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.....2. Write a short note on Augustine's theory of knowledge.

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3. How does Augustine understand God?

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2.8. PHILOSOPHY OF THE WORLD

True to the general tenet of his philosophy, Augustinian theory of the world seeks to highlight those features that reveal nature's relation to and dependence on God. He speaks of the creation of the world out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) by God's free act. As created by God all things owe their being to God.

His interpretation of nothingness is in the following manner. Suppose that things are made out of some formless matter. Would not this formless matter be independent of God? First of all, says Augustine, are you speaking of a matter, which is absolutely formless, or of a matter, which is formless only in comparison with the completely formed? If the former, then you are speaking of what is equivalent to nothingness. If you are speaking of the latter, then such matter is not altogether nothing but has something.

THEORY OF SEMINAL REASONS (*Rationes Seminales*)

In his theory of the world Augustine develops the theory of *seminal reasons*. They are formative principles implanted in matter by God at creation, like seeds. Seminal reasons are invisible having the potentiality to receive form according to the divine plan. This is the basis for Augustinian theory of exemplarism. Plato had spoken of ideas as exemplars of every existent in the world. Augustine has placed the ideas in the mind of God. Everything develops according to the ideas in the mind of God.

Augustine formulated the theory of seminal reasons in order to overcome an exegetic problem. According to the book of Genesis, God created the world in six days. In the book of Ecclesiasticus, it is said: "God created all things together" (18,1). Augustinian solution was to say that God created all things together in the beginning, but he did not create them all in the same condition. God created many things invisibly in germs, in their seminal reasons.

THEORY OF NUMBERS

Augustine made use of the Platonic number theme that goes back to Pythagoras, to speak about the world. He looks on number as the principle of order and form, of beauty and perfection. The world is arranged according to number, which is the basis for the intelligibility of the natural order. This mathematical understanding of the world became one of the characteristic features of Augustinianism.

The ideas are the *eternal numbers* while bodies are *temporal numbers*, which unfold themselves in time. Bodies can be considered as numbers in various ways, as being wholes consisting of a number of ordered and related parts, as unfolding themselves in successive stages. The plant, for example, germinates, breaks into leaves, and produces flower and fruit and seminate. The seminal reasons are *hidden numbers*, whereas bodies are *manifest numbers*.

2.9. ETHICS

Augustinian ethics has a Greek colour. Following the Greek tradition Augustine proposes happiness as the end of human conduct. Hence, Augustinian ethics is called *eudaimonistic*.

Happiness is to be found in the attainment and possession of the eternal and immutable object, God. This happiness is not the result of a theoretic contemplation of God, but a loving union with God. In Augustine's thought there is no separation between natural and supernatural ethics because he deals with the natural man and the natural man has a supernatural vocation.

The will is free and the free will is subject to moral obligation. The Greek philosophers had the conception of happiness as the end of conduct, but had no clear conception of obligation. With his clear notion of God and of divine creation Augustine was able to give moral obligation a firmer metaphysical basis than the Greeks. The necessary basis of obligation is freedom. Free will is a gift of God to man. It is the capacity to know, to choose and to act freely according to our own lights. Free will is not an absolute good, but an intermediate good: its nature is good, but its effect can be good or bad according to the way man uses it.

Just as the human mind perceives eternal truths in the light of God, in the same manner it perceives in the same light practical truths or principles that should direct the free will. Just as God has made the mind a receiver of *intellectual illumination*, he has made the will the receiver of *moral illumination*, through the intellectual illumination of the mind. Just as the light of truth is present in the mind, so too the law of God is written in the human heart or conscience. Man is by nature set towards God. He can fulfil the dynamism of that nature only by observing the moral laws that reflect the eternal law of God.

EVIL

Augustinian solution to the problem of evil is centered on the negative nature of evil. Evil is not something positive in the sense of created by God. Evil is the absence or privation of goodness. Evil is the distortion of something that is inherently good. The evil of blindness consists in the lack of a proper functioning of the eye. Darkness is the absence of light. (*Confessions*, 3:7; 7:3,5,12)

How evil originated? Evil came about initially in those levels of the universe that involved free will - the levels of angels and humans. Some of the angels rebelled against the creator. They in turn tempted the first man and woman to fall. Moral evil is due to this fall. Natural evil is the penal consequences of sin. "All evil is either sin or the punishment of the sin." "God is not the parent of evils ... Evils exist by the voluntary sin of the soul to which God gave free choice. If one does not sin by will, one does not sin."

How is it that man does evil? Augustine answers: because he turns away from education. He turns away from moral knowledge, from the opportunity to acquire it. Without free will there can be no goodness, no right action. It is not logically possible for God to have given man free will and at the same time to have prevented him from sinning, from doing evil. For, to do that is to take away with one hand what he gives with the other. In the world of bodies, there are many things which we can put to bad use, but this is no reason for saying that they are evil and that God should not have given them to us, because, considered in themselves, they are good.

2.10. PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

In 410 Goths conquered Rome. The pagans attributed the disaster to the abandonment of the ancient gods. So long as Jupiter was worshipped Rome remained powerful. Now the emperors have turned away from him and he no longer protects Romans. This pagan accusation called for an answer. The *City of God* was St. Augustine's answer. It was an immensely influential book throughout the middle ages, especially in the struggle of the Church with secular powers. With Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics*, *City of God* is one of the foundational works in political philosophy.

Augustine was the first to develop a Christian philosophy of history. In his *City of God*, he tried to analyze the forces at work in human affairs. He saw the kingdom of God as the goal of all history. There are external and internal forces that move human history. The external force is the providential care of God for his creation. The internal forces that drive history are the desires and the loves of the individuals who make it up. Augustine is a "theological interpreter of history; he is not primarily interested in the development of humankind, but in God's plan."

The human race can be divided into two camps - that of those who love God and prefer God to self and that of those who prefer self to God. He sees the history of the human race as the history of the dialectic of these two camps, the one in forming the *worldly state (civitas terrena)* and the other in forming the *divine state (civitas Dei)*. He calls city of world as city of Babylon and city of God as city of Jerusalem. Cain belongs to the city of the devil, Abel to the city of God. Abel was a pilgrim on earth and a citizen of heaven. The patriarchs belonged to the city of God. Those who are moving towards full citizenship in the city of God live life as pilgrims. This world is for them a place they must pass through in order to reach their true home in heaven. Those who reflect the values of the earthly city are perfectly happy making their home here.

Augustine's philosophy of history is *linear*. The first humans had a chance to maintain their original innocence and once they failed there was no going back. The coming of Christ was also a historical event never to be repeated. In *City of God* 12.4 he calls the cyclical theories of history *a mockery of the truth*.

2.11. TIME

Augustine was driven to the question of time by the argument against the idea of creation: what did God do before he created heaven and earth? Such questions are meaningless. With the creation, God also created time. Time has a beginning. In eternity all is present. (*Confessions*, 11:10,13,14)

Neither the past nor the future, but only the present really *is*. Nevertheless, there really is time past and future. We are led into contradictions here. To avoid these contradictions he says that past and future can only be thought as present. *Past* must be identified with *memory*, and *future* with *expectation*. Memory and expectation are both present facts. There are three times: "a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future." "The present of things past is memory; the present of things present is sight; and the present of things future is expectation." (*Confessions*, 11:20; 11:18). Time is subjective. Time is in the human mind, which expects, considers and remembers (*Confessions*, 11:28). It follows that there can be no time without a created being (*Confessions*, 11:30).

Check Your Progress II

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Write a short note on the ethics of Augustine.

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.....2. What is Augustine's understanding of evil

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4. Explain the Christian philosophy of history.

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2.12. LET US SUM UP

Augustine synthesized the best elements of pagan philosophy, especially those from Plato, into a system of Christian thought. He is generally acclaimed as the *Plato of Christianity*. His was a mind almost superhuman in its transcendent power of synthesis. He is to be remembered as the philosopher of interiority. His single-minded quest for truth is a model for all thinkers. His arguments against the sceptics are very formidable. His epistemological theory of illumination has exerted enviable influence on Christian thinkers. Augustine did give sufficient attention to the reality of evil. His position that natural evil is the punishment for moral evil is rather unacceptable. Even before the arrival of man on earth there have been natural evils. Augustinian interpretation of history is extremely one sided. There is a strong tenet of dualism present in the *City of God*. If we look at it in the present day perspective there is a lack of openness to non-Christians.

2. 13. KEY WORDS

Belief: Belief is the firm assent of the mind to the knowledge / truth claims of another.
Understanding: Understanding is the superior power of discernment / enlightened intelligence.

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2.15. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Believing is *to think with consent*. It is an assent to something without full rational clarity. Faith is the starting-point of all growth in understanding and the gateway to truth. Seek therefore not to understand in order that you may believe, but to believe in order that you may understand”.

Thus, faith for Augustine is superior to reason in the sense that without faith, reason is powerless to attain its object, happiness. But it is also inferior to reason in so much as faith is a blind assent, whereas rational understanding is a kind of vision, an intellectual insight. Hence, to remain content with *mere* faith would amount to decisive mutilation of human rationality.

Faith requires the work of understanding. Philosophy plays an important part in the attempt to achieve deeper insight into the content of faith. It belongs to our intellectual ability to try to penetrate into the truth revealed by God.

- 2) Augustinian theory of knowledge has the specific purpose of identifying the path that will lead man to happiness. And the knowledge of truth alone will make one happy. Only the wise man can be happy and wisdom postulates knowledge of truth.

There are three levels of knowledge. The *lowest level* is that of sense-knowledge, dependent on sensation. He regards sensation *as an act of the soul using the senses as its instruments*. The *highest level* of knowledge is the contemplation of eternal objects by the mind alone without the intervention of sensation. There is a *middle level* of knowledge where the mind judges corporeal objects according to eternal standards. This is the *rational level* of knowledge.

- 3) Augustine bases his theory of God on the argument derived from the immutability and permanence of the object of our intellectual knowledge. Man seeks the truth and strives for the good. Nothing is absolutely true or good except in so far as it participates in the absolute truth and goodness of Him who never changes. The existence of God is, therefore, the essential condition of intellectual and moral life. God's existence can be affirmed from His creation too. The very order, disposition, beauty, change and motion of the world and of all visible things silently proclaim that it could only have been made by God.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) Augustinian ethics has a Greek colour. Following the Greek tradition Augustine proposes happiness as the end of human conduct. Hence, Augustinian ethics is called *eudaimonistic*. Happiness is to be found in the attainment and possession of the eternal and immutable object, God. This happiness is not the result of a theoretic contemplation of God, but a loving union with God.

The will is free and the free will is subject to moral obligation. The necessary basis of obligation is freedom. Free will is a gift of God to man. It is the capacity to know, to choose and to act freely according to our own lights. Free will is not an absolute good, but an intermediate good: its nature is good, but its effect can be good or bad according to the way man uses it.

- 2) According to Augustine, evil is not something positive in the sense of created by God. Evil is the absence or privation of goodness. Evil is the distortion of something that is inherently good. Evil came about initially in the exercise of free will - the levels of angels and humans. Some of the angels rebelled against the creator. They in turn tempted the first man and woman to fall. Moral evil is due to this fall. Natural evil is the penal consequences of sin. "All evil is either sin or the punishment of the sin." "God is not the parent of evils ... Evils exist by the voluntary sin of the soul to which God gave free choice. If one does not sin by will, one does not sin."
- 3) According to Augustine, the kingdom of God is the goal of all history. There are external and internal forces that move human history. The external force is the providential care of God for his creation. The internal forces that drive history are the desires and the loves of the individuals who make it up.

The human race can be divided into two camps - that of those who love God and prefer God to self and that of those who prefer self to God. He sees the history of the human race as the history of the dialectic of these two camps, the one in forming the *worldly state* and the other in forming the *divine state*. He calls city of world as city of Babylon and city of God as city of Jerusalem. Those who are moving towards full citizenship in the city of God live life as pilgrims. This world is for them a place they must pass through in order to reach their true home in heaven. Those who reflect the values of the earthly city are perfectly happy making their home here.



UNIT 3**AQUINAS**

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- 3.2. Life and Works
- 3.3. Faith and Reason
- 3.4. Philosophy of Knowledge
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- 3.12. Further reading and references
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3.0. Objectives

The Thomistic philosophy has made an influential imprint in the successive philosophical trends. The Medieval philosophy remains incomplete without discussing the role of Aquinas in philosophical quench. In order to instil the spirit of Medieval philosophy in the minds of the students, this unit discusses the important philosophical contribution of Aquinas. This unit aims at:

- exploring the philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas
- reflecting on his arguments for the existence of God
- comprehending his views on world and human

3.1. Introduction

St Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274, *San Tommaso d'Aquino*) is Italian Dominican theologian, the foremost medieval Scholastic. He is known as 'Angelic doctor', (*doctor angelicus*), 'Dean of Medieval Scholastic Theologians', 'Founder of Father of scholasticism', 'Universal Doctor', 'Second Augustine', and 'Prince of Scholastics'. He developed his own conclusions from Aristotelian premises, notably in metaphysics, creation, and Providence. His doctrinal system and the explanations and developments made by his followers are known as Thomism. Although many modern Roman Catholic theologians do not find St. Thomas altogether congenial, he is nevertheless recognized by the Roman Catholic Church as its foremost Western philosopher and theologian.



3.2. Life and Works

St Thomas was born about 1225 at Roccasecca, near Aquino, Naples as the youngest son of a large Italian aristocratic family. He began his schooling in the great Benedictine abbey at Monte Cassino, and from 1239-44 he was a student at the University of Naples. In 1244 he joined the Dominican friars, a relatively new religious order devoted to study and preaching; by doing so he antagonized his family, who seem to have been counting on his becoming abbot of Monte Cassino. When the Dominicans ordered Aquinas to go to Paris for further study, his family had him abducted *en route* and brought home where he was kept for almost two years. Near the end of that time his brothers hired a prostitute to try to seduce him but Aquinas angrily chased her from his room. Having impressed his family with his high-minded determination, in 1245 Aquinas was allowed to return to the Dominicans, who again sent him to Paris, this time successfully.

Aquinas' works are enormously voluminous. As a theologian he was responsible in his two masterpieces, the *Summa Theologiae* (Synopsis of Theology) and the *Summa contra Gentiles* (against the Errors of the Infidels) and for the classical systematization of Latin theology. And as a poet he wrote some of the most gravely beautiful Eucharistic hymns in the church's liturgy. The *Summa Theologiae* expounds his mature thought at even greater strength. These encyclopaedic works, though theological in intent, and largely in subject matter, contain much material that is philosophical in method and content. The earliest of Aquinas' theological synthesis, his commentary on the Four Books of Sentences of Peter Lombard (1100-1160), bishop of Paris is the least philosophically rewarding to read. Matter of philosophical interest can be found even in Aquinas' commentaries on the Bible, such as his exposition of the Book of Job. His dense, lucid and passionless Latin, which though condemned as barbaric by Renaissance later, can serve as a model of philosophical discourse. His first service to philosophy was to make the works of Aristotle known and acceptable to his Christian colleagues, against the lifelong opposition of conservative theologians like Bonaventure who were suspicious of a pagan philosopher filtered through Muslim commentaries.

At the University of Paris, Aquinas first encountered Albert the Great, a man of enormous and indiscriminating erudition who quickly became his most influential teacher and eventually his friend and supporter. When Albert moved on to the University of Cologne in 1248, Aquinas followed him there, having declined Pope Innocent IV's extraordinary offer to appoint him abbot of Monte Cassino while allowing him to remain a Dominican. He newly started on a gigantic project of commenting on Aristotle's works. His teaching career was brought to an end by ill health in 1273, after a year at the University of Naples where he had begun his career as an undergraduate. He died at Fossanova on March 7, 1274 while journeying to Lyons to take part in the Council which was to unite the Greek and Latin Churches.

3.3. Faith and Reason

From the beginning of Christian philosophy, we can notice a steady exploration on the relation between faith and reason. We see St. Thomas a more systematic and complete analysis in his *Summa Theologiae*. According to him, philosophy and other human sciences rely simply on 'the natural light of reason'. The philosopher should then leave out his researches all data from revelation, in the sense that he must work out his conclusions by the light of human reason alone.

The theologian, though he uses human reason, submits himself to what has been revealed to man by God. It follows, then, that the principal difference between theology and philosophy lies in the fact that the theologian receives his principles as revealed and considers the objects with which he deals as revealed or as deducible from what is revealed, whereas the philosopher apprehends his principles by reason alone and considers the objects with which he deals, not as revealed but as apprehensible and apprehended by the natural light of reason. Faith and reason do not contradict; truths of faith and truths of reason come from God who is the Truth. God as source of all truth, he communicates it to us directly by revelation and indirectly by giving us the power by which we acquire it. Science acquired in the former manner would be divine, while science derived from experience and reason is human. It is impossible that there should exist a contradiction between truths of natural order and truths of the supernatural order.

Faith renders valuable service to reason by elevating the mind in its natural functioning. Reason, in turn, renders a valuable service to faith by the role it plays in theology. Reason can come to the aid of faith in various ways. For example, it can establish certain preambles of faith, such as the existence and unity of God; and it can prove many truths about creatures which faith presupposes. Reason can also use philosophy to refute doctrines contrary to the faith. Philosophy helps theology in as much as it enables the theologian to deduce scientific conclusions from articles of faith. Theology serves philosophy in as much as it acts as a guide or as light upon the path of the philosopher, showing him fields of research and asking him to be convinced of the limitations of his powers.

3.4. Philosophy of Knowledge

The Thomistic theory of knowledge is largely Aristotelian. In the first place, let it be clearly underlined that for St Thomas, sensation is the act of the total human person, body and soul and not an act of the soul using the body. Next, there are no innate or in-born ideas to be found in man: all his ideas come to him, ultimately, through the senses, though he may develop and reason about them until he reaches conclusions that go beyond the immediate evidence of his senses.

Sensation gives us knowledge of particulars, not of universals. Animals have sensation and they can only know particular elements like men, saucers of milk. They cannot apprehend universals; they cannot form a universal concept of man or milk as such. It is all a question of particular experiences and concrete memory-pictures of particular experience of the past. Each act of sensation yields a phantasm or image in the imagination and this presents the material object as perceived by the senses. Man, however, does not stop there. In and through this particular, material sense impression, he apprehends the universal and the abstract. How does he do this? After all, even though sensation is an activity of the total human composite, the spirit cannot be immediately acted upon by what is material; the intellectual activity, proper to the spiritual soul, cannot be set in motion by a material phantasm.

St Thomas uses the phrase "active intellect" to designate the intellect from the point of view of the function. The active intellect is not a part of intellect, much less a second intellect in man. It is nothing but man's intellect viewed under its function of rendering the sensible species intelligible. Aquinas says that it *illuminates* the phantasm and abstracts from this particular sensible species the universal intelligible species. His use of the word 'illumination' to describe the characteristic activity of the active intellect should not lead us to think that he was postulating some special help from God to bring this about. He means that the active intellect abstracts the universal element in itself, producing the impressed species on the passive intellect. To abstract

means to insolate intellectually; to consider one aspect of a thing, leaving out (ignoring, not denying) other aspects. Since, the active intellect, as such, is purely active, it cannot impress, the universal on itself, this it does on the passive intellect and the reaction to this impression is the concept in the full sense of the word.

Finally, it must be added, that when we affirm a universal concept of a particular thing, we are performing a valid enough operation, for we merely affirm the *id quod* of the concept as being objective (i.e. its meaning: when we apply the concept 'man' to John, we are affirming that he is a rational animal). We do not, in any way, mean to say that there is any identity as regards the *modus quo* (i.e. the mode by which the concept and the object respectively exist: the one is abstract and universal whereas the other is concrete and particular).

3.5. Philosophy of God

There were many illustrious thinkers, mystics and saints who had held, before Thomas, that the knowledge of God's existence is naturally innate in man. (E.g. St. John Damascene, Eastern monk and theological doctor of the Greek and Latin churches whose treatises on the veneration of sacred images placed him in the forefront of the 8th-century Iconoclastic Controversy, and whose theological synthesis made him a pre-eminent intermediary between Greek and medieval Latin culture).

Aquinas would say that this is, at most, confused and vague. St Thomas did not live in a world where large scale and systematic atheism was common, but he felt it necessary to establish proofs for God's existence in so far as this was not a self-evident truth. As a matter of fact, after raising the question "is there a God?" Aquinas' first reply is "it seems that there is no God. However, we must admit that the reasons adduced by Thomas are characteristically abstract and speculative.

The "Five Ways"

Accordingly, St Thomas proceeds to designate "the five ways (*Quinque Viae*) in which we can prove that there is a God." Each of these ways starts out with some phenomenon taken from the observable world and then, by way of some particular application of the principle of causality. In his view, we infer the existence of God from his creation; we can prove it only by the *a posteriori* method. Rejecting the ontological argument of St. Anselm, Aquinas makes use of a number of proofs employed by Aristotle, St. Augustine, Arabian philosophers and presents the arguments in five ways in the *Summa Theologiae*.

1. The argument from Movement (Motion/Change): The first proof invites us to consider the reality of movement that we experience in the world. Movement means passage from potency to act. Anything that moves is moved by something else. An infinite series of moving movers is impossible. We, therefore, have to arrive at the concept of an unmoved mover and this unmoved mover is God.

2. The argument from Efficient Causality: Passing from the element of passivity observed in all inferior causes (whatever is changed or moved, is changed or moved by another), he takes up their activity and comes to the first efficient cause. This proof takes up the fact of efficient causality. Everything that happens has a cause, and this cause in turn has a cause, and so on pointing in a first cause. Aquinas excludes the possibility of an infinite series of secondary causes and concludes that there must be a first cause, this first cause is God.

3. The argument from Possibility and Necessity: there is the fact of contingency, implicit in our observation of things that are ‘springing up and dying away’. This shows that they are contingent rather than necessary beings. A necessary being must be postulated as the source of the existence of contingent or possible beings.

4. The argument from Degrees of Perfection: There is the gradation observed in all things. We judge some beings to be higher in being than others. He maintains that the presence of such degrees of perfection imply the existence of a best, a truest, a supreme being which is the cause of all relative values and perfections and is itself pure perfection.

5. The argument from the Order in the Universe: There is the proof from finality, based on the purposiveness in nature to a claim of a divine designer. Natural bodies appear to operate towards some end or purpose and from this it is argued that there must be an intelligent being by whom everything is given an end that relates to things as a whole.

The first three ways, especially the third way, are known as cosmological arguments. The fourth way is known as teleological argument. Having established that God does exist, St Thomas busied himself with the question of *what* God is. He says that we cannot know God’s essence (What He is). We can only know his existence (that he is). But this does not mean any agnosticism. He accepts the negative way as a valid method for understanding God. Thus he invites us to deny any predicate that would involve imperfections, such as body. As we deny of God all these predictions, we slowly begin to get a clear idea of that which belongs to him alone. Furthermore, when we deny a predicate of God, we do not really mean to say that he lacks all perfections expressed in that predicate, only that he infinitely exceeds that limited perfection in its richness. Finally, St Thomas would say that the most appropriate name for God is “**he who is,**” the name he was supposed to have given to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:14).

The Doctrine of Analogy

Aquinas devised the doctrine of analogical predication as the possible way for man to speak of God. Words can be used in *three ways: univocally, equivocally and analogically*. When we apply a word to several things in the same sense: that is a *univocal use* of the word. If our words about God were meant univocally, we would reduce him to the level of created things. In *equivocation* we use the same word in two quite different senses. There is a third way between these two: *the way of analogy*. When the word ‘good’ is applied both to a created being and to God, it is not being used univocally in the two instances. God is not good in identically the same sense in which human being may be good. Nor do we apply the epithet ‘good’ to God and humans *equivocally*. According to Aquinas the predication ‘good’ is allied to creator and creature neither univocally nor equivocally but *analogically*.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) How does Aquinas explain the relation between Faith and Reason?

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3) What are the Classical proofs for the Existence of God according to Aquinas?

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3.6. PHILOSOPHY OF THE WORLD

As Augustine, Aquinas shows that the only way in which finite and contingent beings could proceed from God would be through creation. This creation would entail being made out of nothing, *ex nihilo*. Here, Aquinas adds a precision. Making “out of nothing” is not to be taken to mean that “nothing” was some kind of a material out of which God fashioned the world: it merely means that, at first, there was nothing and then there was something. Furthermore, creation is a particular prerogative of God alone. It cannot be attributed to, or shared by him with any creature. Creation involves bridging the infinite gulf between non-being and being. Now a creature, precisely because it is finite, cannot bridge this gulf.

3.7. PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN

The human person is that which is the most perfect in all of nature. It is a being subsisting in a rational nature. The person is not the same as Nature. It is the perfection of *who-ness* that makes a person. It is this perfection which makes Thomas to describe as ‘that which is most perfect in all of Nature’. It is ironic that what is most perfect in all of Nature is often the cause of what is the most abominable in all of Nature.

For Aquinas, sensation is an activity of the total human composite and not an act of the soul, using the body as its instrument as Augustine would hold. The union of body and soul is not something unnatural, not a kind of punishment due to some fault in a previous state. The soul of man has no innate ideas: it needs a body in order to have sensation and to think. The union of soul and body is not to the detriment of the soul but to its good. Furthermore, there is only one substantial form in man and this is his human soul which confers on him his bodiliness. It includes his vegetative and sensitive functions together with his rationality.

The theory of the substantial union of the human composite ensures man’s unity but does not it overdo it. Aquinas has made his famous distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic dependence. The purely sensitive soul of an animal is totally dependent on the body for all its operations. Hence when the body, on which it totally, intrinsically depends, perishes or corrupts, the sensitive soul of the animal cannot but corrupt too. But man has a rational soul which does not always depend on the body for all its actions. It has a subsistent form and so is only extrinsically dependent on matter. Hence, when the body corrupts, the soul is not affected.

3.8. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Aquinas, following Augustine, defined evil as privation, i.e. the lack of a due perfection. Evil, then, is not a positive entity and so is not creatable. Hence, there is no necessity to seek a creator for it, either in God who is all good and so would not create what is evil or in some evil principle

as the Manichaeans had done. Not that Aquinas wished to say that evil as an illusion does not exist. It is meant that evil does not exist as something positive on its own: it is just the absence of something that is supposed to be in a creature. He goes on to say that evil cannot be positively willed, as such, by even a human will. For the object of the will is always good, real or apparent. In trying to account for evil, Aquinas distinguishes between two kinds of evil. Physical Evil: Evil which is failure, defect or absence in the structure or processes of a thing is called physical evil (*malum poenae*). It is also called natural evil as when someone falls ill or loses a limb, etc. Thus hunger, death, blindness, lameness, deformity, etc are the examples of physical evil. Moral evil: Evil which is defect and failure of a free will to measure up to the standard of what its conduct should be (right and good) is called moral evil (*malum culpae*). It is sin and any such imperfection which approximates to sin. This evil occurs when people fail to do what they ought to do (acts of omission) or as when someone does what simply should not be done (acts of commission).

3.9. MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Aquinas follows Aristotle in asserting: man is by nature a social animal. Human society is the flowering of human nature. Aquinas expresses this most beautifully in Latin: *naturaliter homo homini amicus est* (by nature, man is a friend to man).

Aquinas accepted Aristotle's position that human ethical behaviour is based upon the nature of human as a social animal. But for Aquinas, this was insufficient. Man is much more than a social animal. He is a being created in the image of the Creator. And that image is the image of a person who is at once intelligent and free. Like God the creator, man is a person, he is intelligent and free.

Thomistic ethics has vertical and horizontal dimensions. To define the human person as a social animal is to link him horizontally to every other human person with whom he lives in community. To define the human person as a being, created in the image of God, is to link him vertically to the infinite, creative Being. This dimension, which is absent in Aristotle adds richness to the ethics of St Thomas.

Aquinas sees ethics as having two principal topics: first, the ultimate goal of human existence and second, how that goal is to be won, or lost. *Summa Theologiae*, sometimes called the Treatise on Happiness, develops an argument to establish the existence and nature of a single ultimate end for all human action, or, more strictly, the kind of behaviour over which a person has 'control'. He develops an argument designed to show that a human being necessarily seeks everything for its own ultimate end, that is, happiness.

Aquinas argues that the often unrecognized genuine ultimate end for which human beings exist is God, who is perfect goodness personified and perfect happiness. It is the ultimate end with which they may exist is the enjoyment of the end for which they exist. That enjoyment is fully achieved only in the beatific vision, which Aquinas conceives of as an activity. Since the beatific vision involves the contemplation of the ultimate (first) cause of everything, it is, whatever else it may be, also the perfection of all knowledge and understanding.

What makes an action morally bad is its moving the agent not toward, but away from the agent's ultimate goal. Such a deviation is patently irrational and Aquinas' analysis of the moral badness of human action identifies it as fundamental irrationality. In this as in every other respect, Aquinas' ethics is reason-centred.

His normative ethics is based not on rules but on virtues; it is concerned with dispositions first and only then with actions. In addition to the moral virtues (cardinal virtues) in all their various manifestations, he also recognizes intellectual virtues that, like the moral virtues, can be acquired by human effort. On the other hand, the supreme theological virtues of faith, hope and charity cannot be acquired but must be directly 'infused' by God.

Passions, virtues and vices are all intrinsic principles or sources of human acts. However, there are extrinsic principles as well, among which is law in all its varieties. Consequently, Aquinas moves on in *Summa Theologiae* to his Treatise on Law, a famous and original treatment of the subject. The best-known feature of the treatise is the concept of natural law. Law in general is 'a kind of rational ordering for the common good, promulgated by the one who takes care of the community', and 'the precepts of natural law are to practical reasoning what the first principles of demonstrations are to theoretical reasoning.... All things to be done or to be avoided pertain to the precepts of natural law, which practical reasoning apprehends naturally as being human goods'.

Human laws of all kinds derive or should derive from natural law, which might be construed as the naturally knowable rational principles underlying morality in general. 'From the precepts of natural law, as from general, indemonstrable principles, it is necessary that human reason proceed to making more particular arrangements which are called human laws, provided that they pertain to the definition of law already stated'. As a consequence of this hierarchy of laws, Aquinas unhesitatingly rejects some kinds and some particular instances of human law, for example: 'A tyrannical law, since it is not in accord with reason is not unconditionally a law but is, rather, a perversion of law'. Even natural law rests on the more fundamental 'eternal law', which Aquinas identifies as divine providence, 'the very nature of the governance of things on the part of God as ruler of the universe'.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) How does Aquinas explain the Union of Body and Soul?

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2) How does Aquinas try to account for Evil?

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3.10. LET US SUM UP

Contemporary historical scholarship in Thomistic philosophy is of a high standard. Aquinas and other medieval and scholastic figures have also benefited from a general rise of interest in the

history of philosophy and by no means are all who now study Christian medieval thought themselves Catholics or even theists.

Future trends are difficult to predict in any detail but if there is a future and if it resembles the past even in broad outline, then the tide of interest in the thought of Aquinas will rise and fall as before. To some extent this will reflect the intellectual condition of the Roman Catholic Church and that of the colleges, seminaries and universities established to serve it. As was noted, however, Aquinas and Thomism are not the preserve of Catholics only. Indeed, there is a growing interest among philosophers trained wholly or partly in analytical philosophy.

3.11. KEY WORDS

Analogy: Analogy is an inference or an argument from one particular to another particular, as opposed to deduction and induction where at least one of the premises or the conclusion is general. Analogy plays a significant role in problem solving, decision making, perception, memory, creativity, emotion, explanation and communication. It lies behind basic tasks such as the identification of places, objects and people, for example, in face perception and facial recognition systems. Specific analogical language comprises exemplification, comparisons, metaphors, similes, allegories, and parables.

Soul: Soul is the immaterial part of a person. It is usually thought to consist of one's thoughts and personality, and can be synonymous with the spirit, mind or self. The soul is often thought to live on after the person's death.

3.12. Further Readings and References

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Masih, Y. *A Critical History of Western Philosophy*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994.

Mondin, Battista. *A History of Medieval Philosophy*. Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2005.

Russell, Bertrand. *History of Western Philosophy*. London: Routledge, 1999.

3.13. Answers to Check Your Progress

Check Your Progress 1

1. According to Aquinas, philosophy and other human sciences rely simply on 'the natural light of reason'. The philosopher should then leave out his researches all data from revelation, in the sense that he must work out his conclusions by the light of human reason alone. The theologian, though he uses human reason, submit himself to what has been revealed to man by God. It follows, then, that the principal difference between theology and philosophy lies in the fact that the theologian receives his

principles as revealed and considers the objects with which he deals as revealed or as deducible from what is revealed, whereas the philosopher apprehends his principles by reason alone and considers the objects with which he deals, not as revealed but as apprehensible and apprehended by the natural light of reason. Faith and reason do not contradict; truths of faith and truths of reason come from God who is the Truth. God as source of all truth, he communicates it to us directly by revelation and indirectly by giving us the power by which we acquire it. Science acquired in the former manner would be divine, while science derived from experience and reason is human. It is impossible that there should exist a contradiction between truths of natural order and truths of the supernatural order.

2. St Thomas Aquinas makes use of a number of proofs employed by Aristotle, St. Augustine, Arabian philosophers and presents the arguments in five ways to prove the existence of God. They are **1. The argument from Movement (Motion/Change):** The first proof invites us to consider the reality of movement that we experience in the world. Movement means passage from potency to act. Anything that moves is moved by something else. An infinite series of moving movers is impossible. We, therefore, have to arrive at the concept of an unmoved mover and this unmoved mover is God. **2. The argument from Efficient Causality:** Passing from the element of passivity observed in all inferior causes (whatever is changed or moved, is changed or moved by another), he takes up their activity and comes to the first efficient cause. This proof takes up the fact of efficient causality. Everything that happens has a cause, and this cause in turn has a cause, and so on pointing in a first cause. Aquinas excludes the possibility of an infinite series of secondary causes and concludes that there must be a first cause, this first cause is God. **3. The argument from Possibility and Necessity:** there is the fact of contingency, implicit in our observation of things that are 'springing up and dying away'. This shows that they are contingent rather than necessary beings. A necessary being must be postulated as the source of the existence of contingent or possible beings. **4. The argument from Degrees of Perfection:** There is the gradation observed in all things. We judge some beings to be higher in being than others. He maintains that the presence of such degrees of perfection imply the existence of a best, a truest, a supreme being which is the cause of all relative values and perfections and is itself pure perfection. **5. The argument from the Order in the Universe:** There is the proof from finality, based on the purposiveness in nature to a claim of a divine designer. Natural bodies appear to operate towards some end or purpose and from this it is argued that there must be an intelligent being by whom everything is given an end that relates to things as a whole.

Check Your Progress 2

1. For St Thomas, the union of body and soul is not something unnatural, not a kind of punishment due to some fault in a previous state. The soul of man has no innate ideas: it needs a body in order to have sensation and to think. The union of soul and body is not to the detriment of the soul but to its good. Furthermore, there is only one substantial form in man and this is his human soul which confers on him his bodiliness. It includes his vegetative and sensitive functions together with his rationality. The theory of the substantial union of the human composite ensures man's unity but does not overdo it.

2. In trying to account for evil, Aquinas distinguishes between two kinds of evil. Physical Evil: Evil which is failure, defect or absence in the structure or processes of a thing is called physical evil (*malum poenae*). It is also called natural evil as when someone falls ill or loses a limb, etc. Thus hunger, death, blindness, lameness, deformity, etc are the examples of physical evil. Moral evil: Evil which is defect and failure of a free will to measure up to the standard of what its conduct should be (right and good) is called moral evil (*malum culpae*). It is sin and any such imperfection which approximates to sin. This evil occurs when people fail to do what they ought to do (acts of omission) or as when some one does what simply should not be done (acts of commission).



UNIT 4**DUN SCOTUS AND WILLIAM OF OCKHAM**

Contents

- 4.0. Objectives
- 4.1. Introduction
- 4.2. John Duns Scotus
- 4.3. William of Ockham
- 4.4. Let Us Sum Up
- 4.5. Key Words
- 4.6. Further Readings and References
- 4.7. Answers to Check Your Progress

4.0. OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, placing ourselves in the post-Thomistic period, we focus our attention on two Franciscans: John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, in their commonness and disagreement with the Dominican Thomas Aquinas.

By the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- Clarify the positions held by Aquinas and Scotus;
- Explain the univocity of being;
- Distinguish formal distinction and individuation;
- Clarify psychology and ethics of Scotus; and
- Explain Universals according to Ockham, and his principle of simplicity

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The thirteenth century was the golden age of scholastic speculation. With the beginning of the fourteenth century the signs of a speculative decline or disintegration became obvious. What hastened this decline is the overemphasis on language and logic, together with an increasing scepticism about the power of reason, so confidently proposed by Aquinas. The long-standing marriage of philosophy and religion began to come apart during this time. In the late scholastic period or in the post-Thomistic period two Franciscans beckon our attention: John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham. What is common to both is their disagreement with the Dominican Thomas Aquinas.

4.2. JOHN DUNS SCOTUS

LIFE AND WORKS

Little is known of the early life of Duns Scotus. He was ordained a priest on March 17, 1291 and on that basis it is inferred that he was born early in 1266. He entered the Franciscan order, studied and taught at Oxford (1300) and at Paris (1302-1303). After a short exile, he was back in Paris by 1304. In 1307 he was transferred to Franciscan study house at Cologne, where he died the following year. He is known as *Doctor Subtilis* (Subtle Doctor), on account of his shrewd reasoning and his perception of fine distinctions, *Doctor Maximus* (the highest doctor), and *Doctor Marianus* (the Marian doctor).

Several works are attributed to the authorship of Duns Scotus. But, all are not authentic. Of the authentic ones, the most important are the *Opus oxoniense* (Oxford Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard. It came to be known later as the *Ordinatio*) and the Treatise *De primo rerum omnium principio* (A Treatise on God as First Principle).

THE RIVALRY WITH AQUINAS

As a thinker Scotus entertained a speculative rivalry, albeit healthy, with Aquinas. He proposed ideas that are different from that of Thomas Aquinas, often as an improvement upon the ideas of Aquinas. This prompts some writers to make the accusation that he differs from Thomas just for the sake of being different. It is also true that at times he misinterprets Aquinas. For example, Scotus insisted on the intellectual intuition of the singular object in opposition to the Thomistic position that the immediate object of intellectual apprehension is the universal. Scotus opined that accepting the Thomistic position would amount to the denial of the divinity of Jesus and that would be a heresy. Again, Scotus held that the concept of being is *univocal* rather than *analogical* as held by Thomas.

The difference between Scotus and Aquinas is, more truly, the result of the difference in their philosophical perspective. Scotus is a follower of the Augustinian- Franciscan tradition (the platonic stream), that is more voluntaristic, in contrast to Aquinas, who is a follower of the Aristotelian-Dominican tradition that is more intellectualistic. In any case, Duns Scotus will definitely serve as a good source to make a critical evaluation of the Thomistic system.

PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

Aquinas was very careful to preserve the prudential equilibrium between the disciplines of philosophy and theology. In him they are distinct but complementary. This balance is gradually being lost in the post-Thomistic period. In the prologue to the *Ordinatio*, Scotus at length speaks of the relation between theology and philosophy. Philosophy is a work of reason unaided by faith. It is an autonomous science and enjoys a status of its own. Theology is a practical science and not a speculative science as Aquinas had asserted. Its principles are accepted on authority and faith. Thus there began the widening of the gap between theology and philosophy. Theology is reduced to the *supernatural* and philosophy to the *natural*. The principle *gratia naturam non tollit, sed perficit* (grace does not take away nature, but perfects it) will gradually be forgotten. This will culminate in the modern phenomenon of complete alienation between faith and reason.

THE THEORY OF BEING

Scotus was purely a metaphysician. He held that metaphysics, along with mathematics and physics, is a theoretical science pursued for its own sake. He identifies the subject of metaphysics as *being qua being*. We are, in a sense, natural metaphysicians. (A view Scotus finds implicit in the opening remark of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* that *all men desire by nature to know*). The primary object of the intellect is being in general. Scotus does not accept the Thomistic position that soul essentially depends on the body.

THE UNIVOCITY OF BEING

Scotus argued in favour of the *univocity* of being. There is a single unified notion of being that applies equally to God and creatures. This notion serves as the ground of metaphysics as a science. There is a danger here of accusing Scotus of denying the distinction between creator and creatures. He did not mean that God and creatures are being in the same way.

In the *Opus Oxoniense* he wrote of the concept of being that “it extends to all that is not nothing.” Being is that which is opposed to non-being. God, as much as creatures, is opposed to non-being. Therefore, being is univocally applicable to God and creatures. It is an all-embracing concept. *Being is that which is*: that is the position of Scotus. He is open to grant that God and creatures are opposed to nothingness in different ways. (*Being is that which is in its own way*: that is the Thomistic position)

MATTER AND FORM

The subtle doctor developed a metaphysics that contained many new elements, nuances, and clarifications of traditional Augustinianism. All material beings are composed of matter and form. They are positive and actual entities. Matter as distinct from nothing is a positive reality and therefore actually something. Hence, for Scotus, primary matter is not a pure potentiality, as it is for the Aristotelians, but an actuality capable of receiving further perfection. Matter and form are essentially ordered to one another and hence the union between matter and form is substantial.

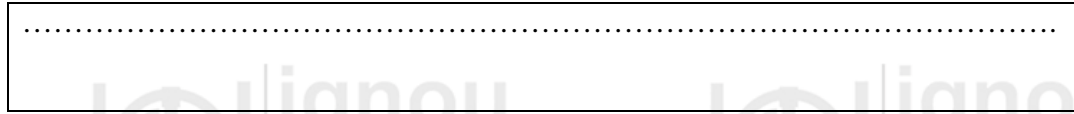
Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use space provided for you answer

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is the basis for the rivalry between Scotus and Aquinas?

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FORMAL DISTINCTION AND INDIVIDUATION

Every being has a unity. But, not every being is simple. For Scotus, each concrete being has a multiplicity of metaphysical elements that are real, positive and distinct.

Scotus speaks of *real distinction (distinctio realis)* and *formal distinction (distinctio formalis)*. The real distinction is one that exists between two different things, for example, between a human and a tree. The *formal distinction* is the result of a rational consideration about one thing in its various aspects, as for example, the distinction between man and his soul. In reality, they are identical or one is part of the other. This is *distinctio formalis a parte intellectus*.

Scotus speaks also of another formal distinction, the *distinctio formalis a parte rei*. In this case it is not the mind that makes the distinction but the distinction is present in the thing itself. Thus, according to Scotus, a man has various forms; he has a common human form (*humanitas or natura communis*), but he also has a form that distinguishes him from all other men. This is a formal distinction *a parte rei*, and Scotus calls it *haecceitas (thisness)*. (*Thisness* consists in *haec res* (this thing). Peter and Paul both contain full human essence, but Peter possesses an additional *formalitas*, which is *Peterness*, and Paul possesses *Paulness*. This is Scotus' **principle of individuation**, which is not only material, as in Thomistic metaphysics, but also formal.

We may feel a little bit exasperated with these distinctions. But, in fact, they reveal the inner constitutional richness of a single being. At the same time we cannot disagree with those who argue for more simplicity in thinking.

GOD'S EXISTENCE

Man has no intuitive knowledge of God in this life. Hence, the existence of God stands in need of rational proof and that must be *a posteriori*. This is the basic stand of Scotus. In proving the existence of God Scotus walked a path that is different from that traversed by Anselm and Thomas Aquinas.

By his natural power human can know some truths concerning God, like God is one, God is supreme etc. But we cannot know by this power that God is a trinity. The philosophers through a consideration of God's effects can attain more knowledge about God. By considering creatures as God's effects the human mind is able to form concepts which apply to God. But one must remember that such concepts when applied to God will only be imperfect.

Scotus proved the possibility of a first efficient cause, starting from the intrinsic possibility of every created being. Since created beings exist, it is absolutely certain that they can exist (principle of non-contradiction). The reason for this possibility cannot be found in *nothing*, for *nothing* cannot be a cause. To say that a thing has nothing for its cause is to say that it has no

cause. The cause of the intrinsic possibility of creatures must be found in a being that is distinct from all created beings. This being either exists by itself or by reason of another. If it exists by reason of another it will be contingent. Hence, it is necessary to postulate a transcendent necessary cause.

For Scotus the primary existential characteristic of the first being is *infinity*. It signifies the intrinsic mode of God's being. Infinity of God is more than merely an attribute of God. It is the most perfect concept, because infinite being includes virtually infinite truth, infinite goodness, and every perfection that is compatible with infinity.

PSYCHOLOGY

Man is a composite being, composed of separable entities, body and soul. Only in this life the soul is dependent on the body. This dependence, however, is not intrinsic to the soul as such. It is rather the result of a punishment. At death there will be the disintegration of this composition. It seems Origen influenced Scotus in this point. The human intellectual activity is an activity that transcends the power of the senses. From this he infers that man has a rational soul, which is the form of man.

In agreement with the Augustinian tradition, Scotus accepts the primacy of the will over the intellect. The intellect and will are natural powers. The intellect is a cognitive power that is not free, because when something is presented to the intellect as true, it cannot but accept it. On the other hand, the will is a free power, because even if something is presented to it as good, it still remains free to accept or reject it. Here again, there is disagreement between Thomas and Scotus. According to Thomas, when the will is confronted with the supreme good, it cannot but choose it. According to Scotus, not even the supreme good can determine the human will. Yes, he is a philosopher of total freedom.

Scotus speaks of two inclinations of the will. The first towards one's own good and advantage, the second towards the achievement of justice appropriate to the objective value of all things. This second inclination consists in the ability to overcome the natural self-centered inclination and to opt for the *affection for true justice (affectio justitiae)*. It is the human option for the other, the *love of willing-well* to another (*amor benevolentiae*). In such altruistic love, the will becomes the will as just and free. It is this will that is free and just that enables us to love God and our neighbour. Love is superior to faith. It is better to love God than to know him. The perversion of the will is more serious than the perversion of the intellect.

MORALITY AND FREEDOM

Scotus firmly asserted the absolute freedom of God's will and the pre-eminence of human freedom. (Opposition to Averroes). The objective norm of the moral law is the divine essence.

In man as in God, liberty is the supreme value. The divine will is seen as taking precedence over the divine intellect. (Aquinas argued for the primacy of the divine intellect). Free will expresses the highest perfection of human nature. The primacy of the will is characteristic of his ethics. Like Augustine he believed that “the will commanding the intellect is the superior cause of its action. The intellect, however, if it is the cause of volition, is a subservient cause to the will.” “Man’s free will enables him to free himself from the inclinations of his natural appetites so that he can choose to act in accord with right reason, and with *affection for justice*.” An action shall be qualified as a right human action if it is free, objectively good, and conformable to right reason, done with a right reason and right intention and performed in the right way.

SUMMARY

“There is no medieval doctor more misunderstood than this Scottish Franciscan. The very title of Subtle Doctor by which he is honoured has an ironic ring. He was called an innovator, yet he followed the most ancient scholastic tradition, developing the intuitions of Augustine and incorporating compatible elements of Aristotelian doctrine. He was called a Franciscan who had lost the significance of love, yet his philosophy is founded on love. He was said to be a methodical saboteur, an insidious theologian, a precursor of voluntarism and immanentism, a 13th century Kant, yet his realism is scholastic to an extreme, carefully avoiding any pretended autonomy of nature of the individual ego.” This quotation is a lucid evaluative summary of the opinions of others about Duns Scotus.

Scotus is the last of the great personalities of scholasticism. His may be regarded as the last of the great speculative syntheses of the Middle Ages. “The primacy of being constitutes the basis of his epistemology and metaphysics; the primacy of will characterizes his ethics; and the notion of Infinite Being who is Love dominates his entire theology.”

Constant criticism of his immediate predecessors, particularly of Aquinas, is something very peculiar to Scotus. But we find in him much in common with Thomas Aquinas. He shared with him the desire to construct a speculative synthesis based on the commonly accepted principles of the thirteenth century metaphysical tradition. There would not have been a Duns Scotus, if a Thomas Aquinas had not lived before him.

In natural theology, even though Scotus disagreed with Anselm and Thomas, in many respects he follows the Anselmian and Thomistic traditions. He made use of the concept of infinite being of Anselm and his proof for the existence of God is very similar to the third way (cosmological argument) of Aquinas.

In theory of man and ethics Scotus used all his energy to uphold the freedom of man in spite of his insistence on the freedom of divine will. Some may think of a contradiction here. But, in Christian thinking, the freedom of God in no way diminishes the freedom of man. Man, as co-creator, shares very specially in the freedom of God.

The Scotus' love for subtlety has won for him many disciples. But the later thinkers would look at this philosophical subtlety as an attempt in vain-thinking. It is by way of Scotus that the term *scholasticism* came to suggest labyrinthine academic subtlety and became the butt of humour for the early moderns.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use space provided for you answer

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Explain real distinction, formal distinction and the principle of individuation.

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2. What is the basic stand of Scotus on God's existence?

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4.3. WILLIAM OF OCKHAM

LIFE AND WORKS

William of Ockham is a thinker who may be regarded as a *philosophical Janus*. He is a thinker who looks in two opposite directions: *back to the Middle Age* and *forward to the Modern Age*. Looking back he began criticizing the overemphasis on rational abstraction of the scholastic period and to free human reason from its subordination to divine will. Thus, inadvertently, he paved the way for the *via moderna* (modern way). "He was an original thinker in the sense that he thought out his problems for himself and developed his solutions thoroughly and systematically."

William was born probably in the village of Ockham, near Guildford, Surrey, at the end of the 13th century. Of his early life nothing definite is known. We know for certain that he was ordained a sub-deacon in 1306. He was a student at the University of Oxford around 1309 and while a student he joined the Franciscan Order. He continued his studies at Oxford and later became a professor there.

In the 14th century there began the dissolution of the great medieval social structure. The conflict between the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor reappeared again. In 1324 William was investigated for heresy and the matter was referred to the Pope then in Avignon. William was summoned to Avignon and was asked to answer the accusations. He escaped from there and took refuge at the court of Emperor Ludwig of Bavaria. There he remained an active, intellectual force. The following verse is attributed to him: *Tu me defendas gladio, ego te defendam calamo* (Defend me with the sword, I shall defend you with the pen). As William sided with the Emperor, Pope John XXII excommunicated him. After the death of the Emperor, William made an effort to get reconciled with the Church. He died at Munich in 1349, probably as a victim of the prevalent Black Death. His most important work is his commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard. Other important works are: *Summa totius Logicae, De potestate papae*.

THE BIFURCATION OF FAITH AND REASON

William of Ockham is the speculative progeny of Duns Scotus. But, the child brought the path initiated by the originator to new lands of speculation and thus became the best critic of the master. He largely dismantled the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. A sharp distinction is found in Ockham's thought between reason and faith. The truths of theology are based on revelation and are neither provable nor refutable by any process of natural cognition. Theology is thus pushed into a realm beyond the reach of reason. Theology is not a rational science. Thus, God is removed from the field of rational speculation and as a result natural theology is made impossible. God disappears from the intellectual horizon and ceases to be the proper object of the mind. We may qualify it as the *loss of God*.

THE QUESTION OF UNIVERSALS

In the discussion about the reality status of the universal concepts Ockham sided with the nominalist turn. Universals have reality neither in the things nor in the mind of God as eternal exemplars of the things. Universals are abstractions of the human mind (*conceptus mentis*).

Particular things participate in universal essences. Human intellect can discover these essences. These essences have ontological reality; they have extralingual reality. This is the core of the medieval realist tradition.

The forward-looking aspect of Ockham's philosophy resides in his rejection of realism and his alternative explanation of nominalism and empiricism. He was a radical empiricist who maintained that individual objects of sense were the only reality. The later British empiricism is heavily indebted to him. What he denies in his nominalism is the belief that there is the need of positing ontologically distinct essences to speak about or understand individual things. He was an anti-realist who did not accept the existence of universals as such, and he refused to infer a multiplicity of strange objects (such as essences and universals) from the multiplicity of words in the language.

For Ockham, universality is a property primarily of thoughts, secondarily of language that gives expression to thoughts. But he has no convincing answer to the question – Why we apply the

same universal name to many individuals? He said that in the case of the universals, nature works in a hidden manner.

OCKHAM'S RAZOR

Today Ockham is best known for a *principle of simplicity* called *Ockham's razor*. The principle is a simple one: All things being equal, we should always adopt the simpler explanation. He stated it a bit more formally: "Entities are not to be multiplied beyond necessity."

This principle is called explanatively as *principle of parsimony* or *principle of economy*. What can be explained by the assumption of fewer things is vainly explained by the assumption of more things. Ever since the Middle Ages, the notion that *simpler is better* (*less is more; more is less*) has been an integral part of science's progress and success. Unfortunately, outside of scientific circles, this principle has been a major casualty of modern times. It is tragic that the notion *more is better* has permeated our lives.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use space provided for you answer

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Bifurcate faith and reason from Ockham's perspective.

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2. Explain the reality status of the universal concepts according to Ockham.

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4.4. LET US SUM UP

The main feature of late scholasticism is its dialectical opposition to the foundational philosophical positions of the high scholasticism. The bifurcation of faith and reason will drastically change the whole speculative spectrum. "Alone, alienated from the world and from God, the human spirit begins to feel insecure in the universe." To escape from this insecurity, rather than the search for truth, will become the preoccupation of the next generation of thinkers.

Ockham's critical and sceptical attitude towards the traditional metaphysical tenets and arguments will develop into a movement called **Ockhamism**. It will foster a new speculative attitude that will pave the way for the scientific empiricism of the seventeenth century.

After William of Ockham medieval philosophy began the slide towards decline rapidly. One reason is that it got unimaginably diversified into secondary questions and thus got alienated from the original primary questions.

4.5. KEY WORDS

Contingency: Contingency is the status of propositions that are not necessarily true or necessarily false.

Essence: Essence is the inner principle of determination of a thing.

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4.7. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Healthy rivalry: The ideas of Scotus were improvement upon the ideas of Aquinas.
Scotus misinterprets Aquinas: For example, Scotus insisted on the intellectual intuition of the singular object in opposition to the Thomistic position that the immediate object of intellectual apprehension is the universal.
Philosophical differences: Scotus is a follower of the Augustinian- Franciscan tradition (the platonic stream), that is more voluntaristic, in contrast to Aquinas, who is a follower of the Aristotelian-Dominican tradition that is more intellectualistic.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) Every being has a unity. But, not every being is simple. Each concrete being has a multiplicity of metaphysical elements that are real, positive and distinct.

The real distinction is one that exists between two different things, for example, between a human and a tree. The Formal distinction is the result of a rational consideration about one thing in its various aspects, as for example, the distinction between man and his soul. In reality, they are identical or one is part of the other. This is *distinctio formalis a parte intellectus*.

There is another formal distinction, the *distinctio formalis a parte rei*. In this case it is not the mind that makes the distinction but the distinction is present in the thing itself. Thus, according to Scotus, a man has various forms; he has a common human form (*humanitas or natura communis*), but he also has a form that distinguishes him from all other men. This is a formal distinction *a parte rei*. This is Scotus' principle of individuation, which is not only material, but also formal.

- 2) We have no intuitive knowledge of God's existence. Hence, we need a rational proof and that must be *a posteriori*.

Scotus proved the possibility of a first efficient cause, starting from the intrinsic possibility of every created being. Since created beings exist, it is absolutely certain that the cause can exist (principle of non-contradiction). The reason for this possibility cannot be found in *nothing*, for *nothing* cannot be a cause. To say that a thing has nothing for its cause is to say that it has no cause. The cause of the intrinsic possibility of creatures must be found in a being that is distinct from all created beings. This being either exists by itself or by reason of another. If it exists by reason of another it will be contingent. Hence, it is necessary to postulate a transcendent necessary cause.

For Scotus the primary existential characteristic of the first being is *infinity*. It signifies the intrinsic mode of God's being. Infinity of God is more than merely an attribute of God. It is the most perfect concept, because infinite being includes virtually infinite truth, infinite goodness, and every perfection that is compatible with infinity.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) Ockham made a sharp distinction between reason and faith. The truths of theology are based on revelation and are neither provable nor refutable by any process of natural cognition. Thus, he pushed theology into a realm beyond the reach of reason. Theology is not a rational science. Thus, God is removed from the field of rational speculation and as a result natural theology is made impossible. God disappears from the intellectual horizon and ceases to be the proper object of the mind.
- 2) According to Ockham, universals have reality neither in the things nor in the mind of God. They are abstractions of the human mind. Particular things participate in universal essences. Human intellect can discover these essences. These essences have ontological reality; they have extralingual reality. This is the core of the medieval realist tradition.

For Ockham, universality is a property primarily of thoughts, secondarily of language that gives expression to thoughts.



UNIT 5

JEWISH AND ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHERS

Contents

- 5.0. Objectives
- 5.1. Introduction
- 5.2. Individual Islamic Philosophers
- 5.3. Jewish Philosophers
- 5.4. Let us sum up
- 5.5. Key Words
- 5.6. Further Readings and References
- 5.7. Answers to Check Your Progress

5.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit is an attempt to show that during the fifth and sixth centuries, a new civilisation slowly developed and a new political, social, intellectual and religious order arose after the patristic philosophy which is called the philosophy of the Fathers of the Church reached its climax in the system of Augustine. It aims at exposing that the medieval philosophy is not only of those who were ardent members of the Church like Popes, Bishops, Priests and Canonised Men but also there had been philosophers in the medieval ages from other religions like Judaism and Islam.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Scholasticism is a term which generally designates the dominant doctrinal movement in the Western or Latin middle ages. The origin of the word denotes that a 'Scholastic' was, originally, a master teaching in a school. This is a method of theological and philosophical speculation which aims at better understanding and deeper penetration of revealed truths and Christian doctrine through the intellectual processes of analogy, definition, speculation, coordination and systematization of these materials. A man designated as scholastic might be supposed to be learned in the three fields namely, grammar, dialectic and rhetoric. Gradually, the title was given to any learned person whether in the sciences of philosophy and whether a teacher or not. Throughout most of the medieval period, it was a title of respect.

The Scholastic claim that the doctrines of faith and the deliverances of reason agree is gradually modified in two principal ways: the first view is that while some of the dogmas could be explained or rendered intelligible, others transcend reason, the second is that none could be explained for they are not objects of philosophical knowledge at all, the truths of religion lie beyond the reach of reason, and reason cannot fathom them. The latter view which is more extreme amounts to an abandonment of Scholasticism as such and results in a deliverance of philosophy from servitude to dogmatic theology.

Regarding Scholasticism, which is a rational reflection on faith which takes into account Platonic, neo-Platonic and Aristotelean teaching developed first of all among Muslims and Jews and only later among Christians. After the Islamic conquest of Syria, Persia and Egypt; there began a great work of translation of the texts that had been studied in the late Greek

philosophical schools into Arabic. It includes a number of dialogues of Plato and Neoplatonic treatises as well as the works of Aristotle. At any rate, as with the Scholastics, there was a great divergence in views among the Islamic philosophers, but some basic characteristics give them a kind of unity. They were very much influenced by several Neo-Platonic writings. They tried to make their philosophy subservient to, and in harmony with Sacred Scripture, Koran. The first great thinkers in this line were the encyclopaedists Al-Kindī (died in 873), the first outstanding Islamic philosopher known as “the philosopher of the Arabs.” and Al-Fārābī (878-950), one of the pre-eminent thinkers of medieval Islam. He was regarded in the Arab world as the greatest philosophical authority after Aristotle. They set a trend for future Arab thinkers by seeing in philosophy a means to correct and purify their religious faith of errors. Thus in the long run, they gave priority to philosophy and not to Scripture.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) Explain the term Scholasticism with its later modifications in your own words.

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2) What are the Basic characteristics of Islamic philosophers? Who are the first outstanding philosophers?

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5.2. INDIVIDUAL ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHERS

Apart from the first outstanding Islamic philosophers, the following thinkers played an emphatic role in the Islamic Scholasticism.

AVICENNA (980-1037)

Iranian physician and the most famous and influential of the philosopher-scientists of Islam. He was particularly noted for his contributions in the fields of Aristotelian philosophy and medicine. He composed the *Book of Healing*, a vast philosophical and scientific encyclopaedia, and the *Canon of Medicine* which is best among the most famous books in the history of medicine.

As a general principle, Avicenna held that truth is One and so there could be no real contradiction in philosophy. As a consequence, he sought to harmonise Plato and Aristotle, being assured that there could be no real differences between their points of view. Besides, the revelations of Koran could hardly be at variance with philosophy either. In working out all these harmonies, he came up with his theory of hierarchy of beings and of causes.

As to the hierarchy of beings, he divided the universe into three orders. The lowest order is that of the terrestrial world. Its summit is the human soul. In explaining the make-up of this world, he is a faithful Aristotelian. Act and Potency, matter and form, the four causes were found in his usage. As to the human intellect, he offers some original thinking, separating it into the active and passive intellect. He held that the active intellect is quite separate from the human intellect. Next order is the celestial world at whose apex is the 'first cause'. As to the Celestial world, he found inspiration in explaining it as much in Aristotle's metaphysics. The heavens consist of a series of crystal spheres into which the various planets and stars are fixed in transparent forms. The turning of these spheres explains the movement of the heavenly bodies across the sky. The revolution of these spheres is accounted for by the fact that each one is provided with an intelligence that sets them in motion. Then, comes God who presides over all as supreme. God is viewed in Aristotelian fashion as pure actuality, first mover and necessary being. His existence is called for by the fact of contingent beings in the world. The goal of philosophy is to know God and to be like God, so far as this is possible. It could be reached, according to Avicenna, by instruction as well as by divine illumination.

AL-GHAZALI (1058-1111)

Al-Ghazali is one of the greatest Islamic jurists, theologians and mystical thinkers. He learned various branches of the traditional Islamic religious sciences in his home town of Tus, in the northern part of Iran. As the intellectual head of the Islamic community, he was busy lecturing on Islamic jurisprudence at the College, and also refuting heresies and responding to questions from all segments of the community. However, Al-Ghazali fell into a serious spiritual crisis and finally left Baghdad, renouncing his career and the world. After wandering in Syria and Palestine for about two years and finishing the pilgrimage to Mecca, he returned to Tus where he was engaged in writing, Sufi practices and teaching his disciples until his death.

With this background, we should not be surprised to learn that his major work *Revivification of Religious Sciences* is still the peak of orthodox Islam and that his main philosophical work is called *The Destruction of Philosophers* and is directed against Avicenna and his school. He is a kind of mystical sceptic, holding that the only way to harmonise faith and reason is to hold that the latter cannot attain truth by itself and that man can only do so by opening himself to mystic illumination. For Al-Ghazālī, the sole valid proof of truth was the authority of the Koran. Since he saw Avicenna's theses on the eternity and necessity of creation as an undermining of the sovereignty of God, he attacked such views saying that they involve ridiculous contradictions. He also taught a type of occasionalism – i.e. he held that creatures do not really act as agents in the full sense of the word; they are mere occasions for God to act through them. He saw God as acting in almost complete disregard of the merits and wishes of creatures, in a very arbitrary manner and was instrumental in giving to Islam much of its spirit of fatalism.

AVERROES (1126-1198)

The violence of Al-Ghazali's anti-philosophical polemic, coupled with the force of his person and reputation effectively put an end to all philosophical activity in Eastern Arabia for quite sometime. Thus the next great Islamic thinker was a man from Spain, Averroes. He is regarded by many as the most important of the Islamic philosophers. He set out to integrate Aristotelian

philosophy with Islamic thought. A common theme throughout his writings is that there is no incompatibility between religion and philosophy when both are properly understood.

His major work was *The Destruction of the Destruction*, purporting to be a refutation of Al-Ghazali. He seems to argue that there are two forms of truth, a religious form and a philosophical form. And it does not matter if they point in different directions. There is much in his work also which suggests that religion is inferior to philosophy as a means of attaining knowledge, and that the understanding of religion which ordinary believers can have is very different and impoverished when compared with that available to the philosopher.

He proposed an unusual manner of reconciling reason with faith by his theory of the three orders. Such a theory was necessary, since many of his ideas were in flagrant contradiction with the Koran. According to him, there are three distinct orders of truth which are quite impervious to each other. Thus the Koran, though it is addressed to all men, can be interpreted according to the three orders as follows. In the Vulgar level, that meant for the common people, there is the obvious or literal sense. This is the area of faith and by way of proof oratory is used. Then there is the Mystical order, this is for the theologian. Mystical interpretations are to be aimed at and proofs are to be based on probabilities. Finally, there is the area of Science. This is for the philosopher and here the true meaning is to be discovered by the help of scientific demonstration. In the event of conflict, science must prevail and faith is to be given an allegorical interpretation.

These three meanings are not always harmonisable. One should not worry about this as Averroes holds. Each one should be happy with that level or order of truth which is proportionate to him. Thus all heresies and difficulties are resolved.

CRITICAL REMARKS

One cannot be disappointed by the two extreme attitudes taken by the Islamic thinkers. If Al-Ghazali was anti-intellectual and fideist, Averroes would be violently rationalist and anti-faith. The attempt to harmonise two apparently conflicting views cannot be achieved by a sheer denial of one of these. That is a too easy way out. Most regrettable is Averroes' theory of the three orders of truth. Such a view encourages all manner of dishonesty and superficial eclecticism. Avicenna has a much more balanced approach and argues for the unity of Truth. But his system is as fragile and ambiguous as it is attractive and leaves much unsaid.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) How does Avicenna divide the universe into three orders As the hierarchy of beings?

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2) Explain how Al-Ghazali differs from Avicenna. What is the meaning of Occasionalism?

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3) What was the Proposal of Averroes to reconcile reason with faith?

5.3. JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

The term Jewish philosophy refers to various kinds of reflective thoughts engaged in by persons identified as being Jews, in one sense or another. At times, as in the Middle Ages, this meant any methodical and disciplined thought, whether on general philosophical subjects or on specifically Judaic themes pursued by Jews. The first really great Jewish thinker, whose writings were to play an important part on the formation of Scholasticism was Avicenna (Solomon Ibn Gabirol) who lived about 1021-1070 in Spain. He is one of the foremost Hebrew poets of the middle ages. He elaborated the theory of emanation. He held that all things emanate successively from the will of God, the simple and ineffable Being. From God, the soul of the universe or cosmic spirit composed of universal matter and universal form is emanated. And there are the angels and spiritual souls composed of spiritual matter and spiritual form. Finally emanated corporeal beings composed of prime matter with corruptible form. Jewish rationalism was given an even greater development by Maimonides in the 12th cent and his work was even more influential in the making of the Scholastic mind.

Characteristics of Jewish Philosophy

1. The main concern is to deal with the ultimate questions of the nature of the universe and of the human condition.
2. Judaism represents a constructive synthesis of biblical monotheism and Greek philosophy.
3. The earliest written source for Jewish ideas is the Hebrew Bible which has been considered as a divinely revealed or inspired text.
4. Reason and philosophy were represented by Plato, Aristotle and the neo-Platonists, while faith was represented by the Old Testament and the *Talmud*.
5. It has got certain common strands notably the belief in a single, personal God, creator of the universe and of man, caring for his creation, intervening in history and sanctioning an elaborate code of social regulations.

MOSES MAIMONIDES

Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) was a Spanish Jew, jurist and physician, the foremost intellectual figure of medieval Judaism. His first major work was a commentary on the Mishna (Hebrew: "Repeated Study"), the oldest authoritative post biblical collection and codification of Jewish oral laws. His contributions in religion, philosophy and medicine have influenced Jewish and non-Jewish scholars alike.

Maimonides held that there was a necessary harmony between faith and philosophy – i.e. between the revelation transmitted through Moses and wisdom as developed by Aristotle. In case of conflict, reason seems to take primacy since it has the duty to explain, though it cannot contradict revelation. In any case, contradictions are to be resolved by allegorical interpretations of the Bible. For we must hold fast to what is given to us by sense-perception or can be a bit too far in his attempts to rationalise their faith and some French Jews even tried to get the Inquisition to quash his ‘heresies’.

Maimonides assembles proofs for God’s existence, taken from Aristotle and from Avicenna. He invites us to reflect on the attributes or names we ascribe to God. In the first place, he points out that we must not take literally the anthropomorphic description of God given in the Old Testament, as for instance, ‘jealous’ and ‘angry’. He went a step further in this to add that we know rather what God is not, than what he is. He is of the view that we can assert nothing of God’s real Nature. Finally, Maimonides said we could attribute to God only titles that concern his action on the world – such as Creator, Provident and so on – since they designate him as unknowable cause of the world under various aspects. Like Aristotle, he would say that God is Pure Thought, perfectly knowing Himself.

Maimonides also taught a kind of restricted immortality which is reserved only to philosophers and saints. He accepted Avicenna’s theory of degrees and concluded that spirituality is only proper to the two higher levels of intelligence. Since only the philosopher and the saint attain this level of intelligence, only they can know life after death. This immortality is, however, impersonal: it involves the ultimate absorption of the intelligence concerned into the Active Intellect. He added that there would be, eventually, a special resurrection of all other men, but said that this was an article of faith.

LEVI BEN GERSON (GERSONIDES)

Levi Ben Gerson (1288-1344), known in Latin as Magister Leo de Baneolis, was active in the Province of Bagnol, Orange, and for a short time, in Avignon, but little else is known about his life. **Work:** *Milhamot Adonai*.

Levi Ben Gerson agrees with the Aristotelians that the acquisition of the intellectual knowledge is the final goal of human life. He states that it is the purpose of his work ‘to investigate very precious and obscure questions on which depend the great fundamental principles which bring human to intellectual happiness.’ He addresses six topics of importance: immortality of the soul, prediction of the future (in dreams, divination and prophecy), divine knowledge of particulars, divine providence, celestial bodies and their relation to God, and creation.

HASDAI CRESCAS

Born in Barcelona, Hasdai Crescas was active in Spain during the second half of the fourteenth century and the first decade of the fifteenth. His times were marked by the persecution of Jews and by false charges against them. In 1367, Crescas, then a merchant and communal leader in Barcelona was imprisoned with others on the made-up charge of desecrating the Host, but he was soon released. In 1383 he was a member of a delegation that negotiated the removal of Jewish privileges with Pedro IV, king of Aragon. In 1387 he became closely associated with the court

and received the title “member of the royal household.” He died Ca. 1412. **Work:** *Adonai* (Light of the Lord).

Hasdai Crescas was among those who accepted the notion that there are basic principles or roots of all scriptural beliefs and they are: existence, unity and incorporeity of God. These are followed by six scriptural principles on which the validity of the Torah depends: God’s knowledge of existent things, providence, omnipotence, prophecy, human freedom and purpose of the Torah. Next come true beliefs which are divided into those that do not depend upon any specific commandment and those that do. The former consists of: creation of the world, immortality of the soul, reward and punishment, resurrection of the dead, eternity of the Torah, Superiority of the prophecy of Moses, the efficacy of the Urim and Thumin worn by the High Priest in predicating the future, and the coming of the Messiah; the latter consists of such beliefs as the efficacy of prayer and of repentance. Of special philosophic interest is Crescas’ critique of certain Aristotelian physical and metaphysical notions which Maimonides had presented in twenty-five propositions. The Aristotelians had defined place as the inner surface of a surrounding body; Crescas identified space with dimensionality. The Aristotelians had denied the existence of a vacuum; Crescas affirmed it. The Aristotelians believed in the existence of one world; Crescas, that of many. The Aristotelian had denied that an actual infinite can exist; Crescas argued for its existence. Crescas also believed that human actions are produced by a decision of the will.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) What are the Characteristics of Jewish Philosophy?

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2) How does Moses Maimonides explain the Nature of God and theory of Immortality?

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5. 4. LET US SUM UP

After the establishment of the fundamental doctrines and the triumph of religious doctrines, there began a period of philosophical construction devoted to the elaboration of a philosophy in which the subject-matter and guiding principles were determined by religious dogma. This religious philosophy – which constitutes the largest part of the philosophy of the Middle Ages – had for its aim the exposition, systematization, and demonstration of the religious dogmas and the construction of a theory of the world and of life on that basis. The thinkers who

performed this service were called schoolmen and their systems, scholastic philosophy. Scholastic philosophy derived its doctrinal commitments from religious dogmas as formulated by religious thinkers of Judaism, Islam and Christianity, but they cast these in a philosophical mould of dialogue which bore the stamp of the methods and concepts of Greek philosophy.

5.5 KEY WORDS

Act: Act is the state of being or perfection.

Potency: Potency is the capacity for act.

Possibility: Possibility is that which is not yet but can be.

5.6. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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5.7. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

Scholasticism is a term which generally designates the dominant doctrinal movement in the Western or Latin middle ages. The origin of the word denotes that a 'Scholastic' was, originally, a master teaching in a school. This is a method of theological and philosophical speculation which aims at better understanding and deeper penetration of revealed truths and Christian doctrine through the intellectual processes of analogy, definition, speculation, coordination and systematization of these materials. A man designated as scholastic might be supposed to be learned in the three fields namely, grammar, dialectic and rhetoric. Gradually, the title was given to any learned person whether in the sciences of philosophy and whether a teacher or not. Throughout most of the medieval period, it was a title of respect.

The Islamic Philosophers were very much influenced by several Neo-Platonic writings. They tried to make their philosophy subservient to, and in harmony with Sacred Scripture, Koran. The first great thinkers in this line were the encyclopaedists Al-Kindī (died in 873), the first outstanding Islamic philosopher known as "the philosopher of the Arabs." and Al-Fārābī (878-950), one of the pre-eminent thinkers of medieval Islam. He was regarded in the Arab world as the greatest philosophical authority after Aristotle. They set a trend for future Arab thinkers by seeing in philosophy a means to correct and purify their religious faith of errors. Thus in the long run, they gave priority to philosophy and not to Scripture.

Check Your Progress 2

1. As to the hierarchy of beings, Avicenna divided the universe into three orders. The lowest order is that of the terrestrial world. Its summit is the human soul. In explaining the make-up of this world, he is a faithful Aristotelian. Act and Potency, matter and form, the four causes were found in his usage. As to the human intellect, he offers some original thinking, separating it into the active and passive intellect. He held that the active intellect is quite separate from the human intellect. Next order is the celestial world at whose apex is the 'first cause'. As to the Celestial world, he found inspiration in explaining it as much in Aristotle's metaphysics. The heavens consist of a series of crystal spheres into which the various planets and stars are fixed in transparent forms. The turning of these spheres explains the movement of the heavenly bodies across the sky. The revolution of these spheres is accounted for by the fact that each one is provided with an intelligence that sets them in motion. Then, comes God who presides over all as supreme. God is viewed in Aristotelian fashion as pure actuality, first mover and necessary being. His existence is called for by the fact of contingent beings in the world. The goal of philosophy is to know God and to be like God, so far as this possible. It could be reached, according to Avicenna, by instruction as well as by divine illumination.

2. Al-Ghazālī is different from Avicenna in being the orthodox Islamic philosopher and that his main philosophical work is called *The Destruction of Philosophers* and is directed against Avicenna and his school. He is a kind of mystical sceptic, holding that the only way to harmonise faith and reason is to hold that the latter cannot attain truth by itself and that man can only do so by opening himself to mystic illumination. For Al-Ghazālī, the sole valid proof of truth was the authority of the Koran. Since he saw Avicenna's theses on the eternity and necessity of creation as an undermining of the sovereignty of God, he attacked such views saying that they involve ridiculous contradictions. He also taught a type of occasionalism – i.e. he held that creatures do not really act as agents in the full sense of the word; they are mere occasions for God to act through them. He saw God as acting in almost complete disregard of the merits and wishes of creatures, in a very arbitrary manner and was instrumental in giving to Islam much of its spirit of fatalism.

3. Averroës proposed an unusual manner of reconciling reason with faith by his theory of the three orders. Such a theory was necessary, since many of his ideas were in flagrant contradiction with the Koran. According to him, there are three distinct orders of truth which are quite impervious to each other. Thus the Koran, though it is addressed to all men, can be interpreted according to the three orders as follows. In the Vulgar level, that meant for the common people, there is the obvious or literal sense. This is the area of faith and by way of proof oratory is used. Then there is the Mystical order, this is for the theologian. Mystical interpretations are to be aimed at and proofs are to be based on probables. Finally, there is the area of Science. This is for the philosopher and here the true meaning is to be discovered by the help of scientific demonstration. In the event of conflict, science must prevail and faith is to be given an allegorical interpretation. These three meanings are not always harmonisable. One should not worry about this as Averroës holds. Each one should be happy with that level or order of truth which is proportionate to him. Thus all heresies and difficulties are resolved.

Check Your Progress 3

1. The main concern is to deal with the ultimate questions of the nature of the universe and of the human condition. Judaism represents a constructive synthesis of biblical monotheism and Greek philosophy. The earliest written source for Jewish ideas is the Hebrew Bible which has been considered as a divinely revealed or inspired text. Reason and philosophy were represented by Plato, Aristotle and the neo-Platonists, while faith was represented by the Old Testament and the *Talmud*. It has got certain common strands notably the belief in a single, personal God, creator of the universe and of man, caring for his creation, intervening in history and sanctioning an elaborate code of social regulations.

2. Maimonides invites us to reflect on the attributes or names we ascribe to God. In the first place, he points out that we must not take literally the anthropomorphic description of God given in the Old Testament, as for instance, 'jealous' and 'angry'. He went a step further in this to add that we know rather what God is not, than what he is. He is of the view that we can assert nothing of God's real Nature. Finally, Maimonides said we could attribute to God only titles that concern his action on the world – such as Creator, Provident and so on – since they designate him as unknowable cause of the world under various aspects. Like Aristotle, he would say that God is Pure Thought, perfectly knowing Himself. Maimonides also taught a kind of restricted immortality which is reserved only to philosophers and saints. Since only the philosopher and the saint attain this level of intelligence, only they can know life after death. This immortality is, however, impersonal: it involves the ultimate absorption of the intelligence concerned into the Active Intellect. He added that there would be, eventually, a special resurrection of all other men, but said that this was an article of faith.