

BLOCK 1

Philosophy as such took a new direction towards the end of the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century. It all began with some of the noted philosophers criticizing the traditional methods and ways of thinking. The foundations were laid by the negation and the critique of Nietzsche of the rationalistic tradition that had gone by, a demand for focusing on the methodology of sciences, the shift to pay more attention to the now and here existence of the human being, going deeper into the pragmatic notion of humans and the discussion over the notion of language and its analysis. Although the initial push was given by various thinkers, yet they shared one common goal, the criticism of all that tradition had exalted. The contemporary thinkers were of a revolutionary type, trying to bring about a radical change. This whole movement was a combined effort of Nietzsche, Karl Marx, Freud (though a Psychologist) and others. In this block we shall limit ourselves to studying the origins of the contemporary concerns of philosophy and later we will venture into it in detail.

This block consisting of five units deal with introductory remarks on contemporary western philosophy and its foundations laid down by Karl Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.

Unit 1 “Introduction to Contemporary Western Philosophy” tries to introduce the major divisions of contemporary western philosophy and their main thrust. In the Anglophone world, analytic philosophy became the dominant school. On continental Europe, no single school enjoyed dominance. 20th-century movements such as phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics, critical theory, structuralism, and post-structuralism are included within this category.

Unit 2 is on the philosophical thinking of Karl Marx. In this unit the students will be introduced to his life, philosophical heritage of German Idealism, and the political and economic situation of the time that played a major role in his thinking. Apart from this, we have his historical materialism, the struggle that goes on between the classes, the role played by the labour and how one becomes alienated in the process.

Unit 3 highlights the contribution made by Friedrich Nietzsche. Beginning with his life, you will be introduced to his philosophical stance, his strong critique of religion and morality, particularly Christian religion and morality, with the catch phrase: “death of God”. However, he does not stop here; he introduces the phase of Nihilism and the concept of Over-man or Superman.

Unit 4 details the thinking of Sigmund Freud. Here, we begin with his life and the influences that shaped his thinking. We also deal with different stages: psycho-sexual development in a human person, the various crises that a person undergoes during each stage of growth if his needs are not well taken care of and the remedial measures to be adopted to deal with such situations.

This block briefly introduces us into what contemporary philosophy is and the pioneers of this range of thinking. It will also give us a picture of what had gone ahead of them and how it was unique for that movement; yet it had its own pitfalls challenged by the succeeding thinkers.



BPY 009 - Contemporary Western Philosophy (4 credits)

Course Introduction

The term “Contemporary Philosophy” in general refers to the period in the history of Western philosophy of the present time. It began towards the end of the nineteenth century. The thinking set itself towards more systematization and innovative horizon. This period heralds the rise of analytic and continental philosophy, which gave philosophical thinking a new direction shifting the attention from the traditional topics. The term Contemporary philosophy is often confused with Modern and Post-modern times. However, the phrase “contemporary philosophy” is a phase in philosophy that refers to a specific period in the history of western philosophy. The Analytic and continental philosophers who were involved in philosophizing simultaneously were in large measure independent of each other. The Analytic philosophy developed mostly in English speaking parts of the world: North America, United Kingdom, Scandinavia and Australia; whereas continental philosophy is prevalent throughout the rest of the western world such as France and Germany.

In this course of the third year BA we have presented 4 blocks comprising 16 units.

Block 1 is on the Foundations of Contemporary Philosophy. In this block we will be introduced to contemporary western philosophy and the Philosophies of Karl Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.

Block 2 deals with Early Continental Philosophy which will study Husserlian Phenomenology, Heidegger, Theistic Existentialists and Atheistic Existentialists.

Block 3 looks into Later Continental Philosophy which deals with Structuralism and Post structuralism, Postmodernism, Hermeneutics and Critical Theory.

Block 4 studies Analytical Philosophy: The block considers Logical Atomism and Positivism, Wittgenstein, Ordinary Language Philosophy and Pragmatism.

All these blocks put together will give us introductory insights into what Contemporary Western Philosophy is and its implications for humanity.

UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION TO CONTEMPORARY WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to introduce the two main philosophical groupings of Contemporary Western Philosophy: Analytical and Continental philosophies. By the end of this unit you must be able to get familiar with:

- The Analytical tradition and its subdivisions
- The Continental tradition and its subdivisions

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The scope of philosophy in the ancient understanding, and the writings of the ancient philosophers, was all intellectual endeavours. It began with the basic questions regarding the

origin of the nature. These were widely debated in the ancient Greece and several possible answers were suggested. As a result, many other problems such as the nature of reality, source of validity of knowledge, limitations and possibilities of human reasoning, norms of human conduct etc. arose as subjects of philosophical analysis. It also included many other disciplines, such as pure mathematics and natural sciences such as physics, astronomy and biology. Over the time, academic specialization and the rapid technical advance of the special sciences led to the development of distinct disciplines for these sciences and their separation from philosophy. Today, philosophical questions are usually explicitly distinguished from the questions of the special sciences, and characterised by the fact that they are the sort of questions which are fundamental and abstract in nature, and which are not amendable to being answered by experimental means.

Contemporary Western philosophy is a piece of technical terminology in philosophy that refers to a specific period in the history of Western philosophy. Contemporary philosophy may be described as the present period in the history of Western philosophy beginning at the end of the nineteenth century with the rise of analytic and Continental philosophy. Hence in Contemporary terms Western philosophy refers to two main traditions of Contemporary philosophy: Analytic philosophy and Continental philosophy. Continental philosophy began with the work of Brentano, Husserl, and Reinach on the development of the philosophical method of phenomenology. This development was roughly contemporaneous with the work by Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell inaugurating a new philosophical method based on analysis of language via modern logic, hence the term 'analytic philosophy'. The relationship between philosophers who label themselves 'analytic' and those who label themselves 'continental' is often a hostile one, but there are some Contemporary philosophers who have argued that this division is harmful to philosophy and attempt a combined approach.

Within these broad branches of Analytic philosophy and Continental philosophy there are now numerous sub-disciplines. Western philosophers have often divided philosophy into several major branches based on questions typically addressed by the people working in different parts of the field. Philosophy is done primarily through reflection. It does not tend to rely on experiment. However, in some ways philosophy is close to science in its character and method.

Some Analytic philosophers have suggested that the method of philosophical analysis allows philosophers to emulate the methods of natural science. Whatever philosophy essentially is or is concerned with, it tends to proceed more abstractly than most natural sciences. It does not depend as much on experience and experiment, and does not contribute as directly to technology as the other sciences.

1.2 ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

Analytic philosophy is a generic term for a style of philosophy that came to dominate English-speaking countries in the twentieth century. It is ordinarily dated to the work of English philosophers Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. They turned away from the then-dominant forms of Hegelian objectives in particular to its idealism and purported obscurity and then began to develop a new sort of conceptual analysis, based on new development in logic.

The Contemporary philosophers who self-identify themselves as analytic have widely divergent interests, assumptions and methods. In its Contemporary state analytic philosophy is usually taken to be defined by a particular style characterized by precision and thoroughness about a narrow topic. In the opinion of Michael E. Rosen, the term analytic philosophy can refer to:

- a) A tradition of doing philosophy characterized by an emphasis on clarity and argument, often achieved via modern formal logic and analysis of language, and a respect for the natural language.
- b) The positivist view that there are no specifically philosophical truths and that the object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts. As a result, many analytic philosophers have considered their inquiries as continuous with, or subordinate to, those of the natural sciences.
- c) The view that the logical clarification of thoughts can only be achieved by analysis of the logical form of philosophical propositions. The logical form of a proposition is a

way of representing it often using the formal grammar and symbolism of a logical system to display its similarity with all other propositions of the same type.

Russell in his early career, along with collaborator Alfred North Whitehead, was deeply influenced by Gottlob Frege. Most importantly Gottlob Frege helped to develop the predicate logic. In contrast to Husserl's philosophy of arithmetic, which attempted to show that the concept of the cardinal number derived from psychical acts of grouping objects and counting them, Frege sought to show that mathematics and logic have their own validity, independent of the judgements or mental states of individual mathematicians and logicians.

Like Frege, Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead attempted to show that mathematics is reducible to fundamental logical principles. Their *Principia Mathematica* encouraged many philosophers to take a renewed interest in the development of symbolic logic. In addition, Bertrand Russell adopted Frege's predicate logic as his primary philosophical tool, a tool he thought could expose the underlying structure of philosophical problems.

Later analytic philosophers like Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein focused on creating an ideal language for philosophical analysis, which would be free from the ambiguities of ordinary language that often got philosophers into trouble. This philosophical trend can be called formalism. Russell and Wittgenstein sought to understand language, and hence philosophical problems, by making use of formal logic to formulize the way in which philosophical statements are made. Ludwig Wittgenstein developed a comprehensive system of logical atomism in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. He there argued that the world is the totality of actual states of affairs and that these states of affairs can be built up by expressing atomic facts in atomic propositions, and linking them using logical operators.

Though not very easy to have a clear separation between the branches of Continental and Analytic traditions, we will try to make a survey on the main branches discussed in Analytic philosophy:

ETHICS

First half of the century was marked by the widespread neglect of ethical philosophy and the popularity of sceptical attitudes towards value. As an influence of logical positivism, Contemporary analytic philosophers began to have a renewed interest in ethics. At present the contemporary ethical philosophy is dominated by three schools: utilitarianism, virtue ethics, and Kantianism. Another major development in the latter half of the twentieth century has been contemporary ethical philosophy's overwhelming interest with practical applications, especially in relation to environmental issues, animal rights and the many challenges thrown by advancing medical science. Because of the focus on logic and language in the early years of analytic philosophy, the tradition initially had little to say on the subject of ethics. The attitude was widespread among early analytics that these subjects were unsystematic, and merely expressed personal attitude about which philosophy could have little or nothing to say.

LOGICAL POSITIVISM

Russell's and Wittgenstein's formalism was developed by a group of thinkers in Vienna and Berlin, who formed a Vienna Circle and Berlin Circle into a doctrine known as logical positivism. Logical positivism used formal logic tools to underpin an empiricist account of our knowledge of the world. Philosophers such as Rudolf Carnap and Moritz Schlick, along with other members of the Vienna Circle, held that the truths of logic and mathematics were tautologies, and those of science were verifiable empirical claims. These two constituted the entire universe of meaningful judgements; anything else was nonsense. The claims of ethics, aesthetics and theology were, accordingly, pseudo-statements, neither true nor false, just meaningless nonsense.

Logical positivists typically saw philosophy as having a very narrow role. For them, philosophy was concerned with the clarification of thoughts, rather than having a distinct subject matter of its own. The positivist adopted the verificationism, according to which every meaningful statement is either analytic or is capable of being verified by experience. This led the logical positivists to reject many traditional problems of philosophy, especially those of metaphysics, as meaningless.

PRAGMATISM

Pragmatism is a philosophical movement that includes those who claim that an ideology or proposition is true if it works satisfactorily, that the meaning of a proposition is to be found in the practical consequences of accepting it, and that unpractical ideas are to be rejected. Pragmatism, in William James' eyes was that the truth of an idea needed to be tested to prove its validity. Pragmatism began in the late nineteenth century with Charles Sanders Peirce. Through the early twentieth century it was developed further in the works of William James, John Dewey and George Santayana.

Pragmatist proceeds from the basic premise that the human capability of theorizing is internal to intelligent practice. Theory and practice are not separate spheres; rather, theories and distinctions are tools or maps for finding our way in the world. Theory is an abstraction from direct experience and ultimately must return to inform experience in turn. Thus an organism navigating his or her environment is the grounds for pragmatist inquiry.

From the outset, pragmatists wanted to reform philosophy and bring it more in line with the scientific methods as they understood it. They argued that idealist and realist philosophy had a tendency to present human knowledge as something beyond what science could grasp. These philosophies then resorted either to a phenomenology inspired by Kant or to correspondence theories of knowledge and truth. Pragmatism tries to explain how the relation between knower and known works in the world.

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Current political philosophy owes much to John Rawls and his book *A Theory of Justice*, which produced a sophisticated and closely argued defence of liberalism in politics. Recent decades have also seen the rise of several critiques of liberalism.

Another development in the area of political philosophy has been the emergence of a school known as Analytic Marxism. The best known member of this school is Oxford University philosopher G. A. Cohen, whose work, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* is generally taken as representing the genesis of this school. Cohen attempted to apply the tools of logical and linguistic analysis at the elucidation and defence of Marx's materialistic conception of history.

Communitarians such as Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor advance a critique of Liberalism that uses analytic techniques to isolate key assumptions of Liberal individuals, such as Rawls, and then Challenges these assumptions. In particular, Communitarians challenge the Liberal assumption that the individual can be viewed as fully autonomous from the community in which he lives and is brought up. Instead, they push for a conception of the individual that emphasizes the role that the community plays in shaping his or her values, thought process and opinion.

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) Briefly state the main features of Analytic philosophy.

2) Explain briefly the subdivisions of Analytic philosophy

1.3. CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY

Continental philosophy in Contemporary usage refers to a set of traditions of nineteenth and twentieth century philosophy from mainland Europe. The term originated among English speaking philosophers in the second half of the twentieth century, who found it useful for referring to a range of thinkers and traditions outside the Analytic movement. The main branches of Continental philosophy are German idealism, phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics, structuralism, and post-structuralism.

The history of Continental philosophy is usually thought to begin with German idealism led by figures like Fichte, Schelling, and later Hegel. German idealism developed out of the work of Immanuel Kant. It was closely linked with both romanticism and the revolutionary politics of the Enlightenment. Edmund Husserl has been a canonical figure in Continental philosophy. The term Continental philosophy, like Analytic philosophy marks a broad range of philosophical views and approaches not easily captured in a definition. Continental philosophy is often characterized by its critics as lacking the rigor of analytic philosophy.

The term Continental philosophy, like analytic philosophy, lacks clear definition and may mark merely a family resemblance across disparate philosophical views. Michael E. Rosen has identified certain common themes that typically characterize Continental philosophy. They are the following:

- a) Continental philosophers generally reject scientism, the view that the natural sciences are the best or most accurate way of understanding all phenomena. Continental philosophers often argue that science depends upon conditions of possible experience, and that scientific methods are inadequate to understand such conditions of intelligibility.
- b) Continental philosophy usually considers experience as determined at least by factors such as context, space and time, language, culture, or history. Thus Continental philosophy tends towards historicism.
- c) Continental philosophy typically holds that conscious human agency can change the conditions of experience. Thus Continental philosophers tend to take strong interest in the unity of theory and practice, and tend to see their philosophical inquiries as closely

related to personal, moral or political transformation. This tendency is very clear in the Marxist tradition, and it is also central in existentialism and post-structuralism.

- d) A final characteristic trait of Continental philosophy is an emphasis on meta-philosophy. In the wake of the development and success of the natural sciences, Continental philosophers have often sought to redefine the method and nature of philosophy. In some cases such as German idealism or phenomenology, this manifests as a renovation of the traditional view that philosophy is the first foundational, *a priori* science. In other cases such as hermeneutics, critical theory, or structuralism, it is held that philosophy investigates a domain that is irreducibly cultural or practical. And some Continental philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, the later Heidegger, or Derrida doubt whether any conception of philosophy can be truly coherent.

The main subdivisions of Continental philosophy are the following:

GERMAN IDEALISM

German idealism was a philosophical movement that emerged in Germany in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It developed out of the work of Immanuel Kant and was closely linked both with romanticism and revolutionary politics of the Enlightenment. German idealism was born of the need to retain a variation of the concept of God after Kant had demonstrated its senselessness. The most well-known thinkers in the movement were Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Schelling, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

The philosophical meaning of idealism is that the properties we discover in objects depend on the way that those objects appear to us as perceiving subjects, and not something they possess in 'themselves' apart from our experience of them. The very notion of a 'thing in itself' should be understood as an option of a set of functions for an operating mind, such that we consider something that appears without respect to the specific manner in which it appears. The question of what properties a thing might have 'independently of the mind' is thus incoherent for idealism. Immanuel Kant is generally considered the first of the German idealists.

PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenology is a philosophical method developed in the early years of the twentieth century by Edmund Husserl and a circle of followers in Germany. 'Phenomenology' comes from the Greek words *phainómenon*, meaning 'that which appears', and *lógos*, meaning 'study'. In Husserl's conception, phenomenology is primarily concerned with making the structures of consciousness and the phenomena, which appears in acts of consciousness, objects of systematic reflection and analysis. Such reflection was to take place from highly modified 'first person' view point, studying phenomena not as they appear to 'my' consciousness, but to any consciousness whatsoever. Husserl believed that phenomenology could thus provide a firm basis for all human knowledge, including scientific knowledge, and could establish philosophy as a 'rigorous science'.

In its most basic form, phenomenology attempts to create conditions for the objective study of topics usually regarded as subjective: consciousness and the content of conscious experiences such as judgments, perceptions, and emotions. Phenomenology seeks through systematic reflection to determine the essential properties and structures of consciousness and conscious experience.

An important element of phenomenology is intentionality. Intentionality refers to the notion that consciousness is always consciousness of something. Whether this something that consciousness is about is in direct perception or in fantasy is inconsequential to the concept of intentionality itself. The object of consciousness does not have to be physical object apprehended in perception: it can just as well be fantasy or a memory. The structures of consciousness like perception, memory, fantasy etc are called intentionalities.

EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism is a term that has been applied to the work of a number of nineteenth and twentieth century philosophers who, despite profound doctrinal differences, generally held that the focus of philosophical thought should be to deal with the emotions, actions, responsibilities, and thoughts of individual person and his/her conditions of existence. The term 'existentialism' seems to have been coined by the French philosopher Gabriel Marcel in the first half of the

twentieth century. The label has been applied retrospectively to other philosophers for whom existence and, in particular, human existence were key philosophical topics. Soren Kierkegaard came to be regarded as the first existentialist, and has been called the 'father of existentialism'. In fact he was the first to explicitly make existential questions the primary focus in his philosophy.

Soren Kierkegaard maintained that the individual has the sole responsibility of giving meaning to one's own life and living that life passionately and sincerely, in spite of many existential obstacles and distractions including despair, angst, absurdity, alienation, and boredom. Subsequent existential philosophers retain the emphasis on the individual, in varying degrees, on how one achieves and what constitutes a fulfilling life, what obstacles must be overcome, and what external and internal factors are involved. Many existentialists have regarded traditional systematic or academic philosophy as too abstract and remote from concrete life experience. Existentialism became fashionable as a way to reassert the importance of human individuality and freedom.

HERMENEUTICS

Hermeneutics is the study of interpretation theory, and can be either the art of interpretation, or the theory and practise of interpretation. The word 'hermeneutics' is a term derived from the Greek word *hermeneuo* which means translate or interpret. Hermeneutics can be traced back to Aristotle's work *On Interpretation*. It is the earliest extant philosophical work in the Western tradition to deal with the relationship between language and logic in comprehensive, explicit, and formal way.

Contemporary hermeneutics encompasses everything in the interpretative process. This includes verbal and nonverbal forms of communication as well as prior aspects that affect communication, such as presuppositions, pre-understandings, the meaning and philosophy of language, and semiotics. Philosophical hermeneutics refers primarily to Hans-Georg Gadamer's theory of knowledge as developed in *Truth and Method*, and some times to Paul Ricoeur. A 'hermeneutic' refers to one particular method or strand of interpretation.

Traditional hermeneutics involves interpretation theories that concern the meaning of written texts. These theories focus on the relationships found between the author, reader and text. Hans-Georg Gadamer argued that the meaning of the text goes beyond the author, and therefore the meaning is determined by the point where the horizons of the reader and the writer meet. Paul Ricoeur argued that the text is independent of the author's intent and original audience, and therefore the reader determines the meaning of the text.

The scope of hermeneutics has expanded to include the investigation and interpretation not only of oral, textual and artistic works, but of human behaviour generally, including language and patterns of speech, social institutions, and ritual behaviours. It interprets or inquires into the meaning and import of these phenomena, through understanding the point of view and 'inner life' of an insider, or the first-person perspective of an engaged participant in these phenomena.

STRUCTURALISM

Structuralism was a fashionable movement in France in the second half of the twentieth century, and grew to become one of the most popular approaches in the academic fields concerned with the analysis of language, culture and society. Structuralism as an approach to the human sciences attempts to analyze a specific field as a complex system of interrelated parts. It began in linguistics with the work of Ferdinand De Saussure. But many French intellectuals perceived it to have a wider application, and the model was soon modified and applied to other fields, such as anthropology, psychoanalysis, literary theory and architecture.

The work of Ferdinand De Saussure concerning linguistics is generally considered to be a starting point of structuralism. The term 'structuralism' itself appeared in the works of French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss and gave rise, in France, to the 'structuralist movement', which spurred the work of such thinkers as Louis Althusser, the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, as well as the structural Marxism of Nicos Poulantzas. Structuralism is closely related to semiotics.

Structuralism states that human culture is to be understood as a system of signs. Robert Scholes defined structuralism as a reaction to modernist alienation and despair. Structuralists attempted to develop a semiology. Ferdinand de Saussure focused on the underlying system of language

rather than the system of language and called his theory semiology. The discovery of the underlying system had to be done via examination of speech. He argued that linguistic signs were composed of two parts, a signifier and a signified.

POST-STRUCTURALISM

Post-structuralism emerged in France, in the second half of the twentieth century, criticising structuralism. Post-structuralism encompasses the intellectual movements of certain Continental philosophers and sociologists who wrote within the tendencies of twentieth-century French philosophy. The movement may be broadly understood as a body of distinct responses to structuralism. The contributors, most notably Jacques Derrida, Michael Foucault, and Julia Kristeva, either inverted structuralist principles or set out to reject them outright. Theorists such as Roland Barthes and Jean Baudrillard merged traditional Marxian ideas relating to capitalist exchange of value with such novel principles, bringing into attention the relationship between consumerism and the realm of sign. The movement is closely related to postmodernism. Anti-humanism is often a central tenet.

Post-structural practises generally operate on some basic assumptions: Post-structuralists hold that the concept of 'self' as a separate, singular, and coherent entity is a functional construct. Instead, an individual comprises tensions between conflicting knowledge of claims. Therefore, to properly study a text a reader must understand how the work is related to his or her personal concept of self. This self-perception plays a critical role in one's interpretation of meaning. While different thinkers' views on the self vary, it is often said to be constituted by discourses.

The author's intended meaning, as it is, is secondary to the meaning that the reader perceives. Post-structuralism rejects the idea of a literary text having a single purpose, a single meaning, or a singular existence. Instead, every individual reader creates a new and individual purpose, meaning and existence for a given text. To step outside of literary theory, this position is generalizable to any situation where a subject perceives a sign. Meaning is constructed by an individual from a signifier.

POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism literally means ‘after the modernist movement’. While ‘modern’ itself refers to something ‘related to present’, the movement of modernism and the following reaction of postmodernism are defined by a set of perspectives. It is used in a critical theory to refer to a point of departure for works of literature, drama, architecture, cinema, journalism and design, as well as in marketing and business and in the interpretation of history, law culture and religion in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries.

Postmodernism is an aesthetic, literary, political or social philosophy which was the basis of the attempt to describe a condition, or a state of being, or something concerned with the changes to institutions and conditions as post-modernity. In other words, postmodernism is the ‘cultural and intellectual phenomenon’, especially in new movements in the arts, since the first half of the twentieth century, while post-modernity focuses on social and political outworking and innovations globally since the second half of the twentieth century in the West.

Postmodernity is a derivative referring to non-art aspects of history that were influenced by the new movement, namely developments in society, economy and culture since 1960s. When the idea of a reaction or rejection of modernism was borrowed by other fields, it became synonymous in some contexts with post-modernity. The term is closely linked with poststructuralism and modernism, in terms of a rejection of its perceived bourgeois, elite culture.

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) Sketch out the main features of Continental philosophy

2) What are the main subdivisions of Continental Philosophy

3) What is Phenomenology?

4) Briefly explain Existentialism

1.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to give an overall view of Contemporary Western philosophy. We tried to expose the two main philosophical traditions in Western world with its sub-divisions. In the last century, philosophy has grown more specialized and more distinct from the natural sciences. Much of philosophy in this period concerns itself with explaining the relation between the theories of the natural sciences and the ideas of the humanities. In the Anglophone world, analytic philosophy became the dominant school. In the first half of the century, it was a cohesive school, more or less identical to logical positivism. In the latter half of the 20th century, analytic philosophy diffused into a wide variety of distinct philosophical views. On continental Europe, no single school enjoyed dominance. 20th-century movements such as phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics, critical theory, structuralism, and poststructuralism are all included within this category.

1.5 KEY WORDS

Formalism: The view that mathematics concerns manipulations of symbols according to prescribed structural rules.

Behaviourism: A semantic thesis about the meaning of mentalistic expressions. It received its most sanguine formulation by the logical positivists who asserted that statements containing mentalistic expressions have the same meaning as, and are thus translatable into, some set of publicly verifiable statements describing behavioural and bodily processes and dispositions.

Intentionality: Things that are about other things exhibit intentionality. The adjective 'intentional' in this philosophical sense is a technical term not to be confused with the more familiar sense, characterising something done on purpose.

Semiotics: The study of the interpretations of formal languages. A formal language can be defined apart from any interpretation of it. This is done by specifying a set of its symbols and a set of formation rules that determine which strings of symbols are grammatical or well formed.

Deconstruction: A demonstration of the incompleteness or incoherence of a philosophical position using concepts and principles of argument whose meaning and use is legitimately only by that philosophical position. A deconstruction is thus a kind of internal conceptual critique in which the critic implicitly and provisionally adheres to the position criticised.

Fallibilism:

The doctrine, relative to some significant class of beliefs or propositions, that they are inherently uncertain and possibly mistaken. The most extreme form of the doctrine attributes uncertainty to every belief; more restricted forms attribute it to all empirical beliefs or to beliefs concerning the past, the future, other minds, or the external world.

1.6 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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1.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

1) Analytic philosophy is a generic term for a form of philosophy that came to dominate English-speaking countries in the twentieth century. It is ordinarily dated to the work of English philosophers Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. They turned away from the then-dominant forms of Hegelian objecting in particular to its idealism and purported obscurity and then began to develop a new sort of conceptual analysis, based on new development in logic. In the opinion of Michael E. Rosen, the main characteristics of Analytic philosophy are the following:

- a) A tradition of doing philosophy characterised by an emphasis on clarity and argument, often achieved via modern formal logic and analysis of language, and a respect for the natural language.
- b) The positivist view that there are no specifically philosophical truths and that the object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts. As a result, many analytic philosophers have considered their inquiries as continuous with, or subordinate to, those of the natural sciences.
- c) The view that the logical clarification of thoughts can only be achieved by analysis of the logical form of philosophical propositions. The logical form of a proposition is a way of representing it often using the formal grammar and symbolism of a logical system to display its similarity with all other propositions of the same type.

2) It is very difficult to have a clear separation between the branches of Continental and Analytic traditions. Analytic philosophy may be subdivided as follows:

- a) **Ethics:** Contemporary analytic philosophers began to have a renewed interest in ethics under the influence of logical positivism. At present the contemporary ethical philosophy is dominated by three schools: utilitarianism, virtue ethics, and Kantianism. Another major development in the latter half of the twentieth century has been contemporary ethical philosophy's overwhelming interest with practical applications, especially in relation to environmental issues, animal rights

and the many challenges thrown by advancing medical science. Because of the focus on logic and language in the early years of analytic philosophy, the tradition initially had little to say on the subject of ethics. The attitude was widespread among early analytics that these subjects were unsystematic, and merely expressed personal attitude about which philosophy could have little or nothing to say.

b) **Logical Positivism:** Russell and Wittgenstein's formalism was developed by a group of thinkers in Vienna and Berlin, who formed a Vienna Circle and Berlin Circle into a doctrine known as logical positivism. Logical positivists typically saw philosophy as having a very narrow role. For them, philosophy concerned the clarification of thoughts, rather than having a distinct subject matter of its own. The positivist adopted the verificationism, according to which every meaningful statement is either analytic or is capable of being verified by experience. This led the logical positivists to reject many traditional problems of philosophy, especially those of metaphysics, as meaningless.

c) **Pragmatism:** Pragmatism is a philosophical movement that includes those who claim that an ideology or proposition is true if it works satisfactorily, that the meaning of a proposition is to be found in the practical consequences of accepting it, and that unpractical ideas are to be rejected. Pragmatism is that the truth of an idea needed to be tested to prove its validity. Pragmatism began in the late nineteenth century with Charles Sanders Peirce. Pragmatist proceeds from the basic premise that the human capability of theorizing is internal to intelligent practise. Theory and practise are not separate spheres; rather, theories and distinctions are tools or maps for finding our way in the world.

d) **Political Philosophy:** Current development in the area of political philosophy has been the emergence of a school known as Analytic Marxism. The best known member of this school is Oxford University philosopher G. A. Cohen, whose work, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* is generally taken as representing the genesis of this school. Cohen attempted to apply the tools of logical and linguistic analysis at the elucidation and defence of Marx's materialistic conception of history.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) Continental philosophy in Contemporary usage refers to a set of traditions of nineteenth and twentieth century philosophy from mainland Europe. The history of Continental philosophy is usually thought to begin with German idealism led by figures like Fichte, Schelling, and later Hegel. German idealism developed out of the work of Immanuel Kant. It was closely linked with both romanticism and the revolutionary politics of the Enlightenment. Edmund Husserl has been a canonical figure in Continental philosophy. The term Continental philosophy, like Analytic philosophy marks a broad range of philosophical views and approaches not easily captured in a definition.

The term Continental philosophy, like analytic philosophy, lacks clear definition and may mark merely a family resemblance across disparate philosophical views. Michael E. Rosen has identified certain common themes that typically characterise Continental philosophy. They are the following:

- a) Continental philosophers generally reject scientism, the view that the natural sciences are the best or most accurate way of understanding all phenomena. Continental philosophers often argue that science depends upon conditions of possible experience, and that scientific methods are inadequate to understand such conditions of intelligibility.
 - b) Continental philosophy usually considers experience as determined at least by factors such as context, space and time, language, culture, or history. Thus Continental philosophy tends towards historicism.
 - c) Continental philosophy typically holds that conscious human agency can change the conditions of experience. Thus Continental philosophers tend to take strong interest in the unity of theory and practise, and tend to see their philosophical inquiries as closely related to personal, moral or political transformation. This tendency is very clear in the Marxist tradition, but is also central in existentialism and post-structuralism.
 - d) A final characteristic trait of Continental philosophy is an emphasis on metaphilosophy.
- 2) The term Continental philosophy, like Analytic philosophy marks a broad range of philosophical views and approaches not easily captured in a definition. The main branches of

Continental philosophy are German idealism, phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics, structuralism, and post-structuralism.

3) Phenomenology is philosophical method developed in the early years of the twentieth century by Edmund Husserl and a circle of followers in Germany. 'Phenomenology' comes from the Greek words *phainómenon*, meaning 'that which appears', and *lógos*, meaning 'study'. In Husserl's conception, phenomenology is primarily concerned with making the structures of consciousness, and the phenomena which appears in acts of consciousness, objects of systematic reflection and analysis. In its most basic form, phenomenology attempts to create conditions for the objective study of topics usually regarded as subjective: consciousness and the content of conscious experiences such as judgements, perceptions, and emotions. Phenomenology seeks through systematic reflection to determine the essential properties and structures of consciousness and conscious experience.

4) Existentialism is a term that has been applied to the work of a number of nineteenth and twentieth century philosophers who, despite profound doctrinal differences, generally held that the focus of philosophical thought should be to deal with the emotions, actions, responsibilities, and thoughts of individual person and his/her conditions of existence. The term 'existentialism' seems to have been coined by the French philosopher Gabriel Marcel in the first half of the twentieth century. The label has been applied retrospectively to other philosophers for whom existence and, in particular, human existence were key philosophical topics. Soren Kierkegaard came to be regarded as the first existentialist, and has been called the 'father of existentialism'. In fact he was the first to explicitly make existential questions a primary focus in his philosophy. Soren Kierkegaard maintained that the individual has the sole responsibility of giving meaning to one's own life and living that life passionately and sincerely, in spite of many existential obstacles and distractions including despair, angst, absurdity, alienation, and boredom. Subsequent existential philosophers retain the emphasis on the individual, in varying degrees, on how one achieves and what constitutes a fulfilling life, what obstacles must be overcome, and what external and internal factors are involved.

UNIT 2 KARL MARX

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2.14. Answers to Check Your Progress

2.0. OBJECTIVES

The objective of this course is to introduce to the students the thoughts of Karl Marx, one of the greatest thinkers of all times. It aims to make the students familiar with his life and works, the historical factors that moulded his thought process and the main aspects of his Philosophy. It also invites the students to reflect on the political and economic system envisaged by Marx in the context of contemporary socio-economic and political realities.

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly Marx is one of the most important philosophers of all times. No one in the 20th century has been more defended or vilified than Karl Marx for inspiring the many left-wing socialist or communist revolutions that changed the political landscape of the 20th century. Marx

is also considered one of the fathers of democratic socialism that since the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union is now the principle form of socialism throughout the world.

2.2. LIFE AND WORKS.

Karl Heinrich Marx was born into a comfortable middle-class Jewish family in Trier in Germany on May 5, 1818. His father Hirschel Marx was a lawyer and while Karl was still a child decided to abandon his Jewish faith and become a Christian to escape anti-Semitism. After finishing his schooling in Trier, Karl Marx entered Bonn University to study law. At Bonn he became engaged to Jenny von Westphalen. Later Karl joined Berlin University and changed his subject of specialization from Law to Philosophy. Here Marx came under the influence of the philosophy of G. W. F. Hegel, who had been the professor of philosophy at Berlin until his death in 1831. Marx became a member of the Young Hegelian movement, a group, which included Bruno Bauer, David Strauss and others who were involved in a radical critique of Christianity and the Prussian autocracy. After obtaining his doctorate from the University of Jena, Marx hoped to get a teaching post. However his radical political views and association with the Young Hegelian movement made it impossible.

Marx took to journalism to make a living and moved to Cologne and there the *Rheinische Zeitung* published an article by him in which he defended the freedom of the press. Marx immigrated to France, arriving in Paris at the end of 1843; Marx rapidly made contact with organized groups of emigrant German workers and with various sects of French socialists. He also edited the short-lived *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbucher* which was intended to bridge French socialism and the German radical Hegelianism. During his first few months in Paris, Marx set down his views in a series of writings which later came to be known as *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844). It was also in Paris that Marx developed his lifelong partnership with Friedrich Engels (1820-1895). While working on their first book together, *The Holy Family*, the French government expelled Marx from the country, and Marx moved to Brussels where he remained for the next three years. While in Brussels Marx devoted himself to an intensive study of history and elaborated what came to be known as the materialist conception of history, which was later published as *The German Ideology*. At the same time, Marx also wrote a polemic the *Poverty of Philosophy* against the idealistic socialism of the French socialist

thinker J.P Proudhon. In 1847 a meeting of the Communist League's Central Committee was held in London and Marx attended this meeting. After returning to Brussels at the request of the Central committee, he wrote *The Communist Manifesto*.

Early in 1848 Marx moved back to Paris where a revolt against King Louis Philippe who was forced to abdicate, was on. Slowly the revolution reached Germany. On the outbreak of disturbances in Germany Marx went to Cologne. However the summer of 1848 brought the first reaction of counter revolution and the revolutionary movements were suppressed. Finally Marx settled down in London in May 1849 to begin the "long, sleepless night of exile" that was to last for the rest of his life. He wrote two lengthy pamphlets on the 1848 revolution in France and its aftermath, *The Class struggle in France* and *the 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. During the first half of the 1850s the Marx family lived in poverty in the Soho quarter of London. Marx and Jenny already had four children and two more were to follow. Of these only three survived. Marx's major source of income at this time was the help from Engels. From 1852 Marx wrote a series of articles in *New York Daily Tribune* and also contributed to *New American Cyclopedia*. In London Marx spent a lot of time in the British Museum reading books and journals that would help him analyze the capitalist society. By 1857 he had produced a gigantic 800 page manuscript on capital, landed property, wage labor, the state, foreign trade and the world market, *The Grundrisse* (Outlines). Marx published *A contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* in 1859. In the early 1860s he composed three large volumes, *Theories of Surplus Value*, which discussed the theoreticians of political economy. It was not until 1867 that Marx was able to publish volume 1 of *Capital*. Volumes II and III were finished during the 1860s but were published posthumously by Engels. Marx was elected to the General Council of the First International in 1864. During the last decade of his life though Marx's health declined, he managed to comment on contemporary politics in his *Critique of Gotha Programme*. In his correspondence with Vera Zasulich, Marx contemplated the possibility of Russia bypassing the capitalist stage of development and building communism on the basis of the existing peasant cooperatives. The deaths of his eldest daughter and his wife clouded the last years of Marx's life. He died on March 14, 1883 and was buried at Highgate Cemetery in London.

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 the importance of Marx today?

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2) What is the importance of Marx's life for his theory and praxis?

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3) What are some of the important works of Karl Marx?

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2.3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Marxism could be considered the continuation and culmination of German classical philosophy, French Socialism and British Economics. To gain an understanding of Marx's philosophy and the socialist praxis he advocated, it is necessary that we look into each of these fields of knowledge that formed the historical and academic background to Marx's thinking.

2.4. CLASSICAL GERMAN PHILOSOPHY

Hegel was the most important philosopher of the time and he believed that Reality was Spirit and that the human being is Spirit alienated from its objects and from itself. He believed that this alienation can be overcome by knowledge, knowledge that there is nothing in the object which was not put there by the subject spirit itself. During his university days Marx became a member of a radical left wing group, the Young Hegelians. Marx accepted Hegel's dialectic, but for him

history was not the dialectical manifestation of the Spirit but men and women transforming the world through the creation of their means of existence. He drifted away from the Young Hegelian movement and expressed his disagreements with their ideology in the *Holy Family*, the *Theses on Feuerbach* and the *German Ideology*. The *Theses on Feuerbach* contain one of Marx's most memorable remarks: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world; the point is to change it." (Thesis 11) Materialism of the time ignored the active role of the human subject in creating the world we perceive. Idealism as developed by Hegel, understood the active nature of the human subject, but confined it to thought or contemplation. Marx combined the insights of both the traditions to propose a view in which human beings transform the world they find themselves in. This transformation happens not in thought but in reality, through actual material activity. This historical version of materialism is the foundation of Marx's theory of history; it was derived from his reflection on the history of philosophy, his experience of social and economic realities of the time, and his encounter with the working class.

2.5. SOCIALISM

Socialism as we know today is the product of modern industrial world. Millennial and utopian thought before the modern era only existed as forms of Christian heresy. Gradually the idea became secular especially during and after the French Revolution. G.D.H. Cole in the first volume of his *History of Socialist Thought* says that the word "socialist" was first used in 1827 in the Owenite Co-operative magazine as a general description of Robert Owen's co-operative doctrines, and then as "socialisme" in 1832 in *La Globe*. The general connotation of the word in 1830s was a system of society that stressed the social against the individual, the co-operative against the competitive, sociability against individual self-sufficiency; and social control on the accumulation and use of private property. Louis Blanqui, Fourier, Robert Owen etc advocated different versions of socialism. Marxism emerged as a critique and revolutionary transformation of the different schools of socialist thought and the political emancipation movements.

2.6. ECONOMICS

Capitalism is an economic theory which stresses that the means of production should be owned by private individuals. Capitalists believe that Private ownership and free enterprise will lead to

more efficiency, lower prices, and better products. Adam Smith believed that an individual, by pursuing his/her own interest frequently promotes that of the society more efficiently than when one intends to promote it. According to Capitalist thinking enlightened self-interest and competition in the free market would benefit society as a whole by keeping prices low, while providing incentive for the production of a wide variety of goods and services. Capitalist mode of production advocated the division of labour which it believed would contribute to an increase in production. Modern capitalism had created unprecedented wealth. Capitalism could not exist without constantly revolutionizing the means of production. However the system made the workers, the real producers of wealth alienated and poorer, the more they worked the less they became. Marx felt that there was a need for a new economic and social system to liberate the vast majority of the people, the working class or the proletariat from the chains of oppression.

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) What are the historical and academic factors that contributed to Marx's thinking?

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2) Who were the left wing Hegelians and what was their philosophy?

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3) Describe the characteristics of socialism.

4) Describe the characteristics of Capitalism

2.7. HISTORICAL MATERIALISM.

The critique of Hegelian philosophy, different schools of socialism and capitalism made Marx to search for a new philosophy that would be instrumental in making communism a reality. He looked into history to see how societies had evolved from primitive communism to slave economy, to feudalism and finally to contemporary capitalism. He believed that once we understand the laws of the development of history we could also direct them to achieve the goal we have. Marx's concept of historical materialism was his attempt to explain the historical process of development.

The materialistic interpretation of history holds that history is a product of human beings, men and women make history but they make it under given conditions. The process of development and change is as follows.

Human beings have needs and to satisfy these needs they enter into production. The mode of production is the manner in which men and women produce their means of existence. In the course of time, the modes of production become ossified into traditions and are handed down. It is this dynamic relationship to nature that Marx meant by the term productive forces.

Human beings do not produce as isolated individuals but as members of a community, the relationship within which is determined to a great extent by the mode of production.

This economic structure constitutes the base of the society on which superstructures like law, religion, and morality are built to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond. Within the economic structure itself, the productive forces enjoy priority over relations of production.

The superstructures once risen can react on the base and can have certain autonomy.

What triggers social change is the maturing of the contradictions within a given economic system: (i) conflict between new needs and old mode of production; (ii) conflict between the terms in relations of production; (iii) conflict between base and superstructure and (vi) conflict between superstructures. When the conflicts mature and the possibilities within a given system are exhausted, one form of society gives way to another.

Human beings themselves are the most important agents of change, human beings who are aware of the conflicts and interests can change the course of history.

2.8. CLASS AND CLASS STRUGGLE

A class is a group of persons who stand in the same relation to property or to nonproperty, to the factors of production such as labour power and means of production. We might say that a class is a group of people who by virtue of what they possess have to engage in the same type of activities if they want to make the best use of their endowments. Marx was not the first to discover the concepts of class and class struggle. But Marx was the first to see class and class conflict as central categories in the unfolding of history. Marx showed (1) that the existence of classes is linked to predetermined historical phases of the development of production; (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat; and (3) that the dictatorship itself is only the transition leading to the abolition of all classes and the establishment of a classless society. In the *Manifesto* Marx says that history hitherto has been a history of class struggle. As capitalism developed and the capitalists acquired more and more power and wealth it also created an impoverished proletariat. Two basic classes oppose each other in the capitalist system: the owners of the means of production, the capitalists and the workers who have sold their labour power. The conflict between the bourgeois who does not want to give up their privileges and the proletariat who have become aware of their loss, of their alienation, of the inhuman situation in which they live and work will create the conditions for a revolution. This revolution will be the prelude to the establishment of communism.

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 is historical materialism?

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2) Describe class struggle and its implications.

2.9. ALIENATION

For the first time in history we live in a world where we have the technology and the means to produce enough to satisfy the needs of everyone on the planet, yet millions of lives are stunted by poverty and destroyed by disease. Vast numbers of people live their lives characterized by feelings of desolation, loneliness and alienation. The situation is not natural or inevitable but the product of the existing socio-economic system, contemporary capitalism. Marx developed his theory of alienation to reveal the cause of these contradictions, namely alienated human activity that lies behind the seemingly impersonal forces dominating the society. For Marx, alienation was not rooted in the mind or in religion, as it was for his predecessors Hegel and Feuerbach but something rooted in the material world. Alienation meant loss of control, specifically the loss of control over worker's labour power, the product of labour and its commodification.

2.10. ALIENATED LABOUR

Marx considers human labour as one of the chief ways in which humans are distinguished from non-human animals. Non-human animals do produce, but only for survival, and only in an instinctual manner. In contrast, humans are creative and make their life-activity and labour the object of their own wills and consciousness. Marx sees capitalism as an economic and social system which has created and augmented productive forces greater than ever before in human history, yet it thwarts, distorts, and limits human potential. There are four aspects to alienated labour. The worker is alienated:

1. from products of one's own labour. The first aspect of alienated labour is the separation of the worker from the products of his/her labour. Under capitalism, commodities produced by labour are taken away from the worker and sold, and labour itself becomes a commodity. This alienation produces riches and power for the capitalist but enslavement and degradation for workers.

2. from the process of production. Under capitalism, work is controlled by employers and is external to the worker and is not experienced as part of one's nature. While working, the worker does not have a sense of fulfilment.

3. from species. In capitalism individuals act less and less like human beings, and more and more like machines. Humans produce when free from physical need, reproduce and construct the world in freedom in accordance with sense of beauty as a member of a society. This is the essence of production as a *species-being*. In capitalism production is drudgery and merely a means to survive. In the process one is forced to sacrifice what is genuinely human.

4. from other persons. Humans are also alienated from other human beings, in capitalism, human relations are reduced to market or exchange relationships. According to Marx the exchange relationships are social relationships, even though they appear to have become only money relationships.

The division of labour, wage labour and private property are expressions of alienation. In order to end alienation, it is necessary to abolish private property and abolish the relationship between private property and wage labour. Marx believed that through class struggle that would culminate in a revolution which leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat, private property would be abolished and by implication, alienation.

2.11. COMMUNISM

The aim of Marxism is to bring about a communist society, i.e., a classless society. The dictatorship of the proletariat and the nascent socialist society will be characterized by factors such as the
abolition of private property
abolition of inheritance
abolition of division of labour

universalization of education

planned economy, rational and just allocation of the resources of the society

As socialism develops one could expect the “withering away of the state” and creation of a society where the norm is “from each according to his ability and to each according to his need,” as mentioned in the *Critique of Gotha Programme*. It will be “An association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.” (The *Manifesto*)

In a true communist society there will be no more a place for religion as the promise of an illusory happiness in the world to come or as opium to alleviate the pain and misery the masses suffer.

“Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premise now in existence.’ (The *German Ideology*).

Check Your Progress 4

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 alienation?

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2) Describe the different aspects of economic alienation

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3) What are the characteristics of communist society?

2.12. LET US SUM UP

Though Marx remain one of the most important thinkers even in the 21st century, the collapse of Soviet Union and other East European Economies, the economic changes that are taking place in China which still calls itself a communist state makes a critique of what had been accepted by Marxists as a dogma for a long time. A critique in the context of contemporary realities is what Marx himself would have expected, for his favourite motto was, *De Omnibus dubitandum* (you must have doubts about everything). Marx never wanted his thought to be ossified into a dogma to be believed by his followers. His endower was to make the working class aware of their situation and their responsibility in bringing about a classless society where everyone will be able to develop all their potentialities unhindered by class divisions.

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2.14. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

1) What is the importance of Marxism today?

Karl Marx is one of the most important thinkers of the 20th century, whose insights and critique of Capitalism are still relevant at this time of economic crisis that is affecting large number of people throughout the world. Karl Marx is not only the principal socialist thinker of the last two centuries, but also one of the intellectual giants of all times. It was Marx who inspired the many left-wing socialist or communist revolutions that had changed the political landscape of the 20th century. Marx is also considered one of the fathers of democratic socialism that since the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union is now the principle form of socialism throughout the world.

2) What is the importance of his life for his theory?

Marx believed that human beings make their history but they make it under given circumstances. To understand Marxism the story of Marx's life too is very important. He was born a Jew and early in life understood the meaning of belonging to an ethnic minority; his father had to change his religion. He came to know about the plight of the proletariat during his stay in Paris, his journalism taught him the oppressive nature of the state. He himself experienced poverty and

deprivation. In his search for a communist society, his own life and background played a very important role. Most of his life, he was an exile who understood the plight of contemporary proletariat, whose liberation was his life's mission.

3) What are some of the important works of Marx

Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts

The Holy Family

The German Ideology

Theses on Feuerbach

The Communist Manifesto

The Grundrisse

Theories of Surplus Value

The Capital, Vols. I,II,III

Critique of Gotha Programme, etc.

Check Your Progress 2

1. What are the historical and academic factors that contributed to Marx's thinking?

German classical philosophy

French socialism

British economics

2. Who were the left wing Hegelians and what was their philosophy?

Young Hegelians were a group of radical left wing thinkers which included David Strauss, Bruno Bauer, Ludwig Feuerbach and others who were critical of Christianity and the autocratic government of the time. Marx himself was a member of this group in his university days. They believed in the power of critique to change the situation, Marx gradually moved away from the group asserting that 'so far philosophers have only interpreted the world; the point is to change it'. His criticism of the young Hegelians can be seen in the Holy Family, The German Ideology and the Theses on Feuerbach.

3. Describe the characteristics of socialism.

Socialism is a social, economic and Political system that stresses the needs of the community rather than of the individual. The system stresses collaboration against competition, sociability against individual self-sufficiency. It advocates social control on the accumulation and use of private property. Louis Blanqui, Fourier, Robert Owen etc., advocated different versions of socialism. Marx realized that there was a need for a radical critique of the existing socialist ideas and means to bring about real socialism. Marxian socialism emerged as a critique and a revolutionary transformation of the different schools of socialist thought and the political emancipation movements.

4. Describe the characteristics of Capitalism

Capitalism is an economic theory which stresses that the means of production should be owned by private individuals. It is a system which believes that private ownership and free enterprise will lead to more efficiency, lower prices, and better products. Capitalists hold that enlightened self-interest and competition in the free market would benefit society as a whole by keeping prices low, while providing incentive for the production of a wide variety of goods and services. Capitalism advocates the division of labour, free market, and competition. Modern capitalism had created unprecedented wealth. However the system makes the workers, the real producers of wealth alienated and poor.

Check Your Progress 3

1. What is historical materialism?

Historical materialism is the interpretation of history from the perspective of the working class who are the real creators of history according to Marx. Marx sees history as a dialectical process through which different forms of societies come in to existence and get transformed. The process of development and change is as follows.

Human beings have needs and to satisfy these needs they enter into production. The manner men and women produce their means of existence is the mode of production. In the course of time, the mode of production becomes ossified into traditions and is handed down. It is this dynamic relationship to nature that Marx meant by the term productive forces.

Human beings do not produce as isolated individuals but as members of a community. The relationship within which is determined to a great extent by the mode of production.

This economic structure constitutes the base structure of the society on which superstructures like law, religion, and morality are built to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond. Within the economic structure itself the productive forces enjoy priority over relations of production.

What triggers social change is the maturing of the contradictions within the economic structures:

(I) conflict between new needs and old mode of production; (ii) conflict between the terms in relations of production; (iii) conflict between base and superstructure and (vi) conflict between superstructures.

Human beings themselves are the most important agents of change, human beings who are aware of the conflicts and interests can change the course of history.

2. Describe class struggle and its implications.

In the Manifesto Marx says that history hitherto has been a history of class struggle. A class is a group of persons who stand in the same relation to property or to nonproperty, to the factors of production such as labour power and means of production. With the development of capitalism, the class struggle takes an acute form. Two basic classes oppose each other in the capitalist system: the owners of the means of production, or the capitalists, and the workers. When the workers have become aware of their loss, of their alienation, the inhuman situation in which they live and work, it will be possible for them to work for a radical transformation of the situation by a revolution. This revolution will be the prelude to the establishment of communism.

Check Your Progress 4

1. What is alienation?

Alienation is a feeling and a belief that one is an alien to the society in which one finds himself or herself. For, alienation was rooted in human labour and the material world. That is, it is not an individual problem or state of mind, but is an objective, observable feature of the manner in which human labour is organized. Marx developed his theory of alienation to reveal the human

activity that lies behind the seemingly impersonal forces dominating society. Alienation meant loss of control, specifically the loss of control over worker's labour power.

2. Describe the different aspects of economic alienation

Marx considers human labour as one of the chief ways in which humans are distinguished from non-human animals. While labour is much more productive in capitalism than in earlier economic systems, capitalism thwarts, distorts, and limits human potential. There are four aspects to the alienated labour. The worker is alienated:

from products of one's own labour,

from the process of production,

from species and

from other persons.

The division of labour, wage labour and private property are expressions of alienation. In order to end alienation, it is necessary to abolish private property and wage labour. Marx believed that through a class struggle that would culminate in a revolution which leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat, private property would be abolished and by implication, alienation.

3. What are the characteristics of communist society?

The aim of Marxism is to bring about a classless society, a communist society free of alienation. The dictatorship of the proletariat and the nascent socialist society will be characterized by factors such as,

the absence of private property

the absence of division of labour

the universalization of education

the planned economy and

the rational and just allocation of the resources of the society

As socialism develops and alienation disappears one could expect the "withering away of the state" and creation of a society where the norm is "from each according to his ability and to each according to his need." The Communist society will be "An association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." *Manifesto*

UNIT 3: FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE (1844-1900)

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- 3.2 Life
- 3.3 Main Works
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- 3.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.10 Key Words
- 3.11 Further Readings and References
- 3.12 Answers to Check Your Progress

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit is to understand the philosophy of Nietzsche. Though we will not be doing a detailed study of the philosophy of Nietzsche, we will be getting familiar with the salient features of his philosophy. We begin with his life and works and proceed directly to his philosophy. The first section explains his notion of Nihilism, wherein we will explain the general understanding of active nihilism and passive nihilism. The second section elucidates the 'will to power.' We shall analyze how it is understood as 'life' itself and how it is the essence of every willing being. The third section delineates the 'death of God.' We shall see how the announcement of 'death of God' was used against Christianity and against the traditional morality. The fourth section enumerates characteristics of the Overman and explains about the concept of Eternal Recurrence. Thus by the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- Have a basic understanding about the life, works and the personality of Nietzsche
- Figure out the notion of nihilism (active and passive)

- Know what is 'will to power'
- Comprehend the announcement of 'death of God'
- Specify the characteristics of Overman or Superman and the necessary points regarding Eternal Recurrence.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Nietzsche became a legend even before he died in 1900. He was an extremely complex personality; he possessed great artistic talent and was one of the best of the modern German writers. His style, in prose as well as in verse, is passionate, inspiring and of great literary beauty. His knowledge and interest in Greek culture played an eminent role in his philosophy. However, the central theme of his thought was man, human life, and therefore, he was completely preoccupied with history and ethics. Undoubtedly, there is in Nietzsche much more than what the *dilettantism* which took possession of his work and personality at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

3.2 LIFE

Nietzsche was born on October 15, 1844, at Röcken, Prussian Saxony. His father, Ludwig Nietzsche, a Lutheran minister christened him Friedrich Wilhelm after King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia, on whose birthday he was born. Ludwig died in 1849 and the boy was brought up at Naumburg by his mother, sister, a grandmother and two aunts. In 1858, he entered Pforta, a famous boarding school near Naumburg. He was often at the head of the class and acquired an excellent education. His admiration for the Greek philosophy was awakened during his school days. He studied theology and classical philology at the University of Bonn and he graduated in 1864. But in 1865 he gave up theology and went to Leipzig. As a student at Leipzig, Nietzsche discovered Arthur Schopenhauer (known for his pessimism) and Richard Wagner (a great musician of that time), the two greatest influences on his early thought. After reviewing his papers which were published in *Rheinisches Museum*, in 1869, the University of Basel appointed him as the chair of philosophy even before he had even taken the doctorate.

He never married though he proposed to two women, one Dutch and the other Russian. Both refused to marry him. He was for a period of time in conflict with his sister Elizabeth because she married a fascist and went to live with him in Argentina. But she returned later after the

death of their mother and looked after Nietzsche. She was very possessive of her brother, built a myth around him and it is understood that she falsified many of his manuscripts to suit her own fascist ideology. Throughout his life Nietzsche's health was poor. His doctors kept warning him to preserve his very bad eyesight by reading and writing less. He disregarded this advice, fought severe migraine and gastric pains with long walks and much writing and took pills and potions to purchase a little sleep. In 1889, the mental tension became too much for Nietzsche. However, he carried on writing and publishing many books. His books became his life. In January 1889, Nietzsche collapsed in a street in Turin while embracing a horse that had been flogged by its coachman. He never recovered and he vegetated until his death. On August 25, 1900, Nietzsche died as he approached his 56th year, apparently of pneumonia in combination with a stroke. His body was then transported to the family graveyard directly beside the church in Röcken, where his mother and sister also rest.

3.3 MAIN WORKS

The principal works of Nietzsche are named here. *The Birth of Tragedy / from the Spirit of Tragedy* was written in 1872. In the period 1873-76 he published 4 essays with the common title *Untimely Meditations* or *Considerations* which is rendered as *Thoughts out of Season*. They are: i) *David Strauss, the Confessor and Writer* ii) *The Use and Abuse of History* iii) *Schopenhauer as Educator* and iv) *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*. In 1878-79 he wrote *Human, All Too Human* which was published originally in three parts. In 1881 Nietzsche published *The Dawn of Day* and this was followed in 1882 by *Joyful Wisdom*. In 1883-85 Nietzsche came out with his famous work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. Beyond Good and Evil* in 1886 and *A Genealogy of Morals*, one of the exceptional works on morality, in 1887, which together with *Zarathustra*, are probably Nietzsche's most important writings. In 1888 along with *The Will to Power* he had written *The Twilight of the Idols*, *The Anti-Christ* and *Ecce Homo*, a kind of autobiography (these works have been published after the death of Nietzsche). These latest works show signs of his extreme tension and mental instability.

3.4 NIETZSCHE'S PHILOSOPHY

Nietzsche was not content with the traditional mode of philosophizing and conceptualizing. Nietzsche argued and presented his views quite differently from the traditional way. First of all,

his writings do not present a systematic account of his philosophical endeavor. His dislike for a systematic presentation is symbolized in his writings. He had not written his ideas in a systematic way so as to establish a system of his own. Nietzsche himself makes this clear by saying that, "I mistrust all systems and avoid them. The will to system is a lack of integrity." So, it is not easy to present his philosophy systematically; his philosophy cannot be readily segregated into metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics and the like. In any case, we make an attempt, for our practical purpose, to categorize his philosophy under the following titles.

3.5 NIHILISM

Nietzsche sees reality, the cosmos as valueless. Everything organic and inorganic is reduced to be merely the product of matter, which has deterministic laws. The advancement of science and technology, the renaissance thinkers, revolution against Christianity, Darwinian Theory of evolution and many other reasons could be pointed out why the world was looked at as valueless. A view that the world is nothing but a big machine was dominant and, Nietzsche thinks that people do not realize the catastrophe. Nietzsche identifies this catastrophe with nihilism. Western society was seen by him to have been captured by this horror.

Nietzsche describes nihilism as 'ambiguous' in that it can be symptomatic of either strength or weakness. Nietzsche claims that nihilism is a necessary step in the transition to a reevaluation of all values. It is the most extreme form of pessimism. In simple terms, it is the belief that everything is meaningless. It arises from weariness. Nihilism is a transitional stage that accompanies human development, cleaning and clearing away outdated value systems so that something new can arise in their place. Nietzsche speaks of two kinds of nihilism: passive nihilism or incomplete nihilism and active nihilism or perfect nihilism. Passive nihilism is characterized by a weak will and active nihilism by a strong will.

Passive Nihilism

Passive nihilism is more the traditional belief that 'all is meaningless.' It is the result of what happened in our thinking. According to Nietzsche, "the highest values devalue themselves." The aim is lacking; 'the why' finds no answer. The highest values so far had been God and other metaphysical or otherworldly realities. The other world was considered the real world while this world was considered only an apparent one. The role of God is now put in question and

'experience' turns out to be the sole basis of acquiring knowledge. Hence, what happens is the fact that anything, which is considered holy and unquestionable, is under skepticism. The result is nihilism. We are confronted with the naked reality as something aimless and valueless. The world looks valueless because those things that oriented in giving meanings are taken off. One of the main reasons could be the end of Christian thinking, we mean from the point of view of keeping God as the lawgiver, as the source of life, as the source of value and as the source of meaning of our existence. Now everything is related to positivistic or scientific approach, which is devoid of any value attached to the world and thus we are confronted with nihilism. This kind of nihilism is said to be incomplete or the passive.

It is incomplete or passive because even after denouncing the existence of other worldly virtues, the human being still finds meaning in something else. This something is viewed as giving value and purpose to our existence even in the midst of valuelessness. That is nothing but morality. The denial of God does not necessarily lead to the denial of morality, which played a dominant role in the justification of the world. The human being posits the meaning of existence in the acceptance of the existing moral system. Therefore, what we need to do is even to go beyond this status of justifying our existence with the existing moral system.

Active Nihilism

Nietzsche tries to be a perfect or active nihilist. He understands very well that morality serves as the great 'antidote' for the nihilism that one is faced with. Nietzsche argues that "every purely moral value system ends in nihilism. One still hopes to get along with a moralism without religious background but that necessarily leads to nihilism." Hence, it is not enough that we try to be non-metaphysicians but it is necessary to be also active nihilists. If we are confronted with nihilism, we should face it actively and affirmatively. One should not try to value something that is not there as passive nihilists do. Rather we need to face actively the baseless, valueless world. This would indicate active or perfect nihilism.

To sum up, while most of his contemporaries looked on the late nineteenth century with unbridled optimism, confident in the progress of science and the rise of the German state, Nietzsche saw his age facing a fundamental crisis in values. He ends up with identifying nihilism

which others have failed to realize and respond to it actively. “Nihilism literally has only one truth to declare, namely, that ultimately nothingness prevails and the world is meaningless.”

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) How does Nietzsche view nihilism?

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2) What are the two kinds of nihilism? Enumerate their features.

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3.6 WILL TO POWER

To understand the will to power, one must first of all take into account Nietzsche's background and criticism of Arthur Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer posited a ‘will to live,’ in which living things were motivated by sustaining and developing their own lives. Nietzsche instead posited a ‘will to power,’ a significant point of contrast to Schopenhauer’s idea, in which living things are not just driven by the mere need to stay alive, but in fact by a greater need to use power, to grow, to expand their strength, and, possibly, to subsume other ‘wills’ in the process. Thus, Nietzsche regarded such a ‘will to live’ as meaningless while ‘will to power’ alone as primary.

Will To Power as Drive

Nietzsche claims that “A living being seeks above all to discharge its strength – life is *will to power*.” In Nietzsche’s writings, the ‘will to power’ is consistently associated with being the essence of a willing being’s nature. In his writings, he makes the ‘will to power’ as the fundamental drive to explain life’s activities. The ‘will to power’ is treated as the drive of a being to ‘overcome’ itself, or in simple terms, to better oneself or to become more than what it is at present. To better oneself, one must be able to overcome both the limitations of oneself and

external things; “That it must be a struggle and a becoming.” In overcoming these, one can guess what a being feels: satisfaction and pleasure. In striving to better oneself, one certainly has a will that causes them to face the limitations. In facing and triumphing over those things one gains pleasure. But of course, if one does not succeed, then they certainly will feel dissatisfied, but does not one also notice the strengthening of a will thereafter, perhaps to even say a will becoming more ‘determined’ and the cycle continues.

Obeying the Will to Power

As said above, the ‘will to power’ is closely associated with the fundamental drive of willing beings, we shall look at how Nietzsche characterizes several aspects of human doings as actions that can be viewed as obeying the ‘will to power’ as characterized above. First, there is the pursuit of knowledge or the “will to truth” as Nietzsche calls it. In *Human, All Too Human*, he gives three effects of seeking knowledge that are tied to a gain in the sense of power. One effect is that by gaining knowledge, one gains an awareness of one’s power, analogous to “gymnastic exercises are pleasurable even without spectators.” The second effect is that by bettering our knowledge, we also gain the ability to ‘defeat’ and become ‘victors’ over older ideas (or at least we believe so), thus a sense of power over other’s ideas. Lastly, in finding new ‘truths’ one can become affected with a sense of superiority and uniqueness since one feels they understand something better than others which can feed a sense of power over others. Nietzsche claims “Their ‘knowing’ is *creating*, their creating is a legislation, their will to truth is – *will to power*.”

Will to Power Between Nobles and Slaves

Nietzsche saw the ‘will to power’ as that which drove the priests to moralize upon the world and recreate the concepts of ‘good’ and ‘evil.’ This is seen best in the work *The Genealogy of Morals* in which Nietzsche discusses his idea of an interplay based on the philological analysis of words between the ‘noble’ class Romans and the ‘slave’ class Jews. While the Romans were painted as strong, rich, and powerful, the Jews were weak, poor, and lacking in power. However, this dichotomy of power caused deep seated hatred to brew within the Jewish class, led by the priests; “It is their impotence which makes their hate so violent and sinister, so cerebral and poisonous.”

The Romans were powerful in a superficial manner relying on money and weapons. The priests were the “most intelligent haters.” Driven by hatred and keen intellects, the Jews came to overpower the Romans not with weapons and money, but with morality. Whatever the Romans were, termed ‘evil’ or sinful and anything that was Jewish was made ‘good.’ The masses, or the “herd” as Nietzsche refers to them, fell in sway with this morality and thus the Jews came to dominate the Romans. For, to be Jewish was to be good, and to be otherwise made one into “the ‘evil enemy,’ the Evil One.” This will to dominate, spurred by hatred, and led by priests, strong with a ‘will to power,’ allowed the Jews to triumph over Rome. We should not be misled by this conclusion because this (of the Jews, of the slaves) is not the will to power that Nietzsche aims at. The example is to show the force or the power of the will to power. He stands with the will to power of the masters.

To sum up, let us attempt to congeal the above to state what ‘will to power’ is according to Nietzsche. ‘Will to power’ is that which explains the fundamental will of living beings which makes beings strive for growth, overcoming subjective and objective obstacles, and the satisfaction of gaining a sense of volition. It is important to note that in Nietzsche’s writings, there is no other will besides the ‘will to power.’ The ‘will to power empowers one and makes the weak stronger than ever. Though, there is always a discussion whether there are ‘wills to power’ (several wills that empower) or just ‘will to power,’ we are content with ‘will to power.’

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 ‘will to power’ according to Nietzsche?

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2) How does the ‘will to power’ play a role between Nobles and Slaves?

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3.7. THE 'DEATH OF GOD'

The announcement of the 'death of God' by the madman occurs in *The Gay Science*. Let us have an extract from the passage that we might be able to draw some important conclusions to show how this announcement serves as the devaluation of all morality, including Christian, Kantian and utilitarian.

The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. We have killed him – you and I. all of us are his murderers... Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space...? God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. (*The Gay Science*, 125)

The message of the 'death of God' is not merely an announcement for the extinction of religion. It includes the non-believers too to have a broader understanding going beyond mere announcement of the decline of religion which bases itself on God. Let us analyze.

Death of God and Nihilism

As we have seen earlier, the first moment of evaluation of the 19th century Europe shows us to be confronted with nihilism. The announcement of 'death of God' shows us the emptiness and the nihilistic elements of the society. Walter Kaufmann says that Nietzsche represents himself to be the madman in the text. He says, 'to have lost God means madness; and when mankind will discover that it has lost God, universal madness will break out.' The madman accuses the audience saying, "We have killed him". That means now the whole world looks baseless again. There is nothing beyond to ensure us comfort. Through this announcement Nietzsche confronts us with the naked reality again trying to show how we feel now without God. Kaufmann says, "That is an attempt at a diagnosis of contemporary civilization, not a metaphysical speculation about the ultimate reality." Martin Heidegger explains that "The statement 'God is dead' contains the realization that nothing is spreading. Nothing means here: absence of Supersensory, binding world."

DEATH OF GOD AND MORALITY

The announcement of the 'death of God' devalues religion and everything connected with religion. It is here we situate Nietzsche's critique of religion as essentially linked to morality. As 'death of God' contains three structural moments: an arrow shot to devalue the Christian, Kantian and other foundations of morality. Christian morality has its foundation in God. The Kantian foundation of morality is different at the start but at the end with the postulation of God it becomes essentially related to Christianity. The utilitarian principles keeping the morality of the community have a direct link with the herd (Christian morality): the norm of altruism is nothing but the 'love of neighbor' – the central theme of Christianity. Hence Nietzsche sees all morality to be related to Christian morality. Now the proclamation of 'death of God' shakes the foundation of morality itself.

From 1880, Nietzsche begins his vehement attack on Christianity. The announcement of the 'death of God' is to insist that the morality of Christianity can no more base itself on God. In the text where the announcement is made, the madman says, "What after all are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?" This reference is related to the death of a Christian God. And thus the foundation of morality is shaken. R.J. Hollingdale's explanation is the following: the 'death of God' is intended to imply all that ever has been or ever could be subsumed on the name of 'God' including all the substitutes of God, other worlds, ultimate realities, things-in-themselves, nominal planes and the wills to live – the entire 'metaphysical need.'" That leads then to a world purposeless and hence morality has nothing to offer – a future happiness or redemption or salvation. Hence Kantian morality too is doomed to be valueless.

We shall move to the utilitarianism. The same attitude of Christianity is seen to be present outside of religion too. Nietzsche says, "Utilitarianism (socialism and democracy) criticizes the origin of moral evaluations, but it believes them just as the Christian does." The utilitarian principle is nihilistic, because it has the conception of 'good and evil' of the priestly class, of Christianity. By destroying the Christian values Nietzsche destroys that of the utilitarian too. Hence the 'death of God' is not mere evaluation but it is the announcement of the denial of God. For Nietzsche regards God "not as a mere error, but a 'crime' against life. We deny that God is God. By denying God Nietzsche wants to 'unearth' the theological instincts wherever they are present. So we conclude, by destroying the basis of the herd morality he destroys that of the other foundations too. The 'death of God,' according to Nietzsche, urges us to be 'true to earth'

and reevaluate the whole of values. The 'death of God' breaks off with all that are illusory and other worldly. It brings an end to the dualities.

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) Describe the announcement of 'death of God.'

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2) How does the 'death of God' devalue religion and morality?

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3. 8. THE OVERMAN OR SUPERMAN

The term 'Overman' (Übermensch) carries two meanings crucial to Nietzsche's revaluation of values. 'Über' signifies 'over' in the sense of height and self-transformation. It suggests the elevation of mankind's highest self into an experience of being that has no trace of moralism or the fiction of free will. It can also suggest 'across' or 'beyond' and Nietzsche employs this second resonance to characterize 'man' as a bridge we must pass across toward a life free of resentment and negativity. The term is never applied to an individual, and Nietzsche plainly considered neither himself nor Zarathustra, whom he often ridiculed, an Overman. The transformation of man into Overman cannot take place without a 'going-down' or the destruction of man's reactive beliefs. The Overman is not the 'end' of mankind but a process that transforms reactive values into the active affirmation of power.

MAN AND OVERMAN

Nietzsche's Zarathustra preaches the advent of the Overman. Nietzsche proposes this word "As the designation of a type of supreme achievement, as opposed to 'modern' man, to 'good' man, to Christians and other nihilists." This means that the Overman is the possibility of a powerful

human being of the future. In fact he is the goal of man. The present man of decadence needs to be overcome. Nietzsche explains: "What is the ape to man? A laughing stock or a painful embarrassment." And just so shall man be to the superman: a laughing stock or painful embarrassment. It means that the man is an animal to be overcome by the Overman as man has overcome the ape. The present man is expected to pave way for the Overman, be like a bridge between animal and Superman.

CHARACTERISTICS OF OVERMAN

If the Overman is the goal what are his characteristics? How does he differ from present man? To answer these questions we shall use an image that Nietzsche describes. One of the images that he uses to explain about the Overman is the image of the sea. The present man is like a river that is contaminated. He is corrupt to the core. The Overman is like a 'sea' to receive polluted water and not be defiled. The image shows that man is nothing compared to the Overman and explains that any happenings or occurrences of life do not defile the Overman. Whatever comes on his way, be it suffering, or pleasant occurrences, he is not affected by the situation rather he affirms himself and establishes himself. He will be beyond 'good and evil.' Overman is not only the embodiment of all the ardent affirmations of life, but the fusion of all that is macho and beautiful. He will cast aside all aspirations towards other worldliness and immerse himself joyfully in the creative task of here and now. Society will and must produce superman, and production of genius is the aim of culture to which, all races will contribute their blood and the body.

Nietzsche concludes that there is no meaning in life except that which a man gives and the aims of most men have no surpassing dignity. To raise ourselves above the senseless flux, we must cease being merely human, all-too human. We must be hard against ourselves and overcome ourselves; we must become creators instead of remaining mere creatures. This dimension of Overman takes us to the next concept, namely, 'Eternal Recurrence.' Though we do not discuss it in a detailed manner, it has its own importance to be explained briefly.

ETERNAL RECURRENCE

The notion of eternal recurrence can be viewed in two ways: cosmological or non-cosmological, but both the ways involve a supreme affirmation of life. On one level, it expresses the view that time is cyclical and that we will live every moment of our lives over and over, infinite times, each time exactly the same. It simply means that each passing moment is not fleeting but rather echoes for all eternity. Nietzsche's ideal is to be able to embrace the eternal recurrence and live in affirmation of this idea. In other words, we should aim to live conscious of the fact that each moment will be repeated infinitely, and we should feel only supreme joy at the prospect.

On another level, the doctrine of the eternal recurrence involves Nietzsche's distinctive metaphysical notions. Nietzsche contends that there is no such thing as being: everything is always changing, always in a state of becoming. Because nothing is fixed, there are no 'things' that we can distinguish and set apart from other 'things.' All of reality is intertwined, such that we cannot pass judgment on one aspect of reality without passing judgment on all of reality. To put it differently, we cannot feel regret for one aspect of our lives and joy for another because these two aspects of our lives cannot properly be distinguished from one another. In recognizing that all of life is one indistinguishable swirl of becoming, we are faced with the simple choice of saying *yes* to all life or *no* to all life. Naturally, Nietzsche argues that the *yes*-saying attitude is preferable.

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 term 'Overman.'

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2) Pen down how the image of sea is compared to that of the Overman.

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3.9 LET US SUM UP

One who knows only the suffering life of Nietzsche will tend to think that he is a sickly being and his philosophy is too sickly and pessimistic. But he learnt from his sickness. He learnt to affirm life in spite of his sickness. He saw the religions, especially Christianity and the traditional morality to be hostile to the dignity and development of human beings. Thus, he started as a nihilist, but confronted the nihilism actively by affirming the self. He came out with the notion called 'will to power,' which is understood as the drive, a drive which makes the human beings strive for growth, overcoming all the obstacles. 'Will to power' is nothing but life itself. Against the morality, Nietzsche becomes prophetic in demanding to devalue the existing morality (Christian, Kantian and Utilitarian), which is nihilistic so that he can present a renewed moral ground or to be specific, a renewed amoral ground. On his way he proclaimed the 'death of God.' Then, follows his Superman or Overman, who overcomes every single difficulty and who is beyond 'good and evil.' He is far superior to man who is merely a human, all-too human. The notions 'will to power' and the Eternal Recurrence paves the platform for the Overman.

Though we would be able to criticize every notion of Nietzsche, we just ask a few questions, was he right? Would we be able to reevaluate morality completely? No God, no morality, no religion. Then, what will be the standard to base ourselves on? The 'death of God' would become a slogan when it does not serve the purpose! Who creates Overman? When? Overman or Overmen? What about the rest? Should they be considered as not worthy to live? Does the 'will to power' consider the life as just physiological? Is the will just a drive? If the world is valueless and nihilistic, are the above said notions necessary at all, because the ideal he has shown seems to lead us to perfect nihilism? Are his revalued notions meaningful, because the affirmation of power, however sublimated, seems to lead to subjugation?

3.10 KEY WORDS

Nihilism: 'Nihil' signifies 'primarily a value of nil.' It means nothingness.

Will to Power: The fundamental drive to explain life's doings. The life, the world is nothing but the 'will to power.'

Death of God: It is an attempt at a diagnosis of contemporary civilization, not a metaphysical speculation about the ultimate reality.

Overman (Übermensch): 'Über' signifies over, across or beyond. Superman is over the man who is too human.

Eternal Recurrence: It is the view that time is cyclical and that we will live every moment of our lives over and over an infinite number of times.

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3.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

1. Nietzsche describes nihilism as 'ambiguous' in that it can be symptomatic of either strength or weakness. Nietzsche claims that nihilism is a necessary step in the transition to a revaluation of all values. It is the most extreme form of pessimism. In simple terms, it is the belief that everything is meaningless. It arises from weariness. Nihilism is a transitional stage that

accompanies human development, cleaning and clearing away outdated value systems so that something new can arise in their place. Nietzsche speaks of two kinds of nihilism: passive nihilism or incomplete nihilism and active nihilism or perfect nihilism. Passive nihilism is characterized by a weak will and active nihilism by a strong will.

2. Nietzsche speaks of two kinds of nihilism: passive nihilism or incomplete nihilism and active nihilism or perfect nihilism. Passive nihilism is characterized by a weak will and active nihilism by a strong will. Passive nihilism is more the traditional belief that 'all is meaningless.' God and the morality were the highest values but they do not have any meaning or value anymore. At the same time it is not enough that we try to be non-metaphysicians but it is necessary to be also active nihilists. If we are confronted with nihilism, we should face it actively and affirmatively. One should not try to value something that is not there as passive nihilists do. Rather we need to face actively of the baseless, valueless world. This would indicate active or perfect nihilism.

Check Your Progress II

1. The 'will to power' is considered as being the essence of a willing being's nature. Nietzsche makes the 'will to power' as the fundamental drive to explain life's doings. The 'will to power' is treated as the drive of a being to 'overcome' itself or in simple terms, to make better or to become more than what it is at present.

2. Nietzsche's famous work, *The Genealogy of Morals* discusses his idea of interplay between the 'noble' class, Romans and the 'slave' class, Jews. While the Romans were painted as strong, rich, and powerful, the Jews were weak, poor, and lacking in power. However, this dichotomy of power caused deep seated hatred to brew within the Jewish class. Driven by hatred and keen intellects, the Jews came to overpower the Romans not with weapons and money, but with morality. Whatever the Romans were deemed 'evil' or sinful, thus anything that was Jewish was made 'good.'

Check Your Progress III

1. The announcement of the 'death of God' by the madman occurs in *The Gay Science*. The madman shouts, "Where is God?" and he continues, "We have killed him, thus we are murderers." The whole world now looks again baseless. There is nothing beyond to ensure us

comfort. And, the message of the 'death of God' is not merely an announcement for the extinction of religion. It includes the non-believers too to have a broader understanding going beyond mere announcement of the decline of religion which bases itself on God.

2. The announcement of the 'death of God' is an arrow shot to devalue the Christian, Kantian and other foundations of morality. Christian morality has its foundation in God. The Kantian foundation of morality is different at the start; but at the end with the postulation of God it becomes essentially related to Christianity. The utilitarian principles keeping the morality of the community have a direct link with the herd (Christian morality): the norm of altruism is nothing but the 'love of neighbor' – the central theme of Christianity. Hence Nietzsche sees all morality to be related to Christian morality. Now the proclamation of 'death of God' shakes the foundation of morality itself.

Check your Answers IV

1. The term 'Overman' (Übermensch) carries two meanings. 'Über' signifies 'over' in the sense of height and self-transformation; it suggests the elevation of mankind's highest self into an experience of being that has no trace of moralism or the fiction of free will. It can also suggest 'across' or 'beyond' and Nietzsche employs this second resonance to characterize 'man' as a bridge we must pass across toward a life free of resentment and negativity. The term is never applied to an individual, and Nietzsche plainly considered neither himself nor Zarathustra, whom he often ridiculed, an Overman.

2. One of the images that Nietzsche uses to explain about the Overman is the image of the sea. The present man is like a river that is contaminated. He is corrupt to the core. The Overman is like a 'sea' to receive polluted water and not be defiled. The image shows that man is nothing compared to the Overman and explains that any happenings or occurrences of life do not defile the Overman. Whatever comes on his way, be it suffering, or pleasant occurrences, he is not affected by the situation, rather he affirms himself and establishes himself.

UNIT 4 SIGMUND FREUD

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- 4.4. The Psychosexual Stages of Development
- 4.5. The Structural Model of Personality (id, ego and superego)
- 4.6. The Oedipus Crisis
- 4.7. His Psychoanalytic Theory
- 4.8. His Theory of the Unconscious
- 4.9. His Philosophy
- 4.10. Let Us Sum Up
- 4.11. Key Words
- 4.12. Further Readings and References
- 4.13. Answers to Check Your Progress

4.0. OBJECTIVES

Sigmund Freud has greatly influenced the study of the human personality. His research and work on the origin and treatment of mental illness has helped form the basis of modern psychiatry. This unit, therefore, provides valuable information about the life and works of Freud. It offers information concerning different theories like psychosexual development, structure of human personality, the Oedipus crisis, the unconscious, his psychoanalytical approach and a brief understanding of him as a philosopher.

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Sigmund Freud, the physiologist, medical doctor and father of psychoanalysis, is generally recognized as one of the most influential and authoritative thinkers of the twentieth century. He revolutionized the ideas on how human mind works and established the theory that unconscious motives control much of human behavior. Freud's strongest impact occurred in psychiatry and psychology. His work has helped millions of mentally ill patients. His theories have brought new approaches in child rearing, education and sociology, and have provided new themes for many authors and artists. Most people in Western society view human behavior in Freudian terms.

4.2. FREUD'S LIFE

Sigmund Freud was born on 6th May, 1856 in a small town Frieberg, Moravia in Austria. His father Jakob was a wool merchant with a keen mind and a good sense of humor. His mother Amalie was a lively woman, her husband's second wife and twenty years younger to him. Being the first of their eight children and having a precocious intellect, his parents favored him over other siblings from the early stages of his childhood. The economic crisis of 1857 caused the loss of his father's job and made his family move to Vienna, where he was to live and work for a very great part of his life.

As Freud was a brilliant student he joined the medical faculty in the University of Vienna. He received his medical degree in 1881 and worked as a medical doctor at Vienna General Hospital. In 1886 he married Martha Bernays and had six children, the youngest of whom, Anna, was herself to become a distinguished psychoanalyst. In the greater part of the year 1886, Freud spent his life in Paris, where he was influenced by the French neurologist Jean Charcot. Charcot was, at that time, using hypnotism to treat hysteria and other abnormal mental conditions. On his return to Vienna, Freud experimented hypnotism and found that it had no lasting beneficial effects on patients.

After abandoning hypnosis, Freud set up a treatment in neuropsychiatry with the help of Joseph Breuer, his colleague and friend. In this treatment, the patient is made to talk uninhibitedly about the earliest occurrences of the symptoms. This came to be known as “talking cure”, as the ultimate goal of this talking was to release the emotional energy imprisoned in the unconscious mind. Later, Freud developed and refined his original theory and practice of psychoanalysis. His books and lectures brought him both fame and ostracism from the mainstream of the medical community. Freud emigrated to England just before World War II when Vienna became an increasingly dangerous place for the Jews, especially for the ones as famous as Freud. After a life of remarkable vigour and creative productivity, he died of cancer in England on 23rd September, 1939.

4.3. HIS IMPORTANT WORKS

The Origin of Psychoanalysis: Letters to Wilhelm Flies, Drafts and Notes: 1887-1902, New York: Basic Books, 1954.

“Screen Memories”, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, New York: Macmillan, 1953 (vol.3, pp. 299-322).

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“On the History of the Psycho-analytic Movement”, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, New York: Macmillan, 1953 (vol.14, pp. 1-66).

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“Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety”, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, New York: Macmillan, 1959 (vol.20, pp. 177-178).

“The Future of an Illusion”, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, New York: Macmillan, 1961 (vol.21, pp. 5-58).

“Civilization and Its Discontents”, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, New York: Macmillan, 1961 (vol.22, pp. 64-148).

4.4. THE PSYCHOSEXUAL STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

The concept of **psychosexual stages of development**, as envisioned by Sigmund Freud is the central element in his sexual drive theory. For him, the sex drive is the most important motivating force in man, including children and even infants. Man’s capacity for orgasm or sexuality is neurologically present from birth. Sexuality, for Freud, is not only intercourse, but all pleasurable sensation from the skin. At different times in our lives, different parts of our skin give us greatest pleasure. For example, an infant finds greatest pleasure in sucking, especially at the breast. Freud had the making of psychosexual stages of development in man with regard to pleasurable sensation. Each stage is characterized by the erogenous zone that is the source of the libidinal drive during that stage. These stages are, in order: oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital.

The first stage of psychosexual development is the **Oral stage**. This stage lasts from the beginning of one's life till (about) the 18th month. During this stage the gratifying activities are nursing, eating, as well as mouth movement, including sucking, gumming biting and swallowing. Here, the mothers' breast is the only source of food and drink, which also represents her love. In this stage, the gratification of needs will lead to the formation of independence and trust.

The second stage is called **Anal stage**, which lasts from about 18th month till three or four years old. In this stage, the focus of drive energy moves from the upper digestive tract to the lower end and the anus. The gratifying activities are bowel movement and the withholding of such movement. In this stage, children are taught when, where and how excretion is appropriate by the society. Thus, children discover their own ability to control and adjust such movements.

The third stage is called **Phallic stage**, which lasts from three or four years till the fifth or sixth year. Here the gratification is focused on the genital fondling, but not in the form of adult sexuality, since the children are physically immature. Children become increasingly aware of their body and are curious about the bodies of other children. This is probably the most challenging stage in a person's psychosexual development. The key event at this stage, according to Freud, is the child's feeling of attraction toward the parent of the opposite sex, together with envy and fear of the same-sex parent.

The fourth stage of psychosexual development is the **Latent stage**. This stage lasts from five or six years old till puberty. During this stage, sexual feelings are suppressed in children and for the sake of other aspects of life, like learning, hobbies, adjusting to the social environment outside home, forming beliefs and values, developing same-sex friendship, etc. Problems however might occur during this stage on account of the inability of the child (ego) to redirect the drive energy to activities accepted by the social environment.

The fifth and last stage of psychosexual development is called **Genital stage**, which starts from puberty onwards until development stops, which is ideally when adulthood starts. The gratifying

activities during this stage are masturbation and heterosexual relationships. This stage is marked by a renewed sexual interest and desire without any fixation. It includes the formation of love relationships and families, or acceptance of responsibilities associated with adulthood. If people experience difficulties at this stage, it is because the damage was done in the early stages.

This is a true stage theory, meaning that Freudians believe that we all go through these stages, in this order and pretty close to these ages.

4.5. THE STRUCTURAL MODEL OF PERSONALITY (ID, EGO AND SUPEREGO)

According to Sigmund Freud, human personality has three aspects or structures, which work together to produce all of our complex behaviors: the **id**, the **ego** and the **superego**. This three-tier structure of human personality needs to be well-balanced in order to have good amount of psychological energy available and to have reasonable mental health. The ego has a difficult time dealing with the competing demands of the super ego and id. This conflict, according to psychoanalytic view, is an intrinsic and pervasive part of human experience.

According to Freud, we are born with our **id**. The id is an important part of our personality because as newborns, it allows us to get our basic needs met. It works in keeping track with the pleasure principle, which can be understood as a demand to take care of needs immediately with no consideration for the reality of the situation. It is focused on selfishness and instant self-gratification. If you think about it, babies are not really considerate of their parent's wishes. At birth a baby's mind is all **id** – want, want and want. They have no care for time, and do not consider whether their parents are sleeping or relaxing. When the id wants something, nothing else is important. Hence, the id functions in the irrational and emotional part of the mind.

The **ego**, unlike the id, functions according to the reality principle, which says “take care of a need as soon as an appropriate object is found.” It deals with the demands of reality. The ego is called the executive branch of personality because it uses reasoning to make decisions. However, as the ego struggles to keep the id happy, it meets with obstacles in the world. The ego

understands that other people also have needs and desires and that sometimes being impulsive or selfish can hurt us in the long run. Therefore, the ego functions with the rational part of the mind. It realizes the need for compromise and negotiates between the id and the super ego. In other words, the ego is the mediator between the id and the super ego, trying to ensure that the needs of both the id and the super ego are satisfied. The ego's job is to get the id's pleasures met but by being reasonable and bearing the long term consequences in mind. Therefore, the ego comprises that organized part of the personality structure which includes defensive, perceptual, intellectual-cognitive, and executive functions.

It is at this point that Freud introduces his concept of the '**super ego**' – a term that has since passed into everyday discourse. The super ego in the Freudian structure of personality is the moral part of us and develops due to the moral and ethical restraints placed on us by our caregivers. It takes into account whether something is right or wrong. The super ego can be thought of as a type of conscience that punishes misbehavior with feelings of guilt (for example: having extra-marital affairs). It acts as the conscience, maintaining our sense of morality and proscription from taboos. It tends to stand in opposition to the desires of the id because of their conflicting objectives. It strives to act in a socially appropriate manner, whereas the id just wants instant self-gratification. It helps us to fit into society by getting us to act in socially acceptable ways.

In a healthy person, according to Freud, the ego is the strongest so that it can satisfy the needs of the id and not upset the super ego, and still take into consideration the reality of every situation. If the id gets too strong, impulse and self gratification take over the person's life. If the super ego becomes too strong, the person would be driven by rigid morals and unbending in his or her interactions with the world.

Check Your Progress I

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

b) Check your answers with those provide in the end of the unit.

What are the psychosexual stages of development according to Freud?

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How does Freud divide the structure of human personality? Explain.

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4.6. THE OEDIPUS CRISIS

Each psychosexual stage has certain difficult tasks associated with it where problems are more likely to arise. For the oral stage, this is weaning. For the anal stage, it's toilet training. For the phallic stage, it is the Oedipal crisis, named after the ancient Greek story of king Oedipus, who killed his father and married his mother. According to Freud, the Oedipus complex is a universal phenomenon and is responsible for much unconscious guilt. It is the attachment of the child to the parent of the opposite sex, accompanied by envious and aggressive feelings toward the parent of the same sex. These feelings are largely repressed (i.e., made unconscious) because of the fear of displeasure or punishment by the parent of the same sex. And also Freud says that these drives are derived from our primitive ancestry and are hidden within our subconscious.

Resolution of the Oedipus complex is believed to occur by identification with the parent of the same sex and by the renunciation of sexual interest in the parent of the opposite sex. Freud considered this complex to be the cornerstone of the superego and the nucleus of all human relationships. Many psychiatrists, while acknowledging the significance of the Oedipal relationships to personality development in our culture, ascribe love and attractions toward one parent and hatred and antagonism toward the other not necessarily to sexual rivalry but to resentment of parental authoritarian power.

4.7. HIS PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

Psychoanalysis is a body of ideas developed by Freud and continued by others. It is primarily devoted to the study of human psychological functioning and behavior, although it also can be applied to societies. Under the broad umbrella of psychoanalysis there are different theoretical orientations regarding the underlying theory of understanding of human mental setup, human development and human disorders. The various approaches in treatment called “psychoanalytic” vary as much as the different theories. The most fundamental concept of psychoanalysis is the notion of the unconscious mind as a reservoir for repressed memories of traumatic events which continually influence conscious thought and behavior.

Freud’s account of the sexual genesis and nature of neurosis led him naturally to develop a clinical treatment for treating human disorders. This has become so influential today that when people speak of “psychoanalysis” they frequently refer exclusively to the clinical treatment; however, the term properly designates both the clinical treatment and the theory which underlies it. The aim of the method may be stated simply in general terms to re-establish a harmonious relationship between the three elements (id, ego and super ego) which constitute the mind by excavating and resolving unconscious repressed conflicts. Freud believed that the repressed conflicts were buried in the deepest recesses of the unconscious mind. Here the unconscious does not include all that is not conscious, rather only what is actively repressed from conscious thought or what the person is averse to knowing consciously. In a sense this view places the self

in relationship to their unconscious as an adversary, warring with itself to keep hidden what is unconscious. The therapist is then a mediator trying to allow the unspoken or unspeakable to reveal itself using the tools of psychoanalysis. Accordingly, he gets his patients to relax in a position in which they are deprived of strong sensory stimulation, even of keen awareness of the presence of the analyst, and then encourages them to speak freely and uninhibitedly, preferably without forethought, in the belief that he can thereby discern the unconscious forces lying behind what is said.

The process is necessarily a difficult and protracted one, and it is therefore one of the primary tasks of the analyst to help the patient recognize and overcome his own natural resistances, which may exhibit themselves as hostility towards the analyst. Freud always took the occurrence of resistance as a sign that he was on the right track in his assessment of the underlying unconscious causes of the patient's condition. The correct interpretation of the patient's dreams, slips of tongue, free-associations and responses to carefully selected questions lead the analyst to a point where he can locate the unconscious repressions producing the neurotic symptoms, invariably in terms of the patient's passage through the sexual developmental process, the manner in which the conflicts implicit in this process were handled, and the libidinal content of his family relationships. To effect a cure, he must facilitate the patient himself to become conscious of unresolved conflicts buried in the deep recesses of the unconscious mind, and to confront and engage with them directly.

Therefore, the object of psychoanalytic treatment may be said to be a form of self-understanding, which once acquired, it is up to the patient, in consultation with the analyst, to determine how he shall handle this newly-acquired understanding of the unconscious forces which motivate him. One possibility is the channeling of the sexual energy into the achievement of social, artistic and scientific goals. Another would be of suppression, that is to say, the conscious and rational control of the formerly repressed drives.

Hence, Freudian psychoanalysis refers to a specific type of treatment in which the analytic patient verbalizes thoughts, including free associations, fantasies and dreams, from which the analyst formulates the unconscious conflicts causing the patient's symptoms and character

problems, and interprets them for the patient to create insight for resolution of the problems. Psychoanalytic treatment can clarify how patients unconsciously become their own worst enemies: how unconscious and symbolic reactions that have been stimulated by experience are causing symptoms of human disorder.

4.8. HIS THEORY OF THE UNCONSCIOUS

The notion of an unconscious or subconscious has been defined in a variety of ways over time, but in psychology it is considered to be the deepest level of consciousness, a part of which we are not directly aware, but still contains elements that affect conscious behavior. For Freud, the psyche is composed of different levels of consciousness, often defined in three parts as the consciousness, pre-consciousness (which can be recalled with effort), and beneath both these, the unconscious (which is beyond the reach of voluntary recall).

Freud didn't exactly invent the idea of the conscious versus unconscious mind, but he certainly was responsible for making it popular. The conscious mind is what you are aware of at any particular moment, your present perceptions, memories, thoughts, fantasies, feelings, those you have now. Working closely with the conscious mind is what Freud called the preconscious, what we might today call "available memory", anything that can easily be made conscious, the memories you are not thinking about at the moment but can readily bring back to mind. Now one has a problem with these two layers of mind. But Freud suggested that these are the smallest parts.

The largest part by far is the unconscious. It includes all the things that are not easily available to awareness, including many things that have their origins there, such as our drives or instincts, and things that are put there because we can't bear to look at them, such as the memories and emotions with trauma. According to Freud, the unconscious is the source of our motivations, whether they be simple desires for food or sex, neurotic compulsions, or the motives for an artist or scientist. And yet, we are often driven to deny or resist becoming conscious of these motives, and they are often available to us only in disguised form.

4.9. HIS PHILOSOPHY

Freud did not consider himself as a philosopher, although he greatly admired Franz Brentano, known for this theory of perception. In his 1932 lecture on psychoanalysis as “a philosophy of life”, Freud commented on the distinction between science and philosophy. He says that philosophy is not opposed to science, it believes itself as if it were a science, and to a certain extent it makes use of the same methods; but it parts company with science, in that it clings to the illusion that it can produce a complete and coherent picture of the universe, though in fact that picture falls to pieces with every new advance in our knowledge. Its methodological error lies in the fact that it over-estimates the epistemological value of our logical operations, and to a certain extent admits the validity of other sources of knowledge, such as intuition.

In fact, Freud’s philosophy of the Unconscious is the only comprehensive and systematic study of his philosophy of mind. Freud’s model of the mind is often considered to be a challenge to the enlightenment model of rational agency, which was a key element of modern philosophy. He emerged as a sophisticated philosopher who addresses many of the central questions that concern contemporary philosophers. His theories have had a tremendous influence on some French philosophers.

Check Your Progress II

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

b) Check your answers with those provide in the end of the unit.

1. Write a brief note about the psychoanalytic theory of Freud.

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2. What do you understand by Freud’s theory of the Unconscious?

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4.10. LET US SUM UP

This unit on Sigmund Freud dealt with his different theories such as psychosexual development, structure of personality, the Oedipus crisis and the unconscious etc with a sketch of him as a philosopher. As he was concerned about human psyche in its depth and treatment, he is considered to be one of the most influential and authoritative thinkers of the 20th century on works of human mind and behavior.

In psychosexual stages of development he drives home to his sex drive theory in five stages; oral, anal, phallic, latent and genital, where the common element is the pleasurable sensation from skin. Freud developed the structural model of personality which is comprised of id, ego and superego. He said that this three-tier structure of personality has to be well-balanced. The id allows us to get our basic needs. The ego functions according to the reality principles, which tells “take care of a need as soon as an appropriate object is found”. The superego is the moral part of us and develops due to the moral and ethical restrains placed on us by our caretakers. According to Freud the Oedipus complex is climaxed in the phallic stage and is a universal phenomenon with an unconscious guilt. It is characterized by an attachment of the child to the parent of the opposite sex, accompanied by envious and aggressive feelings towards the parent of the same sex.

The most fundamental concept of psychoanalysis is the notion of the unconscious mind as a reservoir for suppressed memories of traumatic events which continually influence conscious

thought and behavior. The aim of the psychoanalytic method may be stated simply in general terms to re-establish a harmonious relationship between the three elements (id, ego and superego) which constitute the mind by excavating and resolving unconscious repressed conflicts. The process is necessarily a difficult one and it is therefore one of the primary tasks of the analyst to help the patient recognize and overcome his own natural resistances. Hence, Freudian psychoanalysis refers to a specific type of treatment in which the analytic patient verbalizes thoughts, from which the analyst formulates the unconscious conflicts causing the patient's symptoms and character problems, and interprets them for the patient to create insight for resolution of the problems.

In his theory of the unconscious he distinguishes three levels of consciousness, as the consciousness, the pre-consciousness and the unconsciousness. According to him, the unconscious is the source of our motivations. Though Freud did not consider himself to be a philosopher, in his 1932 lecture he considered 'psychoanalysis' as 'a philosophy of life'. He said philosophy is not opposed to science as both have similar methods of approach. In fact, Freud's philosophy of the Unconscious is the only comprehensive and systematic study of his philosophy of mind. Finally, we can say that he emerged as a sophisticated philosopher who addressed many of the central questions that the contemporary philosophers are concerned with.

4.11. KEY WORDS

Conflict: It is actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interests. It can be internal (within oneself) or external (between two or more individuals).

Complex: It is a group of mental factors that are unconsciously associated by the individual with a particular subject and influence the individual's attitude and behavior.

Motivation: It is the internal condition that activates behavior and gives it direction; energizes and directs goal-oriented behavior.

Gratification: It is the positive emotional reaction of happiness or pleasure in response to a fulfillment of a desire.

4.12. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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4.13. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress I

1. According to Sigmund Freud, there are five psychosexual stages of development. Each stage is characterized by the erogenous zone that is the source of the libidinal drive during that stage. These stages are oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital. The **oral stage** lasts from the

beginning of one's life till (about) the 18th month. During this stage the gratifying activities are nursing, eating, as well as mouth movement, including sucking, gumming biting and swallowing. In this stage, the gratification of needs will lead to the formation of independence and trust. The **Anal stage** lasts from about 18th month till three or four years old. In this stage, the focus of drive energy moves from the upper digestive tract to the lower end and the anus. The gratifying activities are bowel movement and the withholding of such movement. In this stage, children discover their own ability to control and adjust such movements. The **Phallic stage** lasts from three or four years till five or six years old. Here the gratification is focused on the genital fondling, but not in the form of adult sexuality, since the children are physically immature. This is probably the most challenging stage in a person's psychosexual development. The key event at this stage, according to Freud, is the child's feeling of attraction toward the parent of the opposite sex, together with envy and fear of the same-sex parent. The **Latent stage** stage lasts from five or six years old till puberty. During this stage, sexual feelings are suppressed in children. Problems however might occur during this stage on account of the inability of the child (ego) to redirect the drive energy to activities accepted by the social environment. The **Genital stage** starts from puberty onwards until development stops, which is ideally when adulthood starts. The gratifying activities, during stage, are masturbation and heterosexual relationships. This stage is marked by a renewed sexual interest and desire without any fixation. If people experience difficulties at this stage, it is because the damage was done in the early stages.

2. According to Sigmund Freud, human personality has three aspects or structures, which work together to produce all of our complex behaviors: the **id**, the **ego** and the **superego**. This three-tier structure of human personality needs to be well-balanced in order to have good amount of psychological energy available and to have reasonable mental health. The **id** is an important part of our personality because as newborns, it allows us to get our basic needs met. It works in keeping with the pleasure principle. The **ego**, unlike the id, functions according to the reality principle. It deals with the demands of reality. The ego is called the executive branch of personality because it uses reasoning to make decisions. However, as the ego struggles to keep the id happy, it meets with obstacles in the world. It functions with the rational part of the mind. It realizes the need for compromise and negotiates between the id and the super ego. Therefore, the ego comprises that organized

part of the personality structure. The **super ego** in the Freudian structure of personality is the moral part of us and develops due to the moral and ethical restraints placed on us by our caregivers. It takes into account whether something is right or wrong. The super ego can be thought of as a type of conscience that punishes misbehavior with feelings of guilt. It strives to act in a socially appropriate manner. It helps us to fit into society by getting us to act in socially acceptable ways. In a healthy person, according to Freud, the ego is the strongest so that it can satisfy the needs of the id and not upset the super ego, and still take into consideration the reality of every situation.

Check your progress II

1. Psychoanalysis is a body of ideas developed by Freud and continued by others. It is primarily devoted to the study of human psychological functioning and behavior. The most fundamental concept of psychoanalysis is the notion of the unconscious mind as a reservoir for repressed memories of traumatic events which continually influence conscious thought and behavior. Freud's account of the sexual genesis and nature of neurosis led him naturally to develop a clinical treatment for treating human disorders. The aim of the method may be stated simply in general terms to re-establish a harmonious relationship between the three elements (id, ego and super ego) which constitute the mind by excavating and resolving unconscious repressed conflicts. Freud believed that the repressed conflicts were buried in the deepest recesses of the unconscious mind. Here the unconscious does not include all that is not conscious, rather only what is actively repressed from conscious thought or what the person is averse to knowing consciously. The therapist is then a mediator trying to allow the unspoken or unspeakable to reveal itself using the tools of psychoanalysis. The process is necessarily a difficult and protracted one, and it is therefore one of the primary tasks of the analyst to help the patient recognize and overcome his own natural resistances, which may exhibit themselves as hostility towards that analyst. To effect a cure, he must facilitate the patient himself to become conscious of unresolved conflicts buried in the deep recesses of the unconscious mind, and to

confront and engage with them directly. Therefore, the object of psychoanalytic treatment may be said to be a form of self-understanding, which once acquired, it is up to the patient, in consultation with the analyst, to determine how he shall handle this newly-acquired understanding of the unconscious forces which motivate him.

2. According to Freud, human psyche is composed of different levels of consciousness, often defined in three parts as the consciousness, preconsciousness (which can be recalled with effort), and beneath both these, the unconscious (which is beyond the reach of voluntary recall). Freud didn't exactly invent the idea of the conscious versus unconscious mind, but he certainly was responsible for making it popular. But Freud suggested that the consciousness and the preconsciousness are the smallest parts. The largest part by far is the unconscious. It includes all the things that are not easily available to awareness, including many things that have their origins there, such as our drives or instincts, and things that are put there because we can't bear to look at them, such as the memories and emotions with trauma. According to Freud, the unconscious is the source of our motivations, whether they be simple desires for food or sex, neurotic compulsions, or the motives of an artist or scientist. And yet, we are often driven to deny or resist becoming conscious of these motives, and they are often available to us only in disguised form.

BLOCK 2

The term “Continental philosophy” in contemporary philosophy refers to philosophical thinking that spread in Europe during the end of the 19th century and the 20th century. The various movements that are included under this heading are: German idealism, phenomenology, Existentialism, Hermeneutics, structuralism, Post structuralism, Critical theory of the Frankfurt school and French Feminism. In this block we will be studying early continental philosophers and later continental philosophers. They are Edmund Husserl, Heidegger, Theistic Existentialists (Kierkegaard and Marcel) and Atheistic Existentialists (Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus).

The following four units give us a glimpse into what continental philosophy is and the various contributors of this period such as Husserl, Heidegger, the theistic existentialists and atheistic existentialists.

Unit 1 introduces us into the philosophy of Edmund Husserl. Introducing his life and influences, this unit will focus on what was to form the basis of the early continental philosophy, the phenomenological method. This in turn includes a number of reductions which will lead one to the Consciousness as such. Husserl’s method inspired a number of philosophers to follow their own paths.

Unit 2 is exclusively devoted to the study of the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger. The unit brilliantly exposes Heidegger’s thought and life, his fundamental Ontology, preliminary Analysis of Dasein and his primordial interpretation. It will tell us why and how Heidegger has become one of the most influential philosophers of the contemporary period.

Unit 3 highlights the views of some of the theistic existentialists. We have two theistic existentialists: Kierkegaard who redefines existence and proposes blind leap as the foundation of faith and Gabriel Marcel who digs deep into such issues as incarnation and freedom, philosophy of relation, relation to the finite other, inter-subjectivity, and relation to the Absolute Other in faith and hope.

Unit 4 deals with some of the Atheistic existentialists like Sartre and Albert Camus, who developed their philosophy in which God did not have any major role to play. Sartre analyzes existence and concludes that the presence of the other destroys one's freedom and increases anxiety. Camus' philosophical background is the injustice that he faced and the absurdity in which one finds oneself.

As we see in these units, an important characteristic trait of continental philosophy is its emphasis on meta-philosophy. The continental philosophers have often sought to redefine the method and nature of philosophy itself.

UNIT 1 HUSSERLIAN PHENOMENOLOGY

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introducing Husserl's Career and Thought
- 1.2 Fundamental Conceptions in Husserl's Philosophy
- 1.3 Development of Husserlian Phenomenology
- 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

The main objective of this Unit, in which Early Continental Philosophy is introduced, is to present the phenomenological method rather elaborately. It is done on purpose, since most of the continental philosophers of contemporary period basically follow Husserl's phenomenological method, although most of them have deviated considerably from him. Phenomenology is not confined to Husserl's philosophy, nor is it right to say that all of Husserl's philosophy is phenomenology. All the same, the central figure of and the initiator to this movement is none other than Husserl. Hence knowledge of Husserlian thought will give a solid foundation to the contemporary Western philosophy. It will enable the students to understand the other thinkers of contemporary period. We shall begin by introducing his career and thought, followed by some of the basic conceptions that motivated Husserl to initiate such a philosophy. As his phenomenology passes through three stages, we will be paying attention to all of them. But greater emphasis will be placed on the 'phenomenological period' during which the method got developed.

1.1 INTRODUCING HUSSERL'S CAREER AND THOUGHT

Edmund Husserl was born in Moravia (then in Austria, now part of Czechoslovakia) on 8th April 1859, of Jewish parents. After finishing his basic schooling, he joined the university of Leipzig and then university of Berlin, where he was trained under the leading mathematicians of the time in rigorous and disciplined way of thinking. His interest was gradually turned to philosophy. In Vienna he did his doctorate on: "Contributions to the theory of Calculus of Variations." It is in Vienna that he met and attended the lectures of Franz Brentano, who impressed him by the way in which philosophy and science were linked. Husserl taught in three universities. At the university of Halle (1887-1901) he was Assistant to Prof. Stumpf. Here he published his *Philosophy of Arithmetic* and the first part of *Logical Investigations*. This period corresponds to his pre-phenomenological phase. From 1901-16 he was at Göttingen as extraordinary professor. Here he wrote *Lectures on Phenomenology*, *Idea of Phenomenology* and *Ideas-I*. This period corresponds to the phenomenological phase. In 1916 he was called to Freiburg as a full-fledged professor. Here he completed *Ideas-II*, *First Philosophy*, *Phenomenological Psychology* and *Cartesian Meditations etc.* This period corresponds to that of pure phenomenology. He died in 1938. Herman Van Breda went to Freiburg to do his doctorate in 1938 on phenomenology. On learning that the Nazis were intending to destroy Husserl's manuscripts, he managed to get them shifted to Louvain, and established the *Husserl-Archives* there. Now his manuscripts are being edited and published under the general title *Husserliana*.

Before we launch ourselves into Husserlian phenomenology, it is good to have a pre-view of phenomenological method. The term 'phenomenology' reminds us of Kant's distinction between phenomenon and noumenon. Husserl was opposed to the dualism of Kant. He agrees that only phenomenon is given, but in it is given the very essence of that which is. When one has described the phenomena, one has described all that can be described. But what is this phenomenon, something purely objective, or purely subjective? It is neither of them, but Husserl locates it in the reconciling of reality and thought. The history of philosophy is a series of attempts at reconciliation. The difference in reconciling occurs due to the more or less emphasis on the subjective or the objective. Husserlian phenomenology is an attempt at reconciling them; but he too experienced in himself this difference of emphasis in his reconciling consciousness and reality. Phenomenology is a return to the things themselves, as opposed to mental constructions, illusions etc. The 'thing' is the direct object of consciousness in its purified form;

hence it is never arbitrary, being conditioned subjectively. The phenomenologist is convinced that an analysis of the things themselves can be made by a return to the pure consciousness. Phenomenology, thus, is the methodical attempt to reach the phenomenon through an investigation of the pure consciousness, the objective content of which is the phenomenon.

1.2 FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTIONS IN HUSSERL'S PHILOSOPHY

Husserl wanted his philosophy to have the scientific rigour and philosophical radicalism. For the modern man scientific ideal is considered as the highest ideal. According to Husserl, Philosophy, being the greatest of the sciences, should employ the ideal of rigorous science. This does not mean that philosophy has to blindly imitate empirical sciences which deal with objects as facts that are measurable. Philosophy is not factual, but ideal or essential (*eidōs* = essence). Philosophy can be a rigorous science, since it is possible to reach truly scientific knowledge of ideal objects, or essences of things. When he speaks of scientific rigour, he had in mind the deductive sciences like *mathematics*. Science for him is a system of knowledge wherein each step is built upon its precedent in a necessary sequence. Such a rigorous connection requires ultimate clarity in basic insights, and systematic order in building up further on them.

Although philosophy claims to be a rigorous science, it has never been so. It can become a radical science by means of critical reflection and profound methodological investigations. For this, it is necessary to have ultimate clarity and systematic order. Together with the scientific rigour, Husserl craves for philosophical radicalism. It necessitates a return to the roots or foundations of all knowledge. The ultimate foundation of all knowledge is to be found in the *things themselves*, the original phenomena to which all our ideas refer ultimately. Going deeper into the things, he was convinced that these roots must be sought in the very consciousness of the knowing subject, to whom the phenomena appear.

1.3 DEVELOPMENT OF HUSSERLIAN PHENOMENOLOGY

Historians of philosophy distinguish three periods in the development of Husserl's philosophy, and this distinction is based on the varying emphasis he placed on the subject or on the object.

Pre-Phenomenological Period

This was the period of his philosophical infancy, during which he came to a slightly greater emphasis on the 'objective'. This was occasioned by certain events and persons. A chance-listening to the lectures by Brentano aroused in Husserl interest in scientific psychology and philosophy. Following Brentano, Husserl had given in his *Philosophy of Arithmetic* a psychological foundation to the concept of number. It developed the idea that the concept of number originated in consciousness as a result of the acts of connecting and collecting 'contents of consciousness'. Thus numbers are entirely of psychical nature. They have only an intentional being. Gottlob Frege, in his review of this book, criticized it, saying that it was a form of psychologism. Husserl took seriously the critique made by Frege. Hence in his *Logical Investigations part I*, Husserl refuted psychologism. 'Psychologism' is the view that the theoretical foundation of maths and logic is supplied by psychology, especially by psychology of knowledge. According to this theory, the laws of mathematics and logic have existence and validity only because they have occurred to some consciousness.

Thus, realizing his mistake, Husserl came to the conclusion, i.e., the untenability of psychologism. In his critique he shows the absurdity of its consequences, and the prejudices on which it is based. The axioms and principles of mathematics and logic are true, not because man thinks of them, but valid in themselves. Besides, if logical laws are dependent on the psychological characteristics of human thinkers, we make them relative to these thinkers. Psychologism is now seen as a form of skeptical relativism and anthropologism in philosophy. Relativism is self-contradictory, as it denies the possibility of all knowledge, while asserting its own truth. Mathematics is concerned with numbers, and not with the operation of counting them. Two plus two is four, even if I do not know or think about it. The mathematical and logical objects are ideal objects, and are beyond the limitations of time; whereas psychical acts are real and temporal in nature. Ideal objects are what they are independently of our knowledge about them. Thus during the pre-phenomenological period Husserl could not come to a clear philosophical stand; rather he was looking for a place to stand as a phenomenologist, which he was able to find during the phenomenological period.

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 a pre-view of Husserlian phenomenology

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2) How did Husserl come to the specificity of pre-phenomenological period?

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Phenomenological Period

It is at this period that Husserl reached a philosophical maturity; and he achieved the reconciliation between the subjective and the objective. He had to look for some reconciliation since the problem posed itself as to how the ‘ideal’ *objects* are given to *consciousness*. He takes up this task in Vol.II of *Logical Investigations*. Some thought that it was a lapse into ‘psychologism’ rejected in Vol. I. He made use of the theory of ‘intentionality’ to work out this reconciliation.

Intentionality Consciousness

In Vol.II of *Logical Investigations*, Husserl holds that a separation between logic and psychological phenomena is inadmissible and impossible. Ideal logical entities are given to us in experiences. The relationship between the ‘ideal objects’ of pure logic and the subjective experiences corresponding to them, illustrates an insight into what pervades whole of his philosophy, i.e., ‘intentionality’. According to this, there is a parallelism between the subjective

act and the objective correlate. This parallelism forms the basis for a correlative investigation under which both the aspects of any phenomenon are to be studied and described in conjunction. To study one without the other would be an artificial abstraction. In Husserl's terms this parallelism came to be known as that between the 'noetic' (act) and 'noematic' (content). (*Noesis* is abstract noun, and *noema* is concrete noun). His aim has been a reconciliation of the objectivity of truth with the subjectivity of the act of knowledge.

The central insight in phenomenological analysis is the theory of intentionality. He owed to Brentano for this theory. According to Brentano, all psychical phenomena intentionally contain an object. Husserl objects to this conception of the immanence of the intentional object to consciousness. For him intentionality means the directedness of the act of consciousness to some object. This object is not immanent to the consciousness itself, but remains transcendent to it. For phenomenology it is not of importance whether or not the object of consciousness actually exists. The object is considered from a special point of view, namely as the objective correlate of an intentional act. Thus for Husserl, intentionality means this: consciousness is directedness to an object, as expressed in: conscious of..., joyful at..., desirous of..... etc. All '*cogito*' contains a '*cogitatum*'. Husserl's notion of intentionality can be clarified with the help of its four characteristics.

First of all, ***intentionality objectivates***. It presents the given data in such a way that the whole object is presented to our consciousness. The various acts of consciousness are referred to the same intentional object. The sameness of the object is compatible with the various ways of referring to it such as: love, doubt, thought, which are the qualities of 'intention' as opposed to the object. When one gives thought to one's mother, it is the person of one's mother that is the objective correlate. It is not the fragmentary aspects, like the kindness or generosity of the mother, but the mother as kind or generous is the objective correlate. Secondly, ***intentionality identifies***. It allows us to assign a variety of successive data to the same referent of meaning. Without an identifying function, there would be nothing but a stream of perceptions, similar but never identical. Intentionality supplies the synthetic function by which the various aspects, perspectives and stages of an object are all focused upon and integrated into the identical core. For instance, the various intentional experiences of one's mother do not take one to different

referents, but to the identical referent: one's mother. Thirdly, *intentionality connects*. Each aspect of the identical object refers to the related aspects, which form its horizon. An object is apprehended only within the context, or horizon that consists of the possible apprehensions. The actual intentional experience of an object does not stand in isolation, but links itself to the other possible intentional experiences. To give an example from the realm of sense experience: the frontal aspect of the statue refers to the lateral, and the lateral to the rear. Because of this 'connecting' function are we able to perceive the 'statue'. Finally, *intentionality constitutes*. It constitutes the intentional object. The intentional object is not conceived as the pre-existent referent to which the intending act refers as something already given, but as something which originates (is constituted) in the act. The snake as fearsome is constituted in the act of one's getting frightened.

Husserl, as a phenomenologist, is not interested in the object in itself, but in the intentional object, constituted in the act consciousness. The intentional object is not immanent to consciousness (as Brentano held), but transcendent to it.

Doctrine of Essence

The core of Husserl's philosophy is the notion of essence, as the Husserlian phenomenology tries to attain the knowledge of 'essence' of reality. Natural science begins with experience and remains therein. They are sciences of *facts*. The world is not exhausted by 'facts', having a spatio-temporal existence, as something existing here and now. Every individual being is contingent, insofar as it is such and such, but essentially could be other than what it is. It belongs to the meaning of every contingent thing and event to have an essential being, an *eidōs*, that can be apprehended in all its purity.

In order to come to the knowledge of essences, Husserl proceeds step by step. He distinguishes between ordinary experience and transcendental experience or intuition. The first is the accurate apprehension of the individual fact. In the ordinary experience, man finds himself as a unique person, the empirical ego. The phenomenologist is not interested in the ordinary, but in the transcendental experience, which is the essential intuition proper. In the transcendental experience, one brackets all reference to existence. For the phenomenological reduction of

essences, Husserl proposes to use 'inductive generalization' and 'imaginative variation' that enable one to eliminate the inessential features in order to come to the essential. Inductive generalization is not anything typically phenomenological; it means nothing other than universalizing from the various particular experiences. 'Imaginative variation' can be understood only in the light of the Husserlian notion of 'horizon'. An object is actually experienced or apprehended only within a setting or horizon, which is the context of the possible apprehensions. It is by imaginative variation that one can move from the limitation of the actual perception to the indeterminacy of what can be perceived. The horizon or the setting of the 'can be perceived' is the objective correlate of the 'can perceive' or the un-actualized capacity of the perceiver. Thus by a varied and systematic process, Husserlian phenomenology claims to attain a 'direct essential insight' or transcendental reduction into the pure eidetic sphere. The essence is the objective content of my transcendently reduced conscious experience. Looking at the object of consciousness, I reach the essence by a method of variation. I can vary the various view-points. The essence is what remains invariable when I vary the various view-points.

Eidetic Reduction

The act of grasping the essence has two aspects: one positive, and the other negative. Eidetic reduction is the positive aspect. It is the gradual penetration into the purified essential residue, gradually revealing the pure subjectivity as the exclusive source of all objectivity. Reduction to objectivity is one of the most difficult notions in Husserl, who has not clearly dealt with it in his published works. In his *Ideas*, he makes a distinction between two types of reductions that are complementary. They are *eidetic* reduction and *transcendental* reduction. Eidetic reduction refers to the distinction between 'fact' and 'essence': factual (particular, historical, existential) is converted into essential (ideal, universal and timeless). This is done by keeping away the 'this-ness' or 'suchness' from the particular object. The transcendental reduction refers to the distinction between the real and the non-real. Essences as the pure *noemata* of pure consciousness are *real*, whether or not it is reduced from an existent or non-existent object. Thus the intentional presence can be reduced from a situation of physical absence. Husserl speaks of several levels of reduction, on each of which we have a subject of greater purity. When the subject is at its purest form, we have the strict science of phenomenology. Only when the subjectivity is absolutely pure, can it be the universal a priori

source of objectivity. To know the subjectivity that has the function of 'constitution' is to know one, which is transcendently related to the objects, i.e, intentionality.

Bracketing (*Epoche*)

Bracketing is the negative aspect in grasping the essence. It is the radical and universal elimination of any aspect of factual existence. The factual or the existential is kept in parenthesis or in bracket. Things under consideration may have existence, but it has no significance whatsoever with regard to the essence of things. Besides the elimination of 'existence', to describe the phenomena correctly, the phenomenologist too must be free from all cultural and philosophical bias. It requires an ascetic neutrality in one's attitude to the phenomenon of one's awareness. Phenomenology deals with the insight into the essences, without *regard* to the empirical conditions of their perceptibility, nor even their existence. It is not a question of making it appear in its factual reality or in its existence, but in its intentional presence as transcendent to consciousness. There is a similarity between Husserl's epoché and Descartes' methodological doubt. Descartes doubted everything; only the ego indubitably exists. In Husserl the world is not doubted, but the judgements about it are suspended. The epoche demands that the philosopher takes a distance from the various solutions, which in the course of history have been proposed for different philosophical problems. It aims at eliminating the factuality, the root of all 'contingency'.

Thus, during the 'phenomenological period' Husserl developed the phenomenological method, and succeeded in reaching a reconciliation between the subjective and the objective.

Period of Pure Phenomenology

After having come to a more or less satisfactory method of phenomenology, Husserl continued his philosophical thinking and reflection. This ended up in a transcendental (pure) phenomenology. It is called 'pure' in order to differentiate it from other pseudo phenomenologies. The distinction is based on the subject matter. The subject matter of pure phenomenology is pure phenomena. The pure phenomena are reached by means of the pure consciousness. Since the publication of *Ideas*, pure phenomenology goes by the name, 'transcendental phenomenology'. In *Ideas* 'transcendental' meant that the phenomenologist

suspends all assertion about reality other than that of consciousness itself. Later on it meant, reaching back to the ultimate source of all knowledge, the subjectivity. Emphasis on the pure subjectivity as the source of all objectivity is the characteristic of this phase.

During the phase of pure phenomenology, Husserl speaks of a universal phenomenology, conceived as the ultimate foundation of all knowledge. His intention was to achieve phenomena in its pure and indubitable form; and for this he bracketed all accidental and incidental aspects, all judgments and interpretations of reality. Husserl started his career with a cry for 'scientific philosophy'. Phenomenology claims to fulfill the need of a scientific philosophy with ultimate clarity in basic insights and systematic order in building up on them. Such a philosophy must be the foundation of all sciences. Since these are found realized in Husserl's phenomenology, it claims to be the 'first philosophy'.

As Husserl moved more towards the subjective, his critics gave him the label of an 'idealist', which he hesitatingly accepted; but he insists that his 'idealism' must be distinguished from the subjective idealism of Berkeley, that makes all being dependent on the psychological consciousness. By contrast, Husserl ties up Being with the transcendently reduced consciousness. Being is nothing apart from the 'meaning' which it receives in the bestowing act of consciousness. Husserl gives two arguments for his idealism: the self-contradictory nature of realism, and the direct phenomenological evidence, supplied by the analysis of transcendental constitution. According to him, Being, by its very meaning, refers us back to acts which assign such being. In other words, being derives its meaning from consciousness. The idea of reality as unrelated to consciousness is self-contradictory. The next argument is related to the first, i.e., the doctrine of transcendental constitution. 'Constitution' does not refer to a static structure of an object, but the dynamic process by which it is built up as an object. It is the intentional consciousness that actively achieves this constitution. Objects exist for me only as objects of consciousness. In his *idealism*, reality is extra-mental, but the meaning of reality is in the mind. His philosophy is called 'idealism' also because it is a search into the *eidos* (essence, meaning). It is transcendental idealism in the sense that the real world is reduced to its pure, transcendental significance.

Towards the end of his career, Husserl gradually wanted to develop a phenomenological philosophy by applying the method to some of the realities. In this context Husserl developed the idea of a 'life-world'—the world of our immediate experience in our everyday life, a world of our concrete experience. The scientist conceals the world as our world. It is a vast domain of subjective phenomena, as they are immediately experienced in all colours and practical meaning. Sciences left out the subjective and the practical aspect of the world, and took only the *objective* aspect. A life-world is to be conceived as an oriented world, with an experiencing self at its centre, designated as such by personal pronouns. Thus the world becomes the one related to life and to the humans, with his human values and aspirations. He tried to make a phenomenological reflection on 'time' as well. The inner consciousness of time shows the following structure: a primal impression of a streaming present, surrounded by a horizon of immediate retention of the past (to be distinguished from active recollection) and of immediate protention (to be distinguished from active expectation). Describing retention, Husserl shows how the consciousness of the present sinks off steadily below the surface, and becomes sedimented in such a way that it is accessible only to acts of recollection. He has not given us any evidence of an active 'constitution' of time, but only of a passive synthetic genesis.

Thirdly Husserl was forced to consider the 'Other', as he was criticized that phenomenology is a purely solipsistic explanation of the intentional constitution. For, when phenomenological reduction brackets, even the belief in the existence of the other subjects too is suspended. In his *Cartesian Meditations* he shows the difficulty of transcendental ego constituting other egos, as equal partners in an inter-subjective community. If the other subjects are to be meaningful, they are to be constituted. But it is not possible, since if the constitution is subjective, it is a constitution of one's own self; if it is objective, others as subjects cannot be constituted. This problem remains unsolved in his published works. For a phenomenological evidence for the knowledge of others, Husserl makes use of 'empathy' giving his own interpretation to it. It is a kind of intentional category, by which I experience another's experience. When we perceive a body other than our own, as there rather than here, we apperceive it as the body of an 'alter ego' by way of an assimilative analogy with our own ego. In this process, the analogizing ego and the analogized 'alter ego' are paired in a characteristic 'coupling'. While the other ego is not accessible as directly as his body, it can be understood as a

modification of our own 'pure ego', by which we put ourselves into his, as if we were in his place. The other egos are thus constituted as transcendental, and these form a community, and thus communication is possible. Finally, he gives a thought about God in his phenomenological structure. When Husserl started his philosophical career, although he was a Jew, he kept the Bible away from him. For, he wanted to start a philosophy absolutely presuppositionless. He was not much concerned about bringing God into his philosophy, nor was there a place for God in his philosophy. His philosophy needed only intentional experience, subjectivity and objectivity. Remaining a bit away from his philosophical method, God is placed in between the ego and the world, who creatively constitutes the world, while my subjectivity meaningfully constitutes the world. Since God is the absolutely absolute, he cannot be comprehended within the focus of my ego.

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 Husserl's notion of intentionality?

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2) What is the role of *Epoche* in Husserlian phenomenology?

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1.4 LET US SUM UP

Husserl's mature thought begins with a concern for the foundations of mathematics, continues with the development of phenomenological method, and concludes with a kind of idealism that is associated with the doctrine of the transcendental ego. His merit consists in the fact that he introduced for the first time the phenomenological method that brought the subjective and the objective to their right place. Thus the greatest contribution of Husserl is the theory of intentionality, with the help of which the subject and object are brought closer to a reconciliation. Many of the later philosophers who used the phenomenological method deviated from him, regarding the importance given to essence rather than existence. Since Husserl did not develop a philosophy with the application of phenomenological method, he could not see some of the weak-points in his method. All the same, we cannot but admire the unique contribution of his to the philosophical world.

1.5 KEY WORDS

We make mention only of some of the typically phenomenological terms.

Intentionality: the necessary connection between subjective act and objective content

Noesis: subjective act

Noema: objective content

Epoche: bracketing the non-essentials to arrive at the pure essence

Eidetic reduction: direct intuition of the *eidōs* (essence)

Transcendental: purified from the ordinary and contingent

1.6 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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1.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

1) Give a pre-view of Husserlian phenomenology

Before the detailed clarification of Husserlian phenomenology, it is good to have a pre-view of phenomenological method. The term 'phenomenology' reminds us of Kant's distinction between phenomenon and noumenon. Husserl was opposed to the dualism of Kant. He agrees that only phenomenon is given, but in it is given the very essence of that which is. When one has described the phenomena, one has described all that can be described. This phenomenon is to be found in the reconciling of reality and thought (objective and subjective). Husserlian phenomenology has succeeded in reconciling them; but he too experienced in himself this difference of emphasis in his reconciling consciousness and reality. Phenomenology is a return to the things themselves, as opposed to mental constructions, illusions etc. The phenomenologist is convinced that an analysis of the things themselves can be made by a return to the pure consciousness. Phenomenology, thus, is the methodical attempt to reach the phenomenon through an investigation of the pure consciousness, the objective content of which is the phenomenon.

2) How did Husserl come to the specificity of pre-phenomenological period?

At the period of his philosophical infancy, Husserl came to a slightly greater emphasis on the 'objective'. This was occasioned by certain events and persons. A chance-listening to the lectures by Brentano aroused in Husserl interest in scientific psychology and philosophy. Following Brentano, Husserl had given in his *Philosophy of Arithmetic* a psychological

foundation to the concept of number. Numbers are entirely of psychical nature. They have only an intentional being. Gottlob Frege, in his review of this book, criticized it, saying that it was a form of psychologism. Husserl took seriously the critique made by Frege. Hence in his *Logical Investigations* (Part-I), Husserl refuted psychologism. 'Psychologism' is the view that the theoretical foundation of maths and logic is supplied by psychology, especially by psychology of knowledge. According to this theory, the laws of maths and logic have existence and validity only because they have occurred to some consciousness. Husserl changed this position and held to the untenability of psychologism. In his critique he shows that axioms and principles of maths and logic are true, not because man thinks of them, but valid in themselves. Besides, if logical laws are dependent on the psychological characteristics of human thinkers, we make them relative to these thinkers. Ideal objects are what they are independently of our knowledge about them. Thus during the pre-phenomenological period Husserl could not come to a clear philosophical stand; rather he was looking for a place to stand as a phenomenologist, which he was able to find during the phenomenological period.

Check Your Progress II

1) What is Husserl's notion of intentionality?

There is a parallelism between the subjective act and the objective correlate. To consider one without the other would be an artificial abstraction. In Husserl's terms this parallelism came to be known as that between the 'noetic' (act) and 'noematic (content). It is in this context that he situates his theory of intentionality. Intentionality means the directedness of the act of consciousness to some object. This object is not immanent to the consciousness itself, but remains transcendent to it, and it is considered as the objective correlate of an intentional act. Thus intentionality means this: consciousness is directedness to an object, as expressed in: conscious of...(something); all '*cogito*' contains a '*cogitatum*'. Husserl's notion of intentionality can be clarified with the help of its four characteristics, the most important of which is that *intentionality constitutes*. It constitutes the intentional object. The intentional object is not conceived as the pre-existent referent to which the intending act refers as something already given, but as something which originates (is constituted) in the act. The snake as fearsome is constituted in the act of one's getting frightened. Husserl, as a phenomenologist, is not interested

in the object in itself, but in the intentional object, constituted in the act consciousness. The intentional object is not immanent to consciousness (as Brentano held), but transcendent to it.

2) What is the role of *Epoche* in Husserlian phenomenology?

Bracketing is the negative aspect in grasping the essence. It is the radical and universal elimination of any aspect of factual existence. The factual or the existential is kept in parenthesis or in bracket. Things under consideration may have existence, but it has no significance whatsoever with regard to the essence of things. Besides the elimination of 'existence', to describe the phenomena correctly, the phenomenologist too must be free from all cultural and philosophical bias. It requires an ascetic neutrality in one's attitude to the phenomenon of one's awareness. Phenomenology deals with the insight into the essences, without *regard* to the empirical conditions of their perceptibility, nor even their existence. It is not a question of making it appear in its factual reality or in its existence, but in its intentional presence as transcendent to consciousness.

UNIT 2

HEIDEGGER

CONTENTS

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Situating Heidegger's Thought and Life
- 2.2 Earlier Philosophy of Heidegger
- 2.3 Later Philosophy of Heidegger
- 2.4 Critical Appraisal
- 2.5 Some of the Key-terms
- 2.6 Further Readings and References
- 2.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit, which is exclusively devoted to the study of the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger, is to give a solid foundation to the contemporary Western philosophy, since it is very much based on Heidegger. Once we have a good grip on his philosophy, it would be comfortable to handle the other thinkers of contemporary period. Besides, study of Heidegger will enable the students to see the difference and complementarity between the Eastern and the Western way of philosophizing, since Heidegger's earlier thought is more in line with the western style of thinking, whereas his later thought has taken him more towards the east. We shall begin by situating the importance of Heidegger and by taking a quick glance at his life and works. We will be doing justice to both the phases of Heidegger's philosophy with a rather detailed analysis. But we will try to see both the phases together in their unity and difference. We shall conclude the unit with a critical appraisal.

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

- to understand the 'specificity' of Heidegger's philosophical approach;
- to know as to how and why Heidegger is so influential;
- to have a taste of Heidegger's existential analysis of Dasein;
- to enter into the poetic thinking of Heidegger-II;

-to make a critical appraisal of a thinker

2.1 SITUATING HEIDEGGER'S THOUGHT AND LIFE

Martin Heidegger is widely acclaimed as the most outstanding and creative philosopher of 20th century, not merely for the novelty of his thought, but mainly for having brought about a 'revolution' in Western philosophy. Almost every philosopher after Plato and Aristotle, the great masters of Western philosophy, continued to philosophize in the same tradition, i.e., without any serious change. Heidegger, on the other hand, stood single-handed against the monolithic structure of Western philosophy of two millennia, pointed out its deviating growth, and proposed a novel and primordial approach to philosophy. His thought has been so fundamental and pivotal, that its influence is seen not only in the various branches of Western philosophy and the different disciplines of knowledge, but it takes into its embrace both Eastern and Western way of philosophizing. Besides, his philosophy is built on phenomenology and existentialism, and has built up hermeneutics and postmodernism. Thus his thought occupies a central position in the contemporary Western thought. Hence it is quite fitting that the philosophy of Heidegger is given adequate importance in the philosophical course.

Heidegger was born at Meßkirch (South Germany) on 26 Sept. 1889 of Catholic parents. His familial background of natural environment and agrarian community may have contributed towards retaining an *earthliness* in his philosophy, preventing him to fly to the distant realms of abstraction unrelated to concrete existence. He had the opportunity directly to get to know the phenomenological method developed by Husserl who had the single greatest influence on Heidegger. From being a privatdozent at Freiburg, Heidegger was invited to the university of Marburg, where he published his most famous work, *Being and Time*. Through this work phenomenology got a new formulation, and he came to be known in the philosophical world. It was in Marburg that he came in contact with Bultmann and Paul Tillich, who were the pioneers of an 'Existential Theology', drawing much of inspiration from Heidegger. At the retirement of Husserl, Heidegger was chosen to occupy the Chair of Philosophy in 1928. For a year he was the Rector of Freiburg University, but he resigned the job, owing to criticism from others, and disillusioned by the fanatical excesses of the Nazi party. He spent the second

half of his life in a mountain-hut at Todtnauberg in Schwarzwald. The atmosphere of silence and natural environment provided an ideal setting for his philosophizing. He died in 1976; and his life can be summed up in a sentence: "He was always a seeker, and always on the way."

Heidegger has to his credit numerous works, most of which were published during his life. Now all his works and lectures are being edited and published under the enormous *Gesamtausgabe* which is expected to cover 57 volumes. The English translations of some of the important works of Heidegger are the following: *Being and Time*; *What Is Metaphysics?*; *Basic Writings*; *Discourse on Thinking*; *Identity and Difference*; *On the Way to Language*; *Poetry, Language and Thought*; *The Question of Technology and Other Essays*; *What Is Called Thinking?*; *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*; *On Time and Being*; etc.

2.2 EARLIER PHILOSOPHY OF HEIDEGGER

Fundamental Ontology

The problem of Being, that has inspired the whole western philosophy, has remained forgotten in the history of western philosophy. It was this 'forgottenness of Being' (*Seinsvergessenheit*) which motivated Heidegger to launch a new thinking. His philosophy is the most consistent attempt to break away from the traditional domination of Western thought by the category of 'substance' or 'thinghood'. He carefully avoids falling into the old error of reifying 'Being'. Hence he says that Being (*Sein*) is to be differentiated from entity (*Seiendes*). Since Being is the being of some entity. In order to clarify the meaning of Being we must start with some entity. And he finds that Dasein—the ontological term for man—is the privileged entity to start with, as it is gifted with an ontological transcendence—its ability to go beyond the entities to their Being. Thus he takes the analysis of Dasein as the point of departure to the clarification of the meaning of Being in general. This project of looking into the meaning of Being from the perspective of the ontic pole, Dasein, is called 'fundamental ontology'.

To work out the question of Being, Heidegger proposes a twofold task: one positive, the

other negative. The positive task consists in the ontological analysis of Dasein in view of the meaning of Being, and the negative task, in the destruction of the history of ontology. The existential analysis of Dasein, according to Heidegger, must begin with an account of Dasein in its everydayness, which will reveal ontologically significant structures, called 'existentials'—essential ways of Dasein's Being. The existential analysis of Dasein brings out 'care' as its Being, leading to the primordial interpretation of its meaning as temporality. With this we will have prepared the ground for the clarification of the meaning of Being in general. By the 'destruction of the history of ontology' Heidegger intends to dig into the past to extract the primordial meaning of Being, frozen and petrified by tradition. With this project in view Heidegger started his *Being and Time*, but in the midway of his philosophical journey, he changed his approach, resulting in a Heidegger-II.

The method that Heidegger employs in his existential analysis of Dasein is hermeneutical phenomenology. Phenomenology is associated with Husserl who developed it as a method and gave it a systematic expression. Heidegger took inspiration from Husserl, but departed from him radically by developing phenomenology into *hermeneutical* phenomenology. In Heidegger's *Being and time* the method of hermeneutical phenomenology gradually unfolds itself.

Preliminary Analysis of Dasein

Heidegger begins with the analysis of Dasein in its everydayness, which shows itself primarily as Being-in-the-world, which is the fundamental way of its Being. The various other ways of its Being (existentials) refer to the 'how' of its Being-in-the-world. Although 'Being-in-the-world' is a unitary phenomenon, in the phenomenological language it consists of two complementary aspects: 'Being-in' and 'the world'. Heidegger clarifies that Dasein's relation to the world is ontological, rather than epistemological. We shall consider 'the world' and 'Being-in' separately, in order to arrive at the being of Dasein.

Heidegger considers 'world' neither cosmologically as an objective entity, nor epistemologically as the object of knowledge, nor theologically as opposed to God, but

ontologically as the horizon of Dasein's existence as Being-in-the-world. Since world is to be seen in relation to Dasein, we can distinguish between the environmental and communal world, according as Dasein relates itself to it.

Dasein's ordinary relation to the entities within the world can be either one of theoretical cognition or one of practical dealings. According to Heidegger, the practical or existential dealings are more basic than theoretical observation. In circumspective dealings the entities show themselves as ready-to-hand (*zuhanden*) and in theoretical observation as present-at-hand (*vorhanden*). Only in relation to some Dasein can an entity show itself as such a thing, and in this relation entities show themselves as *for the sake of* Dasein. In Dasein's existential Being-in-the-world it relates itself to the communal world of other Daseins. Dasein is essentially *Being-with* (*Mitsein*), even in factual loneliness. As Being-with, Dasein is essentially *for the sake of* others. Dasein, thus, is related to the environmental entities and communal entities (persons). Its relation to the former is guided by 'practical concern' (*Besorgen*) and to the latter, by 'personal concern' or solicitude (*Fürsorge*). World as the horizon or relation enables the humans to be related environmentally and communally.

'Being-in' refers to Dasein's disclosedness (*Erschlossenheit*). Dasein is disclosive in three basic ways: as thrown, as projective and as falling. The inevitable and irrevocable character of Dasein is its 'thrownness' (*Geworfenheit*). It is also called Dasein's 'situationality' or 'facticity' (*Fakticität*). Situationality (*Befindlichkeit*) as an essential mode of disclosedness points to the *facticity* of Dasein. Dasein discloses itself also projecting or understanding, which pertains to Dasein's potentiality-for-Being (*Seinkönnen*) in the world. It refers to Dasein's choosing of possibilities. The projective character of Dasein represents more of the active dimension of disclosedness. In its everydayness Dasein shows itself to be 'falling' from its ownmost self. Instead of revealing the unique self that Dasein is, it tends to be the 'one', the 'they' (*das Man*). As thrown, projecting and falling, Dasein is its 'there'—its disclosedness; and it is the *way* Dasein *is* essentially.

The analysis of Dasein in its everydayness that began with its basic state (being-in-the-world) culminates itself in 'care', the unity and Being of Dasein in its everydayness. The unifying notion of care consists of its three structural constituents: existentiality, facticity

and fallenness. Care stands for the existential totality of Dasein's ontological structural whole. It is because Dasein's Being is 'care' (*Sorge*) that it can relate itself to things by concern (*Besorgen*) and to persons by solicitude (*Fürsorge*). In the phenomenon of care we have arrived at the peak-point of the existential analysis of Dasein in its everydayness.

Primordial Interpretation

In order to make the ontological analysis more primordial, the hermeneutical situation or the fore-structure of Dasein has to be considered. Clarification of the fore-structure implies that we bring into our consideration the *whole* of Dasein, and in what way it can be *authentic*. These hitherto lacked aspects of totality and authenticity of Dasein are unfolded on a two-level interpretation: on ontological and ontic levels in the analysis of death and conscience respectively.

As long as it is, there is in Dasein something ahead-of-itself, some not-yet. The ultimate *not-yet* of Dasein is its death. Once the not-yet is no more, there is no more a Dasein. Death as the 'not-yet' is already always present as soon as and as long as Dasein is. Dasein faces death as a possibility which is its ultimate, exclusive, inevitable, most certain, and uncertain regarding, making it a constant certainty. Death is inauthentically considered as an occurrence of a moment in the distant future. Dasein's authentic Being-towards-death is 'anticipation'. In the anticipation of death we have the ontological characterization of Dasein's *totality* and *authenticity*: totality, because anticipation refers to Dasein's total Being, and authenticity, because it refers to Dasein's genuine (authentic) Being, permeated with finitude.

Heidegger shows, through the analysis of conscience, as to how the ontological possibility of Dasein's totality and authenticity becomes ontically concrete. Conscience is presented as a 'call' addressed to Dasein to come back to its own self—to its total and authentic Being. The call of conscience comes from itself, is addressed to itself and is a summons to be itself—a call from itself to itself to be itself. The call points to Dasein's ontological Being-guilty—the permeating nullity (*Nichtigkeit*) of Dasein. The authentic response by Dasein to the presence of nullity in its Being is its 'resoluteness'

(*Entschlossenheit*). It is in this context that the radical finitude of Dasein is presented by Heidegger.

As constantly faced with its ultimate possibility and ultimate facticity, Dasein is confronted with the constant and closest presence of the 'not' in its Being. What Dasein authentically projects towards is that into which it has already been irrevocably thrown. The ultimate possibility and facticity of Dasein—the boundary-line—encircle and demarcate its wholeness, which is but its limit situation. Dasein's finitude is nothing but its permeating presence of the limit in its Being. Thus the Being of Dasein, as *total*, and *authentic*, is radically *finite*.

The question that arises now is this: what enables Dasein to exist as anticipatory resoluteness? The answer will provide the meaning of its finite Being. Heidegger shows that temporality is the meaning and ground of Dasein's finite Being, and temporality is concretized in historicity. Dasein, as existence, is ecstatic—standing out. It stands out into its possibility by coming towards itself, it stands out into its facticity insofar as its 'coming towards' is a 'coming back' to itself. This two-fold standing-out is a standing out into the present, into its limit-situation. This three-fold standing-out is the single process of temporalizing. By appropriating the ultimate *ahead* and the ultimate *already*, Dasein authentically exists. In such a notion of temporality, the future is *already* present, the past is *still* present, as different from the 'not yet' and 'no more' of the objective conception. Historicity belongs essentially to temporality. Just as primordial time cannot be taken as a linear succession of 'nows', so also historicity cannot be taken as a record or dead deposit of the past events. Dasein historicizes by a choosing and living of the existential possibilities. Such a choosing is not a fragmented happening, but a single stretching out. The possibilities are rooted in the past (already), though projected to the future (the ahead). In historicizing, Dasein repeats (reclaims) its inherited possibilities. Historicizing Dasein sees the past consisting, not of dead factualities, but of repeatable possibilities. Gandhiji's life of *ahimsa* and *satya* emits possibilities to be reclaimed, rather than dead ideas to be reflected upon. History has thus primarily a futural character, as it has to do with possibilities.

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 Heidegger intend by Fundamental Ontology?

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2) How does Heidegger work out Dasein as Being-in-the-world?

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3) How does Heidegger carry out the analysis of death and conscience in a related manner?

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2.3 LATER PHILOSOPHY OF HEIDEGGER

After having published *Being and Time* in its present form, Heidegger could not continue in the same line of thought, as there was a 'turn' in his thought.

The 'Turn' and his Critique of Western Metaphysics

The forgottenness of Being in the history of philosophy inspired Heidegger to think the question of Being anew. But the way he carried it out in his *Being and Time* was still contaminated by the metaphysical tradition that represents entities in their Being, relating them to transcendental subjectivity. In his changed vision, Being is not clarified in its relation to man, rather man is looked at in the light of Being. Thus the change from the transcendental inquiry of Being from the perspective of the human being to an authentic thinking of Being as the happening of truth is the so-called 'turn' in Heidegger.

Metaphysical thinking begins with Plato and Aristotle, culminates itself in German idealism, and becomes complete in Nietzsche. This monolithic growth is characterized by its forgetfulness of Being, since it remained, ever since its inception, *onto-theological* in character. Instead of considering 'Being' metaphysics has been considering the 'unity' of entities in its universality and ultimacy. Insofar as metaphysics considers the unity of entities in their abstracted universal trait, beingness, it is ontology. Insofar as it looks into the unity of entities as grounded in the highest entity, God, it is theology. Onto-theo-logical tendency of metaphysics was kept nurtured during the two millennia, reaching upto Nietzsche. With modern philosophy, metaphysics became epistemology with the emphasis on subject-object polarity. Man becomes the arbiter of truth. This reached the climax in the absolute idealism of Hegel. The extreme expression of human domination over Being is modern technology. The scientific attitude of representation and objectification becomes one of manipulation of reality for total power by the technological man.

Thinking of Being

In characterizing the 'thinking of Being' (*Seinsdenken*) Heidegger moves into a language that is more poetic and less metaphysical in character. Thinking comes to pass in the belonging together of Being and man, as a call and as a response. It is to be specially noted that thinking here is not an intellectual activity as in metaphysical thinking.

Heidegger explains in a variety of ways that Being presences or un-conceals itself to the receptive humans finitely. In the various explanations, the following seems to be the most important, as it brings Being and time together. In order to clarify the presencing of Being, Heidegger exploits an impersonal verb like 'it rains', which refers to the subject-less 'activity of raining'. Being, thus, is not the subject, but the activity of presencing or un-concealing. There is a 'giving' only insofar as there is a 'given' (gift) and a 'receiver'. Hence to be complete in its meaning we must say: Being is the giving itself in the entities to the humans. In the history of metaphysics Being has been considered as the *given* or the gift, that is, the entity. But the *giving* of the gift was not given thought to. The un-concealing of Being takes place in the mode of time. When Being was thought as presence, an 'idea' without any reference to time, it showed itself as a static, eternal and infinite presence. The time-character speaks for its *finite* presencing. As mentioned above, the presencing of Being takes place only insofar as there is a receiving from the part of the humans. Heidegger characterizes the openness or receptivity from the part of man variously as dwelling, releasement, shepherding, listening, thanking, responding, gathering, seeing, etc. Heidegger finds that poets, mystics and thinkers listen to the voice of Being. For them the greatest wonder is: *that something is!* They see the coming-to-be of entities, the process of un-concealment.

After having considered Being as historical presencing and man as receptive opening, Heidegger takes his thought to a higher realm—the event of appropriation or 'event-ing' (*Ereignis*), and towards the far end of his thinking, he preferred to use the term, *Ereignis*, instead of the metaphysically saturated term, Being. Event-ing shows itself as the 'difference' between Being and entities, the difference between the verbal and the nominal sense of Being, the difference between concealing and revealing. This *difference* is the coming-to-be of entities, the process of 'un-concealment'.

The Divine

Despite Heidegger's strong resolve to keep his philosophical thinking free from theological contamination, the question of God crept into his thought especially at its later phase. Heidegger's thinking of the Divine has to be seen in togetherness with his critique of

the metaphysical conception of God, which is but a corollary to his critique of Western metaphysics. With the adoption of Greek philosophy by Christianity, the metaphysical notion of God found a fertile soil. The two-world doctrine of Plato got baptized as the theory of the natural and the supernatural realms. God is confined to the supernatural realm, and is superimposed with metaphysical attributes of superlative degree. Thus 'God' was reduced to an object of human estimation. Metaphysics thus nurtures a pseudo-God, a product of human representation in the innumerable theological books. Aligning himself with the Nietzschean proclamation of the death of God, Heidegger shows the caricature of the metaphysical God.

In keeping with his way of thinking Heidegger does not take us to a concept of God, but directs our thought to the presencing (*Wesen*, Being) of the Divine—a much preferred term than the metaphysically pregnant term, God. The Divine can be thought only in the light of the truth of Being. As Being is thought as a process of presencing and absencing, so also the Divine presencing is marked by absencing. Heidegger speaks of the absencing of the Divine in terms such as 'flight of gods', 'destitute time', 'darkening of the world, etc. The divine absencing is a mode of presencing. The world's night of the Divine absence is to be taken as the *Holy Night* of Divine presence. The divine presencing is very much 'worldly' and 'historical'. This is in clear contrast to the metaphysical God as the 'absolute other' secured in a supra-sensory realm, untouched by time and space. Authentic thinking of Being is at the same time a thinking of the Divine. When one's disposition is more receptive, one's wondering at the coming-to-be of things is an experiencing of the presencing of the Divine. Heideggerian thinking of the Divine is a cosmic thinking beyond the distinction between philosophy and theology, and beyond the barriers of religions and cultures. In the eminently purified disposition of receptive thinking, the Divine gives itself to be thought; and this open disposition is authentic thinking, primordial poetizing, aesthetic contemplation and genuine mysticism.

2.4 LET US SUM UP

A fundamental philosophy can be adequate only if it includes within its consideration the various dimensions of reality. Heidegger's philosophy is not sufficiently multi-dimensional, since its main and almost exclusive concern is truth as the process of un-concealment. While being

faithful to this dimension, he neglected to some extent the other dimensions such as intersubjectivity, ethics, God, faith, hope, earthliness, bodiliness, eros, etc. On the other hand, it is not very possible for a seminal and creative thinker like Heidegger to be totally multidimensional, as an eclectic thinker may well be. Besides, Heidegger has given a more solid foundation to philosophy than many other philosophers. His philosophy remains open to the other dimensions. *The merit of a thinker consists not merely in having considered great many problematics, but in not having closed himself to any of the problematics.* His philosophy provides a multi-directional opening to a multidimensional problematic. Although Heidegger has given only minor importance to the questions of God, intersubjectivity, ethics, body, etc., he has not closed his philosophy to the further consideration of them. *It is because of the primordially of his approach that his thinking could be open to almost all dimensions of reality.* With his philosophy of finitude, Heidegger shows himself, not as a prophet of doom that instills fear and despair, nor a prophet of hope that points to a future paradise, but as a prophet of 'earthly paradise'—a prophet that calls on man to take over resolutely and receptively his unique possibilities to be himself. It is to Heidegger's merit that he, in embracing a philosophy of radical finitude does not leave man to absurdity and triviality, but lets him find a wholeness and meaningfulness in his radically finite situation.

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) Dwell on Heidegger's Critique of Western Metaphysics.

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2) Shed light on the notion of Being according to later-Heidegger

Richardson, William. *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974.

2.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1) What does Heidegger intend by Fundamental Ontology?

The problem of Being, that has inspired the whole western philosophy, has remained forgotten in the history of western philosophy. This 'forgottenness of Being' (*Seinsvergessenheit*) motivated Heidegger to launch a new thinking. He carefully avoids falling into the old error of reifying 'Being'. Hence he says that Being (*Sein*) is to be differentiated from entity (*Seiendes*). Since Being is the Being of some entity, in order to clarify the meaning of Being we must start with some entity. And he finds that Dasein—the ontological term for man—is the privileged entity to start with, as it is gifted with an ontological transcendence—its ability to go beyond the entities to their Being. Thus he takes the analysis of Dasein as the point of departure to the clarification of the meaning of Being in general. This project of looking into the meaning of Being from the perspective of the ontic pole, Dasein, is called 'fundamental ontology'. To work out the question of Being Heidegger proposes a twofold task: one positive, the other negative. The positive task consists in the ontological analysis of Dasein in view of the meaning of Being, and the negative task, in the destruction of the history of ontology.

2) How does Heidegger work out Dasein as Being-in-the-world?

Heidegger begins with the analysis of Dasein in its everydayness, which shows itself primarily as Being-in-the-world, which is the fundamental way of its Being. Although 'Being-in-the-world' is a unitary phenomenon, in the phenomenological language it consists of two complementary aspects: 'Being-in' and 'the world'. World is to be seen in relation Dasein, and so we can distinguish between the environmental and communal world, according as Dasein relates itself to it. Dasein's primarily related to the entities within the world by way of practical or existential dealings, and in such dealings the entities show themselves as ready-to-hand (*zuhanden*) as different from present-at-hand (*vorhanden*) in theoretical observation. In

Dasein's existential Being-in-the-world it relates itself to the communal world of other Daseins. Dasein, thus, is related to the environmental entities and communal entities (persons) by 'practical concern' (*Besorgen*) and by 'personal concern' (*Fürsorge*) respectively. 'Being-in' refers to Dasein's disclosedness (*Erschlossenheit*). Dasein is disclosive in three basic ways: as thrown, as projective and as falling. The inevitable and irrevocable character of Dasein is its 'thrownness' (*Geworfenheit*). Dasein discloses itself also projecting or understanding, which pertains to Dasein's potentiality-for-Being (*Seinkönnen*) in the world. Dasein shows itself to be 'falling' from its ownmost self as well. The analysis of Dasein in its everydayness that began with its basic state (being-in-the-world) culminates itself in 'care', the unity and Being of Dasein in its everydayness.

3) How does Heidegger carry out the analysis of death and conscience in a related manner?

It is in the context of his clarification of the hermeneutical situation of Dasein that Heidegger makes use of the analysis of death and conscience. He explains death as the ultimate *not-yet* of Dasein. Death as the 'not-yet' is already always present as soon as and as long as Dasein is. Dasein faces death as a possibility which is its ultimate, ownmost, exclusive, inevitable, most certain, and uncertain regarding, making it a constant certainty. Dasein's authentic Being-towards-death is 'anticipation'. In the anticipation of death we have the ontological characterization of Dasein's *totality* and *authenticity*: totality, because anticipation refers to Dasein's total Being, and authenticity, because it refers to Dasein's genuine (authentic) Being, permeated with finitude. Heidegger shows with the analysis of conscience as to how the ontological possibility of Dasein's totality and authenticity becomes ontically concrete. Conscience is presented as a 'call' addressed to Dasein to come back to its own self—to its total and authentic Being. The call of conscience is a call from itself to itself to be itself. The call points to Dasein's permeating nullity (*Nichtigkeit*). The authentic response by Dasein to the presence of nullity in its Being is its 'resoluteness' (*Entschlossenheit*).

Check Your Progress II

1) Dwell on Heidegger's Critique of Western Metaphysics

Heidegger's philosophy grew with his critique of the prevalent metaphysical thinking. The monolithic growth of metaphysics is characterized by its forgetfulness of Being, since it remained, ever since its inception, *onto-theological* in character. Instead of considering 'Being' metaphysics has been considering the 'unity' of entities in its universality and ultimacy. Insofar as metaphysics considers the unity of entities in their abstracted universal trait, beingness, it is ontology. Insofar as it looks into the unity of entities as grounded in the highest entity, God, it is theology. With modern philosophy, metaphysics became epistemology with the emphasis on subject-object polarity. Man becomes the arbiter of truth. The extreme expression of human domination over Being is modern technology. The scientific attitude of representation and objectification becomes one of manipulation of reality for total power by the technological man.

2) Shed light on the notion of Being according to later-Heidegger

Heidegger characterizes Being not as concept, but as the process of un-concealing or presencing. In a poetic language he explains it. In order to clarify the presencing of Being, Heidegger exploits an impersonal verb like 'it rains', which refers to the subject-less 'activity of raining'. Being, thus, is not the subject, but the activity of presencing or un-concealing. There is a 'giving' only insofar as there is a 'given' (gift) and a 'receiver'. Hence to be complete in its meaning we must say: Being is the giving itself in the entities to the humans. In the history of metaphysics Being has been considered as the *given* or the gift, that is, the entity. But the *giving* of the gift, the coming-to-be of reality, was not given thought to. The un-concealing of Being takes place in the mode of time. When Being was thought as presence, an 'idea' without any reference to time, it showed itself as a static, eternal and infinite presence. The time-character speaks for its *finite* presencing. Heidegger says that the receptive mortals 'sees' the greatest wonder: *that something is!* Being as the 'coming-to-be' of reality is referred to as 'event-ing' (*Ereignis*) by Heidegger at the fag end of his thinking. It is the 'difference' between concealing and revealing—the process of 'un-concealment'.

3) How does Heidegger present the question of the Divine?

Heidegger did not want to bring in the question of God in his philosophy; but it crept into his thought especially at its later phase. Heidegger's thinking of the Divine has to be seen in togetherness with his critique of the metaphysical conception of God. With the adoption of Greek philosophy by Christianity, the metaphysical notion of God found a fertile soil. The two-world doctrine of Plato got baptized as the theory of the natural and the supernatural realms. God is confined to the supernatural realm, and is superimposed with metaphysical attributes of superlative degree. Thus 'God' was reduced to an object of human estimation. In keeping with his way of thinking Heidegger directs our thought to the presencing (*Wesen*, Being) of the Divine, which can be thought only in the light of the truth of Being. As Being is thought as a process of presencing and absencing, so also the Divine presencing is marked by absencing. Heidegger speaks of the absencing of the Divine in various terms. The divine absencing is a mode of presencing. The divine presencing is very much 'worldly' and 'historical', as different from the metaphysical God, untouched by time and space. Authentic thinking of Being is at the same time a thinking of the Divine. When one's disposition is more receptive, one's wondering at the coming-to-be of things is an experiencing of the presencing of the Divine.



UNIT 3 THEISTIC EXISTENTIALISTS

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- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Kierkegaard's Philosophy
- 3.3 Marcel's Philosophy
- 3.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.5 Key Words
- 3.6 Further Readings and References
- 3.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit is to present one type of existentialists who are strong believers in God. As against the popular belief that existentialists are generally atheists, this unit will show that faith in God is the central theme in their thought. It is not that God is just given a place in their philosophy, but rather their philosophy would not have been possible without God. Before we look into the theistic existentialists, we begin with a short introductory reflection on existentialism. It will help the students to situate Kierkegaard and Marcel better. The first existentialist we consider is Kierkegaard, who is rightly regarded as the Father of Existentialism. His philosophy of existence is held together by the central notion in his thought, namely, *choice*. The growth in choice is disclosed by the three stages of existence, the culmination of which is the leap of faith. Thus Kierkegaard has taken philosophy away from the clutches of reason. The other theistic existentialist that we will be considering is Gabriel Marcel. His thought is a philosophical reflection of Christian theology. His philosophy, after having made a distinction between the traditional and the existential approach of philosophizing, passes through the inter-subjective relation and culminates itself in the transcendental relation to the Absolute Thou, God. Consideration of these two theistic thinkers is intended to give a religious solidity to the searching minds of the students.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Existentialism got developed in the 20th century in continental Europe. Although it is primarily a philosophical movement, we can find its 'roots' and 'branches' (basis and influence) in various fields. Traditional philosophy did not bother about the problem of concrete existence, like death, love, despair, body, finitude, anxiety, hope, etc. Man became more and more aware of his naked existence, and he could not get away to an ideal and abstract realm. In such a situation Existentialism made its appearance not as a stroke of chance but of necessity. The luxury of philosophizing was not limited to the few arm-chair philosophers; existentialism brought philosophy to the appeal of the ordinary man. Existentialism is an elusive notion, escaping all definitions. It is not a system of philosophy, rather a way of philosophizing. It is a type of philosophizing that looks into human existence, calling the individuals to an awareness of their existence in its essential freedom. Existentialism, instead of retreating to a realm of eternal truths, hugs close to the terrain of ordinary living.

No rigid classification of existentialists is possible. All the same, historians, in spite of the fact that some of the existentialists cannot be placed in any of these two groups, divide the existentialists into two groups: theistic existentialists who admit the existence of God in their philosophy, and atheistic existentialists who deny the existence of God. Although existentialism traces its origins to the strongly theistic Christian polemics of Kierkegaard—what it means to be a Christian—the atheistic stance of Sartre and Camus has become more popular, and existentialism got identified mostly with their philosophy. We shall consider from each group two representative thinkers; and in this Unit we focus our attention on the philosophies of Kierkegaard and Marcel.

3.2 KIERKEGAARD'S PHILOSOPHY

The Background: Personal Life and Western Tradition

Soren Kierkegaard was born in Kopenhagen in 1813 in a wealthy family of extreme religious views. He was physically frail and melancholic in temperament. A gloomy atmosphere of religiosity prevailed in the house. A philosophically important event in his life was a love affair he had with Regina Olsen. Although they were engaged, he experienced the difficulty of

making a choice for her as his life-partner. He was not sure whether he, with his temperament, would be able to live with her as a family; and thus he experienced the struggle of decision. Kierkegaard also experienced gossip from the society, which made him withdraw more to himself away from the society. In his mature years he turned to Religion, different from the existing stereotyped and rationalistic one. He lived a lonely life, died a lonely death in 1855. Some of the important works of his are the following: *Either/or*, *Fear and Trembling*, *Concept of Dread*, *Stages on Life's Way*, etc.

Kierkegaard's personal life and his philosophy cannot be separated. His philosophical problem arose from some of the touching experiences of his life. Thus his philosophy is a reflection and universalization based on his personal experience. The struggle of choice, the call to be an individual, the need to be distanced from the anonymous crowd, the yearning for a genuine Religion and God of personal commitment and choice, etc., are some of the personally experienced themes that prominently reflected in his philosophy. Thus in his philosophical thoughts, one who speaks is the 'actor', rather than the 'spectator'. He calls himself a subjective thinker rather than an objective theorist. His philosophy is incidental to his main purpose, namely, the search as to what it means to be a human being? What it means to be a Christian? The questions are presented in the form of alternatives for his choice, rather than for an intellectual solution. Thus his philosophy is very much centred on choice or decision.

Kierkegaard found that both western philosophy and Christian Religion were engaged in making life easy and comfortable by abstract thinking and superficial living, as both were centred on reason. Kierkegaard did not want religion and philosophy to be matters to be intellectually known, but to be lived personally by a choice. Just as Socrates who disturbed the conscience of the Athenians by making them aware of their ignorance through his questioning approach, Kierkegaard found it his duty to disturb the easy conscience of an age that was smug in the conviction of its own material progress and intellectual enlightenment. He would be the modern Christian 'gadfly' who would make people think regarding their individual Christian existence. In opposition to Hegel who was the main spokesman for the universal and the rational, Kierkegaard stood for his exaltation of the individual existence.

Existence: the Whence and the Whither of Philosophizing

Philosophy has to start with existence which is not to be proved from reason, and thus it is the whence of philosophizing. Thinking has to begin from existence, since it is a response to the irruption of existence in our subjectivity. Hence, unlike Descartes, he holds that 'one exists and thinks' as a single personal entity. Existence is an indubitable truth. It is the attainment of self-possession in the self-directed life of the individual. To exist is not merely to be or to live. It is in choosing one's true self that one exists. Those who persist through life do not necessarily exist; they drift along without becoming individuals. Thus existence has to be won by choice. It means thus to become an individual.

The philosophy of Kierkegaard emphasizes the importance of the individual. His excessive emphasis on individuality is negatively influenced by Hegel's excessive universalism. Man has the tendency to escape in the 'crowd', just as Adam under evil conscience tried to hide himself among the trees. Man today is lost in the crowd, and are at a loss without the crowd. Kierkegaard wants to deliver the human being from the crowd and make him aware of himself as the centre of responsibilities. When one sinks into the crowd, one becomes demoralized by evading responsibilities. It is only by a choice that man can deliver himself from the crowd, and become an individual. Man truly can exist only insofar as he becomes an individual. Kierkegaard challenges man to this end. Looking at the whole of his philosophy, we notice that we have to start philosophizing from existence; and we have to move towards existence, insofar as his philosophy is nothing but keeping on growing in our existence. Thus existence is not only the whence, but the whither of philosophizing as well.

The Three Stages of Existence

The three stages of existence, that Kierkegaard speaks of, had its basis in his life. By his personal choice he moved from a life of sensuality to ethical integrity, and thence to a life of religious commitment. That was the picture of the journey of his life. Hegel's dialectics and Kierkegaard's three stages have similarities and dissimilarities. Both speak of a movement through three stages. But they are very much different. According to Hegel, the process takes place in the universal (humanity), for Kierkegaard it takes place in the individual. In the former case the movement takes place necessarily and logically (dialectical process), in the latter, by a personal choice. If one does not make a choice one will continue to remain in the same stage.

Once a choice is made for the higher stage, the dethroned stage does not disappear fully; according to Kierkegaard, the lower can be incorporated into the higher.

The first stage is called the *Aesthetic Stage* (The Stage of the lone individual). This stage is characterized by an attitude in which one has no continuity or commitment in one's life. It is called the *Don Juan* stage, which includes not merely a life of sensuality, but an attitude of not wanting anything 'fixed', and of desiring to taste all experiences. The man of this stage wants to sample the nectar from every flower. The man in this stage is governed by sense-impulse and emotion; he hates all that limits his field of choice. There is no constancy in his life, as he lives for the moment. There is nothing for him to cling or relate himself to: neither to God nor to other people, nor again to the past or to the future. Thus it is a stage of the lone individual.

The next stage is *Ethical Stage* (the stage of the individual and society). This stage is marked by some constancy and consistency since man in this stage makes a choice for a determinate moral standard. He turns away from the lure and glamour of aesthetic stage, and decides to 'settle down' in life with its obligations. The presence of the other or the society has an influence on him. The shapeless individualism is changed, and he is able to relate himself to the past and the future, as a result of which there is a continuity in his life. By being ethical, one misses the category of the 'exceptional': i.e., being a 'saint' or a 'sinner'. Holding fast to a moral standard, one is protected from deviating to be a sinner and to be a saint. Socrates is given as an example for the 'ethical man'. In this stage my individual fancies are subordinated to the social and the legal. Life gets a rootedness and a shape. It is rightly called the stage of the individual and the society.

The final stage that Kierkegaard speaks of is the *Religious Stage* (the stage of the individual before God). From one's commitment to the impersonal law, man takes a leap to a personal Absolute. Only in this stage the sense of *sin* makes its presence. A wrong behaviour is not merely a violation of law; rather it is expressive of man's option against God. Man attains the genuine selfhood as he makes a leap of faith, a leap into the dark. In this leap as long as one believes, one is carried along; as long as one despairs one sinks. The more man accepts his weakness, the stronger will be the presence of God in him. The leap of faith—the choice to move away from the ethical stage—cuts across the *ethical* demands, as it is evident in the case of

Abraham's preparedness to sacrifice his son at God's demand. Only one who has been faithful to the ethical laws can transcend them in the religious stage. This stage is characterized by essential suffering, fear and trembling, guilt and dread. It is the stage of the individual before God.

The Philosophy of Leap: Faith and Truth

Kierkegaard's is a philosophy of choice or leap, the structure of which remains basically the same. But it can be best explained in relation to man's leap to the Absolute. The central problem in Kierkegaard's philosophy has been the question as to how to be a Christian. Thus he reflected on the relationship between God and man. The existence of God is an indubitable fact for him. As God is infinite, there is an impassable gulf between God and man who is finite. Bridging this gulf is not possible with rational systems, but only with a leap of faith—not with a theory of knowledge, but with an act of commitment or choice. Such a leap is a self commitment to the 'objective uncertainty', a leap into the unknown. Man is as though sitting on a precipice, with an attraction and repulsion to take the leap—*repulsion* because of the objective uncertainty, and *attraction* because of the subjective certainty. He is in a situation of dread, wherein attraction and repulsion, sympathy and antipathy, are interwoven. Dread is the struggle of choice, the alarming possibility of freedom! Faith as the leap links the objective uncertainty and subjective certainty. Such a leap is a venture, a challenge, which I have to struggle to make. Faith is both a gift and a choice; a gift, as man is given the capacity to make the choice; a choice, as it has to be appropriated by oneself.

The truth to which I commit myself by a leap of faith is not same as the objective truth of creed or belief, as Religion is not a system of intellectual propositions to which a believer assents. We ordinarily speak of 'objective truth', the knowledge of which is highly impersonal. For example, $2 + 2 = 4$. Once I know it, I know it; I do not have to make it my own constantly. Kierkegaard doesn't deny the validity of such truths. But he gives priority to the existential truth or truth as subjectivity. It is that on which I stake my whole being. It is so important for me; still I can doubt it. If I accept it, I do so with a passionate self commitment. I make a choice for it. It is in a sense *my* truth. I have to renew such truth constantly to make it my own. To hold to such a truth is a venture, which chooses an objective uncertainty. I make a choice for the existential truths, and I have to maintain them as it were over a fathomless sea by

the passionate appropriation of the objectively uncertain. Thus, Kierkegaard reiterates the centrality of 'choice' in faith and truth, in religion and life.

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) How is Kierkegaard's life related to his philosophy?

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2) The role of 'existence' in Kierkegaard's philosophy?

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3) Dwell on the three stages of existence.

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3.3 MARCEL'S PHILOSOPHY

Among the theistic existentialists, Gabriel Marcel occupies an important place. Just as in the case of Kierkegaard, so also Marcel's life and experience played a significant role in the birth and growth of his philosophy.

Experiential Background to His Philosophy

Gabriel Marcel was born in 1889 in a Catholic family; his mother died when he was just four years old. Thereafter he was brought up by his aunt, who became his step-mother. He experienced an a-religious attitude in the family. After his secondary schooling, he was awarded a fellowship in philosophy by Sorbonne-university. He taught philosophy in different places. During the First World War, he served as a Red-Cross official. In the second half of his life, he began to move closer to religion, especially Catholicism. Thereafter his life was a journey of thought and commitment. Some of the important works of his are the following: *Metaphysical Journal*, *The Mystery of Being*, *Being and Having*, *Homo Viator*, etc. In 1973 Gabriel Marcel died at the age of eighty-three.

Certain experiences in his life stand out in contributing towards his thought: (1) the difference of temperament made him realize that some of the incompatibilities of life cannot be reconciled by intellectual formulae. People cannot be regimented into a group, without consideration of their uniqueness. 2) The spiritual aridity at home set him forth on a spiritual quest that culminated in his faith in God. He did not inherit a religion of passionate commitment, and this absence set him forth towards a genuine religion. 3) His mother's early death made him develop a phenomenology of *presence* from his experience of physical absence of his mother. 4) His experience at the war-field took him away from abstract dialectics to anxious meditations on life and being. He started reflecting on life and death, personal relations and encounters, pain and suffering. In the light of these experiences, he looked at the prevalent academic life, which he found to be very dissatisfying, since it has been stifling all creativity. Thus he began his own philosophical reflection.

Twofold Approach to Reality

Marcel, before he begins his philosophizing, looks into the two ways of looking at reality: the way reality has been looked at traditionally, and the new way that he proposes in his philosophy. This new 'way' is not exclusively of Marcel, but that which emerged with existentialism. But Marcel has given a precise expression to it, by showing the contrast with the traditional approach. First of all, he makes a distinction between the *primary* and the *secondary* reflection. The primary reflection is analytical and dissective, and it has a place in scientific research. It looks at the reality, part by part. The reflecting subject here is an 'impersonal anyone'; and here the subject-object dichotomy is maintained. The secondary reflection, on the other hand, is synthetical and recuperative; it takes a holistic approach. This has greater role to play in philosophy. Another corresponding distinction that Marcel makes is that between *problem* and *mystery*. The object of scientific knowledge is 'problem' and of philosophical reflection is 'mystery'. Problems are open to solution. Once the solution is reached, the problem is no more. For the problems I am an epistemological subject, grappling with an object as a problem. The mystery is a question in which the being of the questioner is involved. No solution is aimed at in a mystery. I cannot stand apart from the mystery; it is in me, and I am in it. The third distinction that Marcel makes is that between '*being*' and '*having*'. The mystery deals with being, and the problem with having. In 'having' the relation between the possessor and the possessed, between the 'who' and 'what' is external, and in 'being' the bond is internal, as between I and thou. My relation to 'having' is such that what I 'have' is at my disposal, and I can dispose it off as and when I want without ceasing to be myself. It is not constitutive of my being.

Incarnation and Freedom

While clarifying the distinction between 'being' and 'having', Marcel gives two instances of 'having': *secret* and *body*. Secret is the pure type of having, since it is fully under my control and disposal. Body is not a *having* as normally understood, since I cannot dispose of my body and be myself. As a phenomenological existentialist, Marcel speaks of the 'mine-character' of body, and in this context and tone Marcel speaks of 'incarnation' or man as 'incarnate' or 'bodily'. Body cannot be considered as an object, as *the body*, rather as *my body*—body preceded by a possessive personal pronoun. Although body is not a having, it is the prototype of all kinds

of having—condition for all possessions. I can possess many things because of my bodily character. If body is not a having, is then being? No, I can neither say I *have* my body, nor can I say that I *am* my body. It has an ambivalent position of being and having. My relation to my body best expressed by the expression: I am bodily, just as I am spiritual. It is the 'I' that is the centre of all actions and thoughts: I am hungry, I know, I decide, I have pain. etc., instead of my body is hungry, my body has pain, my soul knows, etc. There is a constant tension between being having. Bible speaks of 'gaining the whole world' (having) and 'losing one's soul' (being). The 'having-centred man' sees the others as 'having' (at his disposal). Man has to keep the right priority, and balance them both. The notion of incarnation has to be seen against the dualistic conception of body and soul, and that of man and world. To be bodily and to be worldly essentially belong to man. In other words, through my incarnation, I am in the world.

Marcel considers freedom, not as a condemnation, but as a grace, as an invocation to be free. The free act is creative of the personal subject; the anonymous persons do not act in freedom, and thus, they do not create themselves. It is in and through freedom that I create myself. It is a creative response to the appeal of my being. Freedom is primarily *a freedom for* the project of self-fulfilment, which is to be realized through one's freedom for or commitment to God and others. I create myself in my committing myself to others and to God. Man has the capacity for commitment or betrayal. Freedom is not merely the choice between these two alternatives. By choosing to be committed, one fulfils and creates oneself; when one does not make a choice to be oneself, one is in captivity. Freedom is a conquest: it has to be won from the situation of captivity. The free activity is marked by both 'receptivity' and 'creativity', thrownness and possibility: in one word, 'finite freedom'. Thus Marcel's notion of freedom rests on an act of 'ontological humility'—the recognition that man is a created being, and not an autonomous God.

Philosophy of Relation

Marcel's is a philosophy of relation—totally different from the philosophy, propagated by Sartre, his compatriot and contemporary. While speaking of the two-directional relations, Marcel differentiates them, showing their complementarity. The two-directional relations are directed to the finite others and to the absolute other.

Relation to the Finite Other: Intersubjectivity

Marcel is known primarily for his theory of inter-subjectivity which he developed, basing himself on the theory of intentionality in phenomenology, applied to the notion of 'availability'. The act of being available is directed necessarily to other persons. The very act through which 'I am' implies an allusion to other people: an I to a thou. Although inter-subjectivity is presented as the authentic mode of existence, people have the leaning towards living an inauthentic existence of faceless anonymity, living a self-enclosed existence. In this case, the other is seen, not as a 'thou', but as an 'it'—a functionary, an instrument, an object, ... I may start my relation to the other, taking the other as a s/he; but gradually the barrier disappears, and we together form an 'us'. The relation becomes inter-subjective or I-thou relation—the relation between subjects. From The narrowness of the initial subject-object relation (I-it relation) I move to an I-thou relation or intersubjectivity, in which we become mutually available, we accept each other as subjects.

It is in the intersubjective relation that there takes place *presence* and *encounter* (meeting). Only a personal subject can be *present* to me, and we *encounter* each other. An object cannot be present to me, nor can I encounter an object. It is on the plane of secondary reflection and mystery that the other is present to me. Thus encountering and presence have deep metaphysical nuances. There is present here an unconditional *mutuality* that affects the very being of the individuals. The mutually encountering subjects are *available* to each other. Availability and unavailability (*disponibilit* and *indisponibilit*)—the typically Marcelian notions—become meaningful in the context of his explanation of inter-subjectivity. The notion of 'availability' carries with it a stance which is characterized by a readiness to respond, an openness, being at the service of the other, a welcoming, etc. Through one's 'creative fidelity'—responding to the other in a creative manner—one grows in one's inter-subjective relation.

Relation to the Absolute Other: Faith and Hope

When I enter into communion with the other, I transcend the level of 'having' (object) to that of 'being'. But here too I want to go beyond to the Absolute. My exigency for commitment,

fidelity and transcendence is only partially fulfilled in human interrelationships. Hence I aspire towards a self-commitment towards the Absolute. But it is through the finite 'thous' that I can transcend to the Absolute Thou. In my existential relation to the finite thou, I become aware of my orientation to the Absolute Thou (God). Through my spiritual orientation of love and fidelity to others, we begin to participate in the Absolute Other. It is in the Absolute Thou that the universal human fraternity has attained its total actualization. All the finite thous are solidly grounded in the Absolute Thou. My openness to Being passes through the transcending of egoism in the communion with others, to a personal self-transcending to God. God is not to be proved objectively, but to be encountered as the 'absolute Thou'. It is specifically through *faith* that I relate myself to the Absolute Thou. Faith implies a personal commitment. Marcel distinguishes between personal and propositional faith: believing *in* and believing *that* respectively. Man has the freedom for commitment or betrayal of the covenant with God. Faith and freedom disclose the need for transcendence to the horizontal and thence to the vertical: through the finite thous to the absolute Thou.

Faith goes with its concomitant love and hope. A relation of commitment is a relation of inter-subjectivity and hope. The threefold gift of faith, hope and love has to be won by freedom. The evils that disable my freedom can be summed up in the category of 'death'. Death is the meeting of life *in time*, and life *beyond time*. Here Marcel introduces the notion of 'hope'. It is the active reaction against the state of captivity, exile and meaninglessness. It is directed to an absolute end, unlike desire which is directed to finite ends. Just as faith, hope too can be distinguished between 'hoping in' and 'hoping that'; the former is the genuine hope in a person. Finally in a profoundly religious tone, Marcel says that salvation is not a static state, but a continued entering into that universal community grounded in God. Marcel's philosophy thus is based on the indispensability of faith, hope and love in a concrete ontology.

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) Has Marcel's philosophy got developed from his life-experience?

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2) Dwell on the twofold approach in philosophy.

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3) Can Marcel's philosophy be characterized as a philosophy of relation?

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3.4 LET US SUM UP

We have considered two of the most important theistic existentialists: Kierkegaard and Marcel. Their thoughts complement each other, and this justifies the choice of these two thinkers as the theistic existentialists. Kierkegaard emphasizes the individual existence, which is to be growing towards making a leap to the Absolute. He has dwelt at length on man's relation to God, which can be built and maintained by personal choice. Kierkegaard's philosophy has made the Christians reflect on what it means to be a Christian; for the others it was an inspiration to develop their individual responsibility. Christian theology is very much indebted to the

philosophy of Kierkegaard. In the existential movement almost all the themes of Kierkegaard are found, divorced from their original religious setting. Hence rightly he is called 'the father of existentialism'. His philosophy of existence and choice poses a constant disturbance to the flock-religion and mass-life. Marcel too dwells on man's relation to God; but he has built it up in terms of Christian theological thought-pattern. The dimension of the finite-other, which hardly finds a place in Kierkegaard, is worked out elaborately by Marcel. Thus both of them complement each other. Being a 'Christian existentialist' is both the strength and the weakness of Marcel's philosophy: it is a *strength* insofar as his thought provides a philosophical basis to Christian theology in contemporary existential terms; it is a *weakness* insofar as his philosophy is almost exclusively dependent on Christian theology.

3.5 KEY WORDS

Existence: the dynamic character of the being of the human

Leap of faith: making a choice for the Absolute

Intersubjectivity: relation between subject to subject

Incarnation: the essential character of the humans as bodily

3.6 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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3.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

1) How is Kierkegaard's life related to his philosophy?

Kierkegaard's personal life and his philosophy cannot be separated. His philosophical problem arose from some of the touching experiences of his life. A philosophically important event in his life was a love affair he had with Regina Olsen. Although they were engaged, he experienced the difficulty of making a choice for her as his life-partner. Thus his philosophy is a reflection and universalization based on his personal experience. The struggle of choice, the call to be an individual, the need to be distanced from the anonymous crowd, the yearning for a genuine Religion and God of personal commitment and choice, etc., are some of the personally experienced themes that prominently reflected in his philosophy. Thus in his philosophical thoughts, one who speaks is the 'actor', rather than the 'spectator'. He calls himself a subjective thinker rather than an objective theorist. His philosophy is incidental to his main purpose, namely, the search as to what it means to be a human being? What it means to be a Christian? The questions are presented in the form of alternatives for his choice, rather than for an intellectual solution. Thus his philosophy is very much centred on choice or decision.

2) The role of 'existence' in Kierkegaard's philosophy?

Philosophy has to start with existence which is not to be proved from reason, and thus it is the whence of philosophizing. Existence is an indubitable truth. To exist is not merely to be or to live. It is in choosing one's true self that one exists. Those who persist through life do not necessarily exist; they drift along without becoming individuals. Thus existence has to be won by choice. The philosophy of Kierkegaard emphasizes the importance of the individual. Man has the tendency to escape in the 'crowd', just as Adam under evil conscience tried to hide himself among the trees. Kierkegaard wants to deliver the human being from the crowd and make him aware of himself as the centre of responsibilities. Man truly can exist only insofar as he becomes an individual. Kierkegaard challenges man to this end. Looking at the whole of his philosophy, we notice that we have to start philosophizing from existence; and we have to move towards existence, insofar as his philosophy is nothing but keeping on growing in our existence. Thus existence is not only the whence, but the whither of philosophizing as well.

3) Dwell on the three stages of existence.

The three stages of existence, that Kierkegaard speaks of, had its basis in his life. By his personal choice he moved from a life of sensuality to ethical integrity, and thence to a life of religious commitment. The first stage is called the *Aesthetic Stage* and it is characterized by an attitude in which one has no continuity or commitment in one's life. The man in this stage is governed by sense-impulse and emotion; he hates all that limits his field of choice. The next stage is *Ethical Stage*, and it is marked by some constancy and consistency since man in this stage makes a choice for a determinate moral standard. The presence of the other or the society has an influence on him. The shapeless individualism is changed, and he is able to relate himself to the past and the future, as a result of which there is a continuity in his life. The final stage that Kierkegaard speaks of is the *Religious Stage*. From one's commitment to the impersonal law, man takes a leap to a personal Absolute. Only in this stage the sense of *sin* makes its presence. A wrong behaviour is not merely a violation of law; rather it is expressive of man's option against God. Man attains the genuine selfhood as he makes a leap of faith, a leap into the dark. The leap of faith—the choice to move away from the ethical stage—cuts across the *ethical* demands, as it is evident in the case of Abraham's preparedness to sacrifice his son. Only one who has been faithful to the ethical laws can transcend them in the religious stage.

Check Your Progress II

1) Has Marcel's philosophy got developed from his life-experience?

Just as most of the existentialists, Marcel's philosophy too got developed from out of his existential experience. Certain experiences in his life stand out in contributing towards his thought: (1) the difference of temperament made him realize that some of the incompatibilities of life cannot be reconciled by intellectual formulae. People cannot be regimented into a group, without consideration of their uniqueness. 2) The spiritual aridity at home set him forth on a spiritual quest that culminated in his faith in God. He did not inherit a religion of passionate commitment, and this absence set him forth towards a genuine religion. 3) His mother's early death made him develop a phenomenology of *presence* from his experience of physical absence of his mother. 4) His experience at the war-field took him away from abstract dialectics to

anxious meditations on life and being. He started reflecting on life and death, personal relations and encounters, pain and suffering. In the light of these experiences, he looked at the prevalent academic life, which he found to be very dissatisfying, since it has been stifling all creativity. Thus he began his own philosophical reflection.

2) Dwell on the twofold approach in philosophy.

Before he begins his philosophizing, Marcel looks into the two ways of looking at reality: the way reality has been looked at traditionally, and the new way that he proposes in his philosophy. This new 'way' is not exclusively of Marcel, but that which emerged with existentialism. But Marcel has given a precise expression to it, by showing the contrast with the traditional approach. First of all, he makes a distinction between the *primary* and the *secondary* reflection. The primary reflection is analytical and dissective, and it has a place in scientific research. It looks at the reality, part by part. The reflecting subject here is an 'impersonal anyone'; and here the subject-object dichotomy is maintained. The secondary reflection, on the other hand, is synthetical and recuperative; it takes a holistic approach. This has greater role to play in philosophy. Another corresponding distinction that Marcel makes is that between *problem* and *mystery*. The object of scientific knowledge is 'problem' and of philosophical reflection is 'mystery'. Problems are open to solution. Once the solution is reached, the problem is no more. For the problems I am an epistemological subject, grappling with an object as a problem. The mystery is a question in which the being of the questioner is involved. No solution is aimed at in a mystery. I cannot stand apart from the mystery; it is in me, and I am in it. The third distinction that Marcel makes is that between '*being*' and '*having*'. The mystery deals with being, and the problem with having. In 'having' the relation between the possessor and the possessed, between the 'who' and 'what' is external, and in 'being' the bond is internal, as between I and thou.

3) Can Marcel's philosophy be characterized as a philosophy of relation?

Marcel's is a philosophy of relation. While speaking of the two-directional relations, Marcel differentiates them, showing their complementarity. The two-directional relations are directed to the finite others and to the absolute other. Marcel is known primarily for his theory of inter-

subjectivity which he developed, basing himself on the theory of intentionality in phenomenology, applied to the notion of 'availability'. The act of being available is directed necessarily to other persons. The very act through which 'I am' implies an allusion to other people: an I to a thou. Although inter-subjectivity is presented as the authentic mode of existence, people have the leaning towards living an inauthentic existence of faceless anonymity, living a self-enclosed existence. In this case, the other is seen, not as a 'thou', but as an 'it' or a functionary. The relation becomes inter-subjective or I-thou relation—the relation between subjects. In the intersubjective relation there takes place *presence* and *encounter* (meeting). Only a personal subject can be *present* to me, and we *encounter* each other. The mutually encountering subjects are *available* to each other. Availability and unavailability (*disponibilit* and *indisponibilit*)—the typically Marcelian notions—become meaningful in the context of his explanation of inter-subjectivity.

When I enter into the communion with the other, I want to go beyond to the Absolute. My exigency for commitment, fidelity and transcendence is only partially fulfilled in human interrelationships. Hence I aspire towards a self-commitment towards the Absolute. But it is through the finite 'thous' that I can transcend to the Absolute Thou. It is in the Absolute Thou that the universal human fraternity has attained its total actualization. All the finite thous are solidly grounded in the Absolute Thou. It is through *faith* that I relate myself to the Absolute Thou. Faith implies a personal commitment. Man has the freedom for commitment or betrayal of the covenant with God. Faith and freedom disclose the need for transcendence to the horizontal and thence to the vertical: through the finite thous to the absolute Thou. Thus Marcel's philosophy is eminently a philosophy of relation.

UNIT 4

ATHEISTIC EXISTENTIALISTS

CONTENTS

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Jean Paul Sartre
- 4.3. Albert Camus
- 4.4 General Conclusion
- 4.5 Some of the Key-terms
- 4.6 Further Readings and References
- 4.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit is to present another group of existentialists who developed their philosophy in which God did not have any place. It is not that God did not find a place in their philosophy, but God could not have found any, as their philosophy did not give any opening to the Transcendent.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The short General Introduction given at the beginning of the Unit on ‘Theistic Existentialists,’ is equally valid for this Unit to situate Sartre and Camus, the two atheistic existentialists we are considering. The first atheistic existentialist we consider is Jean Paul Sartre, with whom contemporary atheism is almost identified. His philosophy is centred on the exaltation of human existence. Camus’ philosophy got developed from his concrete experience of injustice; and he gave expression to it in two ways: a violent expression (Camus-I) and a moderate expression (Camus-II). Although, for the believing people with a positive frame of mind, their philosophy

may appear to be negatively exaggerated, it is quite useful that the students are introduced to it, so that they can purify and develop their philosophy of life.

4.2 JEAN PAUL SARTRE (1905-1980)

Introducing Sartre

“God is impossible; reality is absurd; man is absolutely free; he makes his morals and destiny; he lives in anguish and despair; hell is other people; man is a useless passion; death is the end of his absurd existence; ...” These few sentences sum up and point to the philosophy of Sartre, one of the most popular of contemporary philosophers. He became popular due mainly to two reasons: the content of his philosophy and the mode of communication. The content of his thought was quite appealing to the people at that period of history—a time of the struggles of wars and the after-effects of wars, a time of people of under oppression of colonization challenging the colonizers, a time of the cold-war dividing the world into two socio-economic systems, a time when people began asking questions about the meaning of their existence. Such a juncture of history was the ripe time for his leftist-leaning, negative-centred and atheistic philosophy to be sold out. Besides, Sartre put forward his thought the popular means of novels and plays, as a result of which his philosophy was easily accessible and available even to people of academically and economically lower standing. His philosophy had a good market in the independent India with a newly awakened hatred towards all structure of exploitation and injustice.

Jean Paul Sartre was born in 1905 in Paris; his father died when he was only two years old. His mother married a second time, when he was eleven years old and hence he was brought up in his uncle’s house. His life was a bundle of bitter experiences; he became unsociable and lonely and he spent much of his time in libraries and cafes. “Cafe,” he says, “has an immense advantage of indifference.” He rejected all honours, including the ‘Nobel Prize’ for literature, as he did not want to be tied down to any institution. Some of his important works are: *Being and Nothingness*, *Nausea*, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, *Existentialism and Humanism*, *Troubled Sleep*, etc.

Analysis of Being

Sartre distinguished reality into two opposing modes: Being-in-itself (*/tre-en-soi*) and Being-for-itself (*/tre-pour-soi*). The object of consciousness which is non-conscious is called 'Being-in-itself. It is always material. All that we can say about it is this: it is there; opaque, compact density; without aspiration, hope or fear, meaning or relation. It is uncreated; it is there without any reason for its being; it is superfluous, unjustifiable, contingent and absurd. Such an absurd being-in-itself generates in us a disgust, a nausea. The existence as unmasked in being-in-itself, and revealed in its terrifying obscene nudity is absurdity—there is no necessary reason for it to be with this particular 'suchness,' it just happened to be! It is superfluous. The superfluity of the in-itself is found true also of myself, the conscious being. There is no reason for me to exist either. Even doing away with my life would be superfluous as well. Thus existence for Sartre is nauseating, absurd and contingent.

Reality is not exhausted by the compact material things, there is also 'consciousness', through which there exist similarity, meaning, difference, etc. The 'sea' gets different meanings according to the consciousness that encounters it: for the swimmers, a place of adventure; for the fishermen, a source of livelihood; for the artists and poets, a source of inspiration; etc. Consciousness is being-for-itself. It is vacuous, and is characterized by potency and incompleteness. It is based on the 'in-itself' which alone is *being* in the proper sense. The 'for-itself' is nothingness. It is through the conscious being or man that 'nothingness' enters into the world. A piece of chalk is complete in itself, but man finds it as incomplete or half; an arch is found to be an incomplete circle. Consciousness finds absence, incompleteness and lacks. My being conscious of my watch goes with my consciousness of its not being my pen. The source nothingness must itself be nothing. Sartre shows that nothingness exists, just as gap, silence, hole, darkness, none, etc. Man is the oppositional unity of the in-itself and the for-itself, body and consciousness; man is the struggle to bridge them, which is bound to fail.

The Destroying Presence of the Other

As I observe the in-itself entities, I become aware of other people observing me. Awareness of myself as acting (subject) goes with the awareness of myself as being acted upon (object). There is nothing more remarkable in Sartre's philosophy than his phenomenological analysis of the other as staring. Sartre clarifies it with an example. Suppose, I am peeping and eavesdropping through the key-hole of another's room. Then I realize that someone else is observing me. This awareness 'nails me to the spot'; I am petrified and immobilized in the act. I *become ashamed*. Shame is the recognition that I am as the other sees me. To be ashamed is to be aware of the presence of someone else. It is at the expense of my subjectivity that the existence of the other is revealed. In the stare of the other—which is always hateful—I am reduced to an 'object'; the other is revealed as the one who hatefully stares at me. My freedom is frozen under his stare. To regain my subjectivity, I try to reduce the other to an object by my stare. Thus each one is trying to enslave the other; the result is the inevitable conflict. If a third person looks at 'us in conflict', *we* become objectified for the third person, and 'we' become ashamed. To love another means to hate the common enemy. Love, for Sartre, is an impossibility. Out of the futile effort to love is born hatred which annihilates the freedom of the other in mortal combat.

Human Condemned to Freedom

The essence of man is consciousness or nothingness. To fill in this emptiness, man makes free choices. Man is necessarily free; the only necessity of man is his freedom. He is absolutely free: he is so free that he is not free not to be free. According to Sartre, freedom is a curse, a horrible yoke, a condemnation. The terrible responsibility attached to freedom fills man with anguish. "I am responsible for everything, and I am condemned to be so. I find myself alone with my heavy responsibility, from which I cannot get out, nor can I throw it onto someone else. Anguish is the awareness that everything is upto me. To evade from this responsibility of freedom man devices 'bad_faith'—pretending to oneself and to others that one is bound or obliged to act in a particular way, namely, by duty, law, or temperament. In bad faith, unlike in lying, truth is hidden even from oneself. Even sincerity can be a form of bad faith.

Impossibility of God and of Moral Values

Sartre is the most ardent atheist in existentialism. He gives several proofs for the impossibility of God. (1) The existence of a God will make man dependent on God. But man is absolutely free. Hence there cannot be a God. (2) If there is a God, he will be the other, who will be reducing me to an object. I will not be able to stare back because of his transcendence. For man to be perpetually unfree is impossible. Hence there cannot be a God, (3) If there is a God, he has to be the fullness of being (in-itself) and consciousness (for-itself). It is an impossibility to identify being and nothingness. Hence God is an impossibility. According to Sartre, God is not merely dead, but there cannot be a God. Man and God cannot co-exist. Just as there cannot be a God because of man's freedom, so also there cannot be a system of moral values. Man creates values in his freedom. Every act is concrete, and it is performed in a definite situation. Hence there cannot be any pre-set moral principles. The only sin that man can commit is to act in bad faith, deceiving oneself with the *ought* of eternal values, or with the hope of a reward or fear of punishment.

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) How has Sartre analyzed Being or reality?

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2) Dwell on Sartre's conception of the other.

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3) Delineate Sartre’s Understanding of freedom and its implications.

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4.3 ALBERT CAMUS (1913-60)

Introducing Camus

Albert Camus was born in 1913 in Algeria; his father died in the war, when Albert was only one year old. He experienced extreme poverty during the childhood. He was a great lover of nature, which is evidently present in his writings. Together with poverty he experienced illness as well (Tuberculosis); during II world war, he worked with resistance group. In 1957 he received nobel prize for literature. In 1960 died in a car accident. His main works are: *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The Stranger*, *The Rebel*, *The Plague*, etc.

The North African background of Camus must have had a role to play in his “Neo-paganism and love for nature.” There is in every Algerian, an earthly na|vit¹ by which he lives the present life to the full – the sensual empirical life world. Camus is critical of the European approach—an attitude that is more “future oriented”. They, says Camus, turn their back to the concreteness of the here and now, and turn to the delusion of power; they reject the misery of the slums in preference to the mirage of an eternal city, ordinary justice for a promised land. Hence he refuses to repudiate the pleasures, joys and beauties of the world.

Absurdity and Rebellion: Camus-I

The theme of absurdity is as old as the book of *Ecclesiastes*, but Camus has expressed it so accurately as the mood of his time. The setting was ideal, and he epitomized the prevalent climate of France under German occupation. He does not equate absurdity with meaninglessness, as life has still some meaning, though absurd.

Contributing Factors

There are many contributing factors for his development of absurdity in the world. Man seeks reasons and explanations, but he is frustrated as no explanation is forthcoming. The following are presented as the contributing factors for this frustration.

(1) *Science*: Despite its dogmatic claims, science ends in hypothesis, and thus inadequate. Science has made the world and reality a bundle of atoms. When he looks for understanding and clarity, he finds irrationality and opacity of the world. (2) *Monotony of life*: Life goes on in an orderly and systematic way: the daily time-table, the weekly programme, the monthly schedule, the yearly plans... all these go on in an uninterrupted way. They suddenly become monotonous, when we become conscious of it. The 'awakening' of the humans gives use to 'monotony'. (3) *Time*: Man suddenly becomes aware that time is his worst enemy. We are being carried by time, and suddenly it destroys us, as it takes us to the "no further." This too begets absurdity. (4) *World*: The darkness, opacity and hostility of the world, which mostly remain dormant, suddenly show themselves; and the humans are thrown into absurdity. (5) *Inhumanity*: Camus says: "men too secrete the 'inhuman'. We perform meaningless actions, and utter formal words; but they remain purely external show, without any inner basis of conviction. When we pause and look, we find the 'absurdity of it. (6) *Death*: The inevitability of death puts an end to all of man's plans and ambitions. The futility of man's life comes to the forefront, and we are thrown into absurdity.

Absurdity and the Responses to It

The world is neither rational nor absurd in itself; only in relation to human consciousness (awareness) it becomes absurd. The *absurd* is born of the confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world to give reason. The absurd is neither exclusively in the humans nor in the world, but in their confrontation. This confrontation can be between one's

intentions and the given possibilities, between an action and the world not in accord with that action.

The Myth of Sisyphus quite dramatically presents the absurd hero. Based on this, absurdity can be explained as the “awareness of oneself as condemned to tragic purposelessness.” Sisyphus was the personification of it as he had, without purpose, to roll the huge stone up the hill to allow it to roll down. Sisyphus was punished for disobeying the gods by refusing to return to the underworld. He was forcibly taken to the underworld where the stone was awaiting him. His scorn of gods, hatred of death, passion for life, brought about this punishment. There is happiness in him in his refusal to give in, in his resentful stubbornness to remain in this struggle. In his *The Stranger* Camus presents ‘indifference’ to everything as the meaning of absurdity. The world is indifferent to the humans, and the humans are indifferent to everything in his life and death.

Responses to Absurdity: One of the common responses to absurdity is that of escaping from it either by physical suicide or by philosophical suicide. Physical suicide is the voluntary termination of life. Philosophical suicide is a taking refuge in faith and religion to escape the absurd. According to Camus, neither physical suicide nor hope (philosophical suicide) is the authentic response to absurdity. Suicide is a cowardly act, by which absurdity is destroyed. It is not an expression of revolt. These are ‘facile solutions’ in the face of absurdity. Both physical and philosophical suicide lacks a fundamental honesty, since they represent a refusal to face the situation of absurdity. It is a cowardly compromise.

After rejecting physical and philosophical suicide as a way out, Camus opts to face the absurd squarely by constant confrontation. Man has to engage in an ongoing struggle, although he knows that he can never win the struggle. It is a confrontation between man and his own absurdity. The sight of such a struggle is an example of human pride in action. There is Majesty in this relentless struggle. According to Camus, “it is essential to die un-reconciled”. His ‘absurd man’ can be said to be without hope only in terms of the two human dreams of eternity and total understanding.

Man's revolt against the absurd results in a new freedom. He begins to experience genuine freedom. There are no restraints in his actions. This freedom is owing to his having no future and no superior being. He is his own master. The truly liberated man is completely indifferent to the future, and thus rejects all scales of values. That is, he rejects the 'ethics of quality' and accepts an 'ethics of quantity'. What is important for the 'absurd man' is not the 'best' way of living, but the 'most' living. He strives to live more, and not better. Every action is of equal value. Man can live with the 'irresponsibility of the condemned criminal,' who has nothing to lose.

Moderation and Reconciliation: Camus-II

After the World War II, Camus began to show signs of moderation from his philosophical extremity. The Myth of Sisyphus conclusions were in agreement with Hitler's atrocities. Camus became convinced of a change, since the Nazi atrocities were the logical outcome of an 'ethics of quantity' that admits of no distinction between right and wrong. In his letters to a German friend he openly confessed his inability to continue his Sisyphus thought-pattern. Camus opts for some sort of values in life and limit in freedom.

In the later works of Camus, he gradually expressed his changed thought. In his *The Plague* (1947) Camus argues that we must extend a helping hand to our brothers in combating the 'plague' of the irrational absurdity. But it falls short of the Judeo-Christian attitude to suffering. In the common struggle against the oppressive plague, men have discovered their solidarity. And with this, they have learned meaning of compassion. Man has an obligation to keep the human solidarity alive. But in spite of man's solidarity and love for each other, there is still a collective impotence, i.e., despite his fight against the absurd, man's ultimate end is defeat and death. Thus no victory over the absurd is possible. Still Camus has now opted for an 'ethics of quality'.

In his *The Rebel* (1951) Camus makes the penetrating analysis of 'rebellion'. He takes the rejection of suicide as the foundational principle in this work; man has decided to live since our personal existence has some value. Camus distinguishes between metaphysical and historical rebellion. Metaphysical rebellion denies absolute freedom, and acknowledges existence with some limits. When the slave says 'no' to his master, he means to say 'up to now "yes" but 'beyond it, "no". He chooses to fight for justice rather than for his own life. It is not an interchange of roles, rather an affirmation of the value of humanity, a value shared by others as

well. Revolt is based on a belief in a common human dignity. Camus also looks at the way some of the historical figures, under the guise of defense of human rights became notorious oppressors of humanity. All dreamers of utopians have ended in failure, as they lost sight of 'limit' (*mesure*).

In his last two works, *The Fall* (1956) and *Exile and Kingdom*, Camus enters into a state of repentance. Man is presented not as the 'innocent rebel' but as 'the guilty other'. He cannot live with his conscience. He looks for a judge who will condemn him and then pardon him, but there is neither condemnation nor pardon in sight. "Who would dare condemn me in a world without judge, where no one is innocent?"

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 Camus' understanding of 'absurdity'?

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2) Clarify the authentic and inauthentic responses to absurdity.

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3) Dwell on Camus' Phase of "Moderation and Reconciliation".

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4.4. LET US SUM UP

Sartre takes man to the heights of absolute freedom, and drops down to utter meaninglessness. I march forward in triumph alone to my own future; but death puts a halt to my triumphant march. Sartre cries out in good faith: “It is meaningless that we are born; it is meaningless that we die.” It is to his credit that Sartre has brought to the open the naked, dark, and hidden aspects of life; but he did it at the expense of all positive aspects. Camus met with a sudden death. Within a short period of time, he has imprinted his mark on the literary and philosophical world. He is an eloquent spokesman of our age. He had the intellectual honesty to change his views, instead of stubbornly holding to the earlier views of absurdity; he kept himself open and thus ended up in solidarity, justice and compassion, and repentance. Both the thinkers have contributed in their style towards clarifying some of the aspects of human existence, however unpleasant they may appear to be. A holistic philosophy of life can be developed only with the help of a multidimensional clarification of the reality of human existence.

4.5 KEY WORDS

Being-in-itself (*être en soi*): material reality

Being-for-itself (*être pour soi*): conscious reality

Shame: the intentional experience of one’s subjectivity being killed

Absurdity: experience of meaninglessness

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4.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Progress I

1) How has Sartre analyzed Being or reality?

Sartre distinguishes reality into two opposing modes: Being-in-itself (*l'être-en-soi*) and Being-for-itself (*l'être-pour-soi*). The object of consciousness which is non-conscious is called 'Being-in-itself. It is always material. It is there; opaque, compact density; without aspiration, hope or fear, meaning or relation. It is uncreated; it is there without any reason for its being; it is superfluous, unjustifiable, contingent and absurd. Such an absurd being-in-itself generates in us a disgust, a nausea. The existence as unmasked in being-in-itself, and revealed in its terrifying obscene nudity is absurdity—there is no necessary reason for it to be with this particular 'suchness,' it just happened to be! It is superfluous. Reality is not exhausted by the compact material things, there is also 'consciousness', through which there exist similarity, meaning, difference, etc. Consciousness is being-for-itself. It is vacuous, and is characterized by potency and incompleteness. It is based on the 'in-itself' which alone is *being* in the proper sense. The 'for-itself' is nothingness. It is through the conscious being or man that 'nothingness' enters into

the world. Consciousness finds absence, incompleteness and lacks. Man is the oppositional unity of the in-itself and the for-itself, body and consciousness.

2) Dwell on Sartre's conception of the other.

As I observe the in-itself entities, I become aware of other people observing me. Awareness of myself as acting (subject) goes with the awareness of myself as being acted upon (object). There is nothing more remarkable in Sartre's philosophy than his phenomenological analysis of the other as staring. The awareness of being stared at 'nails me to the spot'; I am petrified and immobilized in the act. *I become ashamed*. Shame is the recognition that I am as the other sees me. To be ashamed is to be aware of the presence of someone else. It is at the expense of my subjectivity that the existence of the other is revealed. In the stare of the other—which is always hateful—I am reduced to an 'object'; the other is revealed as the one who hatefully stares at me. My freedom is frozen under his stare. To regain my subjectivity, I try to reduce the other to an object by my stare. Thus each one is trying to enslave the other; the result is the inevitable conflict. If a third person looks at 'us in conflict', *we* become objectified for the third person, and 'we' become ashamed. To love another means to hate the common enemy. Love, for Sartre, is an impossibility. Out of the futile effort to love is born hatred which annihilates the freedom of the other in mortal combat.

3) Delineate Sartre's Understanding of freedom and its implications.

According to Sartre, man is necessarily free; the only necessity of man is his freedom. He is absolutely free: he is so free that he is not free not to be free. According to Sartre, freedom is a curse, a horrible yoke, a condemnation. The terrible responsibility attached to freedom fills man with anguish. "I am responsible for everything, and I am condemned to be so. I find myself alone with my heavy responsibility, from which I cannot get out, nor can I throw it onto someone else. To evade from this responsibility of freedom man devices 'bad_faith'. Sartre gives several proofs for the impossibility of God, all of which are based on the absolute freedom of the humans: if there is a God, man cannot be absolutely free. Hence God is an impossibility. According to Sartre, God is not merely dead, but there cannot be a God. Man and God cannot co-exist. Just as there cannot be a God because of man's freedom, so also there cannot be a system of moral values. Man creates values in his freedom. Every act is concrete, and it is performed in a definite

situation. The only sin that man can commit is to act in bad faith, deceiving oneself with the *ought* of eternal values, or with the hope of a reward or fear of punishment. Thus Sartre's notion of freedom has many serious consequences.

Progress II

1) What is Camus' understanding of 'absurdity'?

The theme of absurdity is accurately expressed by Camus as the mood of his time. The setting was ideal, and he epitomized the prevalent climate of France under German occupation. There are many contributing factors for his development of absurdity in the world. Man seeks reasons and explanations, but he is frustrated as no explanation is forthcoming. The following are presented as the contributing factors for this frustration. He points out some of the glaring aspects from the contemporary life as factors that accelerated the experience of absurdity. The world is neither rational nor absurd in itself; only in relation to human consciousness (awareness) it becomes absurd. The *absurd* is born of the confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world to give reason. *The Myth of Sisyphus* quite dramatically presents the absurd hero. Based on this, absurdity can be explained as the "awareness of oneself as condemned to tragic purposelessness." Sisyphus was the personification of it as he had, without purpose, to roll the huge stone up the hill to allow it to roll down. Sisyphus was punished for disobeying the gods by refusing to return to the underworld. He was forcibly taken to the underworld where the stone was awaiting him. There is happiness in him in his refusal to give in, in his resentful stubbornness to remain in this struggle.

2) Clarify the authentic and inauthentic responses to absurdity.

Camus, before presenting the authentic response to absurdity, speaks on the ordinary and inauthentic responses. One of the common responses to absurdity is that of escaping from it either by physical suicide or by philosophical suicide. Physical suicide is the voluntary termination of life. Philosophical suicide is a taking refuge in faith and religion to escape the absurd. According to Camus, neither physical suicide nor hope (philosophical suicide) is the authentic response to absurdity. Suicide is a cowardly act, by which absurdity is destroyed. It is not an expression of revolt. These are 'facile solutions' in the face of absurdity. After rejecting

physical and philosophical suicide as an inauthentic way out, Camus opts to face the absurd squarely by constant confrontation. Man has to engage in an ongoing struggle, although he knows that he can never win the struggle. It is a confrontation between man and his own absurdity. There is Majesty in this relentless struggle. According to Camus, “it is essential to die un-reconciled”. Man’s revolt against the absurd results in a new freedom. He is his own master. The truly liberated man is completely indifferent to the future, and thus rejects all scales of values. That is, he rejects the ‘ethics of quality’ and accepts an ‘ethics of quantity’. Man can live with the ‘irresponsibility of the condemned criminal,’ who has nothing to lose.

3) Dwell on Camus’ Phase of ‘Moderation and Reconciliation’.

After the World War II, Camus began to show signs of moderation from his philosophical extremity. The Myth of Sisyphus conclusions were in agreement with Hitler’s atrocities. Camus became convinced of a change, which he gradually unfolds. In his *The Plague* (1947) Camus argues that we must extend a helping hand to our brothers in combating the ‘plague’ of the irrational absurdity. In the common struggle against the oppressive plague, men have discovered their solidarity. And with this, they have learned meaning of compassion. Camus has gradually opted for an ‘ethics of quality’. In his *The Rebel* (1951) Camus makes the penetrating analysis of ‘rebellion’. He distinguishes between metaphysical and historical rebellion. Metaphysical rebellion denies absolute freedom, and acknowledges existence with some limits. Historical Rebellion is a fight for one’s own self. He chooses to fight for justice rather than for his own life. In his last two works, *The Fall* (1956) and *Exile and Kingdom*, Camus enters into a state of repentance. Man is presented not as the ‘innocent rebel’ but as ‘the guilty other’. He cannot live with his conscience. He looks for a judge who will condemn him and then pardon him, but there is neither condemnation nor pardon in sight. “Who would dare condemn me in a world without judge, where no one is innocent?” Thus Camus gradually moved towards a phase of reconciliation in his thought.

BLOCK 3

As we have already introduced in the previous block what Continental philosophy is and the earlier continental philosophers who lay the foundation to what is to come, here we consider some of the later continental philosophers. Structuralism as such is the analysis of the cultural products like language, mythologies and so on and the major thinkers being Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes, and the main poststructuralist's are Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault. One of the most important movements in the postmodern period is hermeneutics which deals with interpretation of texts. The period is also influenced by the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt school. While modernist critical theory concerns itself with forms of authority and injustice that accompanied the evolution of industrial and corporate capitalism as a political-economic system, postmodern critical theory politicizes social problems by situating them in historical and cultural contexts, to implicate themselves in the process of collecting and analyzing data, and to relativize their findings

This block is divided into four units which will systematically introduce us to the various movements that took place during the contemporary period in the western philosophy.

Unit 1 deals with Structuralism and Poststructuralism. Here we have four thinkers, the structuralists: Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes and the Post structuralists: Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. In general we will look at their contributions towards the analysis of linguistics and other cultural artifacts that are very often overlooked, and they called their work as 'structural analyses'.

Unit 2 highlights the trends and thinking of postmodernism in a philosophical way. Although the term itself is used in a variety of disciplines, here we will deal with its philosophical implication and usage. A differentiation is made between the pre-modern, modern and post-modern periods and drawing upon the general characteristics, and concluding that the contemporary cultural phenomenon called postmodernism is quite original and differently oriented.

Unit 3 highlights the contribution towards the field of hermeneutics and interpretation. Beginning with Hans-Georg Gadamer, who is considered to be the father of Philosophical hermeneutics, we have a number of thinkers: Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur. This unit interprets philosophical hermeneutics as a well organised, systematic, historically based and independent discipline in philosophy.

Unit 4 deals with the Critical Theory. We locate the historical context of the critical theory, the legacies they inherited from Marxism and Hegel, and the views of thinkers like, Max Webber, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Habermas. Among them, Habermas is the best known face of the Frankfurt School.

Structuralism, during the later period of Continental Philosophy, sought to clarify systems of signs through analysing the discourses they both limit and make possible. Saussure conceived of the sign as being delimited by all the other signs in the system, and ideas as being incapable of existence prior to linguistic structure, which articulates thought. This led continental thought away from humanism, and toward what was termed the decentering of human: language is no longer spoken by human to express a true inner self, but language speaks human. Post-structuralism began to dominate the western thought over the 1970s onwards, through the contributions of thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Roland Barthes.



UNIT 1 STRUCTURALISM AND POSTSTRUCTURALISM

Contents

- 1.0. Objectives
- 1.1. Introduction
- 1.2. Structuralism
- 1.3. Poststructuralism
- 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

The chief objective of this unit is to get acquainted with the central themes and thinkers of two related and very influential intellectual movements of our times: structuralism and poststructuralism. By the end of the unit the students should be able:

- To see how the common roots of these movements lie in Saussurean linguistics
- To see how cultural and social phenomena can be understood as sign systems
- To see how poststructuralists radicalize the main insights of structuralists to de-stabilise the project of Western philosophy itself.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Structuralism was a novel approach to the study of all cultural products such as language, mythologies, literature, kinship relations, rituals, fashion etc. The structuralists subjected these and similar social phenomena to a type of analysis that they called “structural analysis,” (of which we shall learn more in the following). It originated and developed in France in the 1950’s and 1960’s. However, its foundations had already been laid long ago in the work done in

linguistics by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), Prince Nicholas Troubetzkoy and Roman Jakobson (1896-1982). The main theoreticians and practitioners of structuralism were Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes. In the 1970s by radicalizing and challenging certain philosophical positions of structuralism, post- structuralism was born in France. The main proponents of poststructuralism are Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault.

1.2. STRURCTURALISM

THE LINGUISTIC BASIS

The basic insights that underlie the emergence of the structuralist movement were first formulated in the field of linguistics, the science of the systematic study of languages. It was done by Saussure, a French speaking Swiss linguist. All these insights were part of a new approach he evolved to study languages, and put forward in a course in general linguistics, which he gave in Geneva between 1901 and 1911. None of these theoretical materials was published during his life-time. However, after his death some of his students who had attended that course put together a book called *Course in General Linguistics* from their notes. It was from this book, which has by now become a classic in its field, that the wider world came to know of his potent ideas. His new approach not only brought about revolutionary changes in linguistics but also became, in the hands of structuralists like Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes etc., the paradigm or model for studying other cultural products.

The novelty of his approach to the study of languages, which is known today as “structural linguistics,” is that he saw any language as a system of significations and devised concepts and tools to identify the elementary constituents of the system and the rules of their combination. Saussure had already seen that language is not the only sign system and that all cultural products are similar sign systems and therefore could be studied using the resources of structural linguistics, when he spoke of a general science of signs or “semiology”. However, it was left to the later thinkers to apply the methods and tools that Saussure had used to study language to other systems of meanings. Thus Lévi-Strauss applied it to the study of cultural anthropology; Roland Barthes to literature and so on.

Let us first examine some notions which Saussure had developed in linguistics and which have now become part of the common repertoire of all structuralists.

Synchronic Approach in Linguistics

Up until 19th century, linguistics (or, philology, as the science of languages was then known) followed what is known as “the diachronic approach” to the study of languages. But Saussure introduced “the synchronic approach.”

The diachronic method approached languages from “comparative” and “historical” (or “evolutionary”) perspectives. Assuming a “comparative” perspective the linguist saw his task as one of analyzing the similarities and differences within a family of related languages; and from a “historical” perspective he studied the evolution of a family of languages, or changes within a particular language over a long period of time. For instance, noting the similarities between the verb “to be” in Sanskrit (*asmi, asi, asti, smas, stha, santi*) with the same verb in Latin (*sum, es, est, sumus, estis and sunt*), linguists set about investigating other similarities between these two languages and concluded that they both evolved from an earlier language; on the basis of this conclusion they began to study how the two languages evolved from an earlier one.

The synchronic approach considers a language in its own right as a contemporary entity, as if it were frozen at a given moment of time and laid out for systematic study. It does not inquire into its ancestral forms or its similarities with and differences from other languages. Saussure does not downplay the importance of the diachronic study; such a study is very useful. But it does not give us any understanding of the internal structure of language, which was what Saussure was interested in studying. Only the synchronic approach, he held, could give us an understanding into what kind of an entity (system) language is and how it functions.

Synchronically studied language manifests itself as a system whose elements hang together. Various aspects and elements of the system can be identified and studied. In fact Saussure claims that language is reducible to five or six dualities or pairs of things such as signifier/signified,

individual/mass, langue/parole, synchrony/diachrony and comparison/exchange. The two dualities that have become most important for the structuralist movement are *langue/parole* and signifier/signified.

Langue, parole and langage

Language exists in two modes: as speech and as written form. Of these, speech is the primary mode of being of language. We learn to speak before we learn to write. Saussure therefore directs his attention to language as speech. He notes that it is composed of two aspects, which he called *parole* and *langue* in French. *Parole* literally means “spoken word; and *langue* literally means “tongue”. *Parole* is the aggregate of acts of speech. Every act of speech is individual, a here-and-now, and is executed by some person. Such individual acts of speech executed by individual speakers of a linguistic community constitute *parole*. Language is not exhausted by *parole*. For these acts would not be acts of speech if there were not a set of norms according to which they are organized. The system of norms according to which *parole* is organized and becomes meaningful speech is called *langue*. For the general phenomenon of language, undifferentiated as to form or function he used the term *langage*.

For Saussure *langue* belongs to the collectivity of the speakers of a language, *parole* to the individual; *parole* gives *langue* its concrete embodiment; *langue* gives *parole* its significance. If it were not for *langue*, *parole* would be a series of meaningless noises; if it were not for *parole*, *langue* would be a series of mute abstractions.

Sign: Signifier/Signified

Language is a system of signs. But what exactly is a sign? For Saussure a sign is essentially a complex entity constituted of two elements: “signifier” and “signified.” The signifier is the sound image or its written equivalent. The concept evoked by it is the signified. He compared these two elements of the sign to two sides of a sheet of paper, which face in different directions and yet are inseparable. At first it is tempting to think of the sign as the word. He notes that in current usage the term “sign” generally designates only a sound-image or the word. However the sound-

image or word by itself is not a sign. It becomes a sign only when it evokes a concept. For instance, the word (sound image) “tree” is called a sign only because it carries the concept “tree”, with the result that the idea of the sensory part implies the idea of the whole. Thus the linguistic sign should be construed as a two-sided psychological entity. Again, it is tempting to think of the signified as the object referred to by the word. However, the signified for Saussure is not the object, but the concept, or meaning.

The association between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. That is, there is no necessity that the sound image “dog” be connected with the concept “dog”, and not with the concept “cat”. However, this does not mean that we can choose any sound image we like and associate it with any concept we like. As Saussure points out, the sign once established “always eludes the individual or social will.”

Language as a System of Differences

Another important Saussurean discovery about language is that it is a system (structure), in fact a double system, of differences. It is his insistence, and that of the later structuralists, on this aspect that earned the structuralist movement its name.

Saussure insists that language constitutes a system, and one in which “everything hangs together.” But what does that mean? It means that the elements of language are essentially interconnected. Given this premise, the task of the linguist is to show the nature of the linguistic system and how it hangs together. He has to identify the locus and the elements of the system as well as its rules of operation and development.

As we mentioned above language is a double system. There is a system at the level of **phonology** and another system at the level of **morphology**. Phonology is the study of the elementary speech sounds, or ‘phonemes,’ of a given language. They are the most basic and the smallest elements in the expression system of a language. A phoneme is usually defined as the minimal (smallest) distinctive (contrastive) sound unit of a language. It is “the minimal unit” because it cannot be further subdivided; it is “distinctive” because when one phoneme is substituted by another, it

produces a meaning change. If the substitution of one elementary sound unit with another results in a different word with a different meaning that elementary sound unit is recognized as a phoneme. Thus when /p/ is substituted with /b/ in the word “pit”, we get the different word “bit”. Thus /p/ and /b/ are contrastive in English and hence they are two phonemes in English. Standard English has a system of forty-four phonemes and Hindi has forty-six phonemes.

Morphology is the study of ‘morphemes.’ A morpheme is defined as the smallest meaningful unit of speech sounds within any one language; that is, a morpheme is composed of one or more phonemes, and is a unit that recurs in a language with the same or at least similar meaning. Some morphemes constitute complete words, e.g., “man” “open” etc. Others occur as parts of words e.g., “dis-” in “disgrace, and ‘-ful’ in “disgraceful”. Morphology studies how phonemes combine to form words and other morphemes.

The most important observation that Saussure and subsequent structural linguists like Troubetzkoy make about these systems concerns their composition. The phonic and morphic systems are not the result of some pre-existing elements (phonemes and morphemes) entering into some kind of relation with one another. The elements of the systems do not have any positive substance or identity prior to and apart from the systems of which they are components. The identity of a phoneme, for example, is determined solely by the relations of differences it has with other phonemes of the system. In other words, the chief characteristic of a phoneme is simply that it is different from all other phonemes.

Saussure emphasizes that the meanings of words are also relational, or differential. No word, therefore, can be defined in isolation from other words. The definition of any given word depends upon its relation with other adjoining words. For example, the word ‘hut’ depends for its precise meaning on its position in what structural linguists call a “paradigmatic chain”, that is a chain of words related in function and meaning each of which could be substituted for any of the other in a given sentence. The paradigmatic chain in the case of the word ‘hut’ might include words such as “hovel,” “shed,” “hut,” “house,” “mansion,” and “palace.” The meaning of any one of these words would change if any one of the others were removed from the chain. Thus ‘hut’ and ‘shed’ are both small and basic structures, but they are not quite the same thing: one is

primarily for shelter (a night-watchman's hut, for instance), while the other is primarily for storage: without the other, each would have to encompass both these meanings, and hence would be a different word. Likewise, a mansion can be defined as a dwelling which is bigger and grander than a mere house, but not as big and grand as a palace. Thus we define 'mansion' by explaining how its meaning relates to that of the two words on either side of it. This mutually defining characteristic of words becomes clearer if we take paired opposites as examples. Thus the terms 'male' and 'female' have meaning in relation to each other. Each designates the absence of the characteristics included in the other. Likewise, the meaning of 'day' is defined by linking it with the concept 'night'.

Saussure's conclusion is that, "... in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences without positive terms. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system."

FROM LINGUISTICS TO OTHER CULTURAL ARTEFACTS

As has already been mentioned, the structuralist movement proper originates in France in the 1950's. It is nothing but an extension or application of the methods of contemporary linguistics started by Saussure and developed further by Troubetzkoy and others to the study of all cultural and social phenomena. The foremost theoreticians and practitioners of structuralism are Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes. Lévi-Strauss applied it to study such phenomena as kinship relations in societies, mythologies etc. Roland Barthes applied it to literary texts and such cultural artifacts as fashion, advertisement, wrestling etc.

Both Barthes and Lévi-Strauss have acknowledged that the basis of structuralism lies in contemporary linguistics. Thus, Barthes defines structuralism as a method for the study of cultural artifacts, which originates in the methods of contemporary linguistics. Lévi-Strauss argues that by following the linguist's example the anthropologist might reproduce in his own discipline the "phonological revolution" effected in that discipline by Saussure and Troubetzkoy.

Saussure himself had foreseen the possibility of such an extension of the methods of linguistics beyond that science to the study of all cultural phenomena. This is borne out by his discussion on the need for a science of 'semiology,' or a general science of signs. Such a science would study all sign-systems.

At this point one may ask: what is common between language and other cultural phenomena that justifies the application of the methods of studying one to the study of the other? In other words: why should linguistics be relevant for the study of other cultural and social phenomena?

The extension of the methods of analyzing language to the analysis of other cultural phenomena is based on two insights: (a) that social and cultural phenomena are signs, and (b) that they do not have essences but are defined by a network of relations, both internal and external.

Social and Cultural Phenomena as Signs

To be able to see how methods of studying languages are applicable to the study of cultural and social phenomena, one must first see the latter as signs. Of course this is not at first obvious, unlike the case of language where it is easily seen that in it we are dealing with signs. How can the cultural institution of the game of football, for instance, be seen as a sign-system? How can the kinship relations be seen as a sign-system? For societies in which such institutions exist, they are so much part of their life that they do not even see it as institutions constructed by them. They are simply there for them just like any natural object. To borrow words from Heidegger, we often think that "they are proximally present-at-hand; that is to say, (we think that) we come across them just as we come across Things." However, in fact they are not natural objects. A natural object like a tree can be known in a set of descriptions that set forth its objective and intrinsic (essential) qualities. A tree is known fully in natural sciences when all its intrinsic qualities are known. However, a game of football is not understood in a purely objective description of the actions that take place on the football field. Confronted with a game of football an observer with no knowledge of the culture in question could present an objective description of the actions that take place; but he would not be able to grasp their meaning, the meaning that these actions have for a member of a culture that has in it football game as an institution. In other

words for a member of this culture the game of football is a system of signification. The external actions that take place on the field function as signifiers through which they relate to something that is signified, the meaning. The entire cultural domain of a society can be seen as consisting of human productions that have a certain meaning for the members of that culture, whether it be its mythologies, marriage rites, social mores, games, rituals, literary creations (like poetry, novel, etc.), advertisements and so on.

Meaning and Network of Relations

The second insight that enables the application of methods of linguistics to all social and cultural phenomena is that the meanings they have for a cultural group is a function of the network of relations (or structure) into which they enter. In other words, if human actions or productions have a meaning there must be an underlying system of conventions which make this meaning possible. The various objectively describable actions on the football field during a game become or constitute themselves into the meaningful institution of football game because of the rules and conventions according to which they are organized. The actions are meaningful only with respect to some institutional conventions. Wherever there are two posts one can kick a ball between them, but one can score a goal only within the particular institutionalized framework called football. The action of kicking a ball between two posts assumes the meaning of “scoring a goal” only because this action has entered into a network of relations with other actions which are constituents of the football game and which are regulated or “arranged” (“structured”) according to certain conventions. Thus, “the cultural meaning of any particular act or object is determined by a whole system of constitutive rules- rules which do not so much regulate behaviour as create the possibility of particular forms of behaviour. The rules of English enable sequences of sound to have meaning; they make it possible to utter grammatical or ungrammatical sentences. And, analogously, various social rules make it possible to marry, to score a goal, to write a poem, to be impolite. It is in this sense a culture is composed of a set of symbolic systems.”

The Task of the Structuralist

The task of the structuralists, whatever their field, is not a mere collection of data; he has also to examine the set of underlying relations through which things can function as signs. The goal is to make explicit the implicitly used knowledge by competent persons of a culture in the recognition and reading of signs.

CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS

He applied the structural analysis to such phenomena as mythologies, kinship relations, totems etc. His method may be illustrated by examining his treatment of the Oedipus myth. He placed the individual story of Oedipus within the context of the whole cycle of tales connected with the city of Thebes. He then began to look for repeated motifs and contrasts in them, and he used these as the basis of his interpretation. Thus the story and the cycle it is part of are reconstituted in terms of a number of basic oppositions: animal/human, relation/stranger, husband/son and so on. Concrete details from the story are seen in the context of a larger structure, and the larger structure is then seen as an overall network of basic “dyadic pairs” which have obviously symbolic, thematic, and archetypal resonance.

ROLAND BARTHES

Barthes’s discussion of wrestling in *Mythologies* is a good example of how institutions of popular culture can be subjected to structural analysis. Normally one thinks that wrestling is objectively different from boxing and therefore quite naturally has different meanings associated with it. But one can easily imagine a culture in which the two sports shared a single myth and were watched in the same way. In the contemporary French culture, however, there is clearly a difference in ethos of the two sports, which requires explanation. For instance, why does one bet on boxing but not on wrestling? Why would it be odd for a boxer to scream and writhe in agony when hit, as wrestlers do? Why are rules consistently broken in wrestling but not in boxing? These differences are to be explained by a complex set of cultural conventions which make wrestling a spectacle rather than a contest. Boxing, Barthes says, is a Jansenist sport based on the demonstration of excellence: interest is directed towards the final outcome and visible suffering would be read only as a sign of imminent defeat. Wrestling, on the other hand, is drama in which each moment must be immediately intelligible as spectacle; the wrestlers themselves are physical

caricatures cast in moral roles, and the outcome is of interest only for that reason. And thus while in boxing rules are external to the match, designating limits beyond which it must not go, in wrestling they are very much within it, as conventions which increase the range of meanings that can be produced. Rules exist to be violated, so that the 'evil character' may be more violently characterized and the audience engaged in revengeful fury. They are broken visibly (though the referee's back may be turned): a violation hidden from the audience would be pointless. Suffering must be exaggerated, but it must also be intelligible; and indeed, as Barthes shows, particular notions of intelligibility and of justice are the major factors which separate wrestling from boxing and make it the grandiloquent and fundamentally reassuring spectacle that it is.

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 meant by morphology?

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2) Explain briefly the perception of madness in classical age.

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1.3 POSTSTRUCTURALISM

Poststructuralism represents a wide variety of philosophical perspectives and critical procedures that came to prominence in the 1970s, challenging some positions and radicalizing others of structuralism regarding language and other signifying systems. Roland Barthes (in his later phase of thought), Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva are the prominent poststructuralist thinkers. There are also a number of other intellectuals in whom poststructuralist tendencies and themes are identifiable such as Lyotard, Baudrillard, Deleuze and Guattari. Though the terms “postmodern” and “poststructural” are sometimes used interchangeably as synonyms, it is useful to follow those scholars who propose that “postmodern” refer to recent developments in literature and other arts, and reserve “poststructural” to recent theories of criticism and of intellectual inquiries in general.

COMMON THEMES

The poststructuralist philosophers come from diverse backgrounds and are occupied with apparently unconnected intellectual domains; for instance, Derrida was groomed in the phenomenological tradition of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, Jacques Lacan was a psychoanalyst in the Freudian tradition and Michel Foucault was a historian of social institutions and constructions. In spite of their different interests and preoccupations their thought shares certain common concerns which are typically poststructuralist.

The Decentering of the Subject

Structuralism had already implicitly shifted focus from the self or the subject. Marxism, existentialism, phenomenology and psychoanalysis were characterized by investiture of a central place to the human self. For these movements the human subject was a free and purposive agent who was the centre of operative initiative and control. Structuralisms instead focused in the supra-individual structures of language, ritual, and kinship which make the individual what he or

she is. For the structuralists it is not the self that creates culture but culture that creates the self. The study of abstract relations within systems or “codes” of cultural signs is the key to the understanding of the human existence. In this sense, it dislodged the subject from the centre and divested it of all operative initiative and originary nature.

Poststructuralism radicalized this theme. They directed this theme against the scientific pretensions of structuralism itself. In the absence of any “centre” language has become for them an unregulatable play of purely relational elements. The subject, author or narrator of a text becomes itself a purely linguistic product. In the words of Paul de Man we reduce the subject to the status of “a mere grammatical pronoun.” Thus Barthes proclaimed the “death of the author” in an article he published in 1968, with the same title. And Michel Foucault in a 1969 article “What is an Author,” announced the “disappearance of the author.” By such pronouncements they did not mean to deny that a human individual is a necessary link in the chain of events that results in a *parole* or text. What they denied was the validity of the “function,” or “role” hitherto assigned in Western thought to a uniquely individual and purposive author, who is conceived as the originator, purposive planner (by his or her intentions) the determiner of the form and meaning of a text. Author is in a sense the construct of the culture. He is a “site” traversed by the “cultural constructs” and the “discursive formations” engendered by the conceptual and power configurations in a given era.

“Reading Reads Texts”

With the author dead, the reader or interpreter becomes a focal figure in poststructuralist treatments of signifying systems. The reader, however, is stripped of the traditional attributes of purposiveness and initiative and is converted into an impersonal process of reading. What does this reading read? It is no longer a literary “work”; this term implies a purposive human maker of the product. It is, instead, the “text”, which is nothing but a structure of signifiers regarded merely as a given for the reading process.

A characteristic poststructuralist view about the text is that it does not have a fixed meaning. The death of the author frees the reader to enter the literary text in whatever way he or she chooses.

The intensity of pleasure yielded by the text becomes proportionate to the reader's abandonment of limits on its signifying possibilities.

Critique of Metaphysics of Presence

Poststructuralism raises a rebellion against what it considers to be the prejudices of Western thinking. One such prejudice is the preference for presence over absence. In fact the Western thinking is so much pervaded by this prejudice that Derrida calls it simply the metaphysics of presence. Thus we see Plato investing all being (*ousia*) in ideas on the ground that they are immediately present to the mind; he also prefers speech over writing on the ground that in speech the meaning is immediately present to the speaker and that the auditor has the possibility of making it present. Descartes accepts the "cogito" as the first principle of all sure and certain knowledge because it is claimed to be immediately and luminously present to every individual. Again Edmund Husserl, the father of phenomenological movement distinguishes linguistic signs from indicative signs on the basis of the claim that in linguistic signs their meanings are immediately present to us, while in the case of indicative signs like smoke indicating fire, there is a "distance" between the signifier and the signified.

Poststructuralism trains its guns against such claims of immediate presence. According to them no meaning or concept can be immediately present to the thinker. It is always mediated through a sign, a signifier. In other words, meanings are never "presentified" (made present) but always re-presented. Every attempt to make it completely present is a "deferring" or a postponement, since new signifiers keep coming into play every time we do it.

Critique of Origins

Inquiry into origins is an attempt to see behind or beyond phenomena to their ultimate foundation. For modern philosophers of the self (e.g existentialists, psychoanalysts and phenomenologists) the attempt to discover the origin of the self is the road to authenticity. Poststructuralism denies the possibility of recapturing the origins of phenomena.

JACQUES DERRIDA (1931-2004)

Derrida first made his name as a Husserl scholar and critic. His translation of Husserl's "Origin of Geometry" with a long introductory essay, and *Speech and Phenomenon* which was a close study of Husserl's theory of signs propounded in his first *Logical Investigation* were applauded by the French University establishment. His name today is almost synonymous with "deconstruction;" he is its most prominent theoretician as well as practitioner.

Derrida's structuralist roots are evident in his writings. Yet he radicalizes and goes beyond structuralism. His "radicalized structuralism" (poststructuralism) is set forth and elaborated in "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," a paper he read in 1966 at an International Colloquium at John Hopkins University, USA, and which was subsequently included in his *Writing and Difference*. In this paper Derrida showed that structuralism while proclaiming that everything is structural, did put certain things beyond structurality. He attacked the quasi scientific pretensions of structuralism, derived from Saussure's concept of the structure of language and represented by Levi-Strauss. He asserted that the notions of system and structure, whether linguistic, cultural or social, presuppose the idea of a "centre" around which everything is structured and yet "escapes structurality." In Saussure's theory of language for example this centre is assigned the function of controlling the endless differential play of internal relationships, while remaining itself outside of and immune from, that play. Derrida regards this incoherent and unrealizable notion of an ever-active yet always absent centre as only one of the many ways in which all Western thinking is logocentric or dependent on the notion of a self-certifying foundation, or absolute or essence or ground which is ever needed but never present.

What gives unity to Derrida's work is his consistent attempt to question the fundamental presupposition that underlie Western philosophy and culture: the presupposition of logocentrism and foundationalism. So he does not consider his work properly philosophical; it is anti-philosophy. He writes, "But I am not sure that the 'site' of my work, reading philosophical texts and posing philosophical questions, is itself properly philosophical. Indeed I have attempted more and more systematically to find a non-site, or a non-philosophical site, from which to question philosophy."

'Difference'

One of the key terms in Derrida's thought is 'difference'. It is a word coined by him to evoke the instability of the binary oppositions fundamental to logical systems or logocentric discourse. It suggests that binary oppositions reverse and slide into one another.

"Differance" is a translation of the French neologism *différance*. He has intended the term to have two connotations: difference and deferral or delaying. The first connotation corresponds to the way in which any pair of binary opposites always fails to match exactly the domain to which it is supposed to apply. There are always irreducible differences between the structure of the actual phenomenon (a historical event, a text, or a personality) and the binary divisions required by a logical system. For instance, Plato wants to make a sharp division between speech and writing. But the phenomena referred to by these words do not correspond exactly to the division. He wants to separate them clearly as binary opposites and privilege speech over writing. But he ends up by saying that 'thought which is expressed in speech, is a writing in the soul'; speech, in other words, becomes a writing, thus erasing the difference that he wanted to set up between them. The second connotation is meant to bring home the fact that in the face of the unstable and recalcitrant phenomena the effort to impose the strict opposition should always be "put off" (deferred). For instance, when we see that the sharp opposition that we want to make between speech/writing does not obtain as we characterize thought expressed in speech as writing in the soul, we may try to secure the opposition by distinguishing between "good writing" (which is like speech) and "bad writing." In other words we think that even if the distinction fails in one level it can be revived at another. But Derrida maintains that even this distinction will fail; then we may try another and so on. A truly sharp distinction will always remain elusive; it is indefinitely deferred or put off.

MICHEL FOUCAULT (1926-84)

The major project that he executed was the study of the history of some important institutions and social constructions like madness, clinic, sexuality, knowledge etc. His philosophical

positions are derived from these studies. One of his basic positions is that the ways in which we think of madness, sickness, sexuality, knowledge etc. though appear to us as objectively given facts, are in fact, social constructions.

We may illustrate this point by examining his account of the evolution of the social perception of madness. The concept of madness is not an objective, non-historical given, but is merely a contingent social construct which has a genealogy. Foucault identifies three distinct stages in the development of the concept of madness. The first stage is seen in the Middle Ages. In this period madness was seen as an integrally human phenomenon. Madness was opposed to reason, but it was recognized as an alternative mode of human existence. Consequently, though abhorred and disdained, it was seen as a meaningful challenge to reason. It could engage in ironic dialogue with reason or claim to be a domain of human experience and insight not available to reason.

Classical Age (17th and 18th centuries) represents the second stage. In this period the perception of madness changed. It was seen as the negation of the characteristic human attribute of reason. It was nothing but unreason, a plunge into animality. It had no human significance. Accordingly there was a conceptual exclusion of the mad from human society. Corresponding to this conceptual exclusion they were also physically excluded from human society by confinement in institutions. The conceptual and physical exclusion also led to a moral condemnation. The moral fault was not of the ordinary kind. While ordinary moral fault is the violation of one or more norms of human community, madness is a more radical moral fault, where one makes a radical choice of rejecting humanity and the human community *in toto* in favour of a life of sheer animality.

In the Modern Age the perception of madness changes again. In this period once again the mad are regarded as being within the human community, not as animals outside human community. They are within human community; however, they are now seen as moral offenders, violators of specific social norms, who should feel guilt at their condition and who need reform of their attitudes and behaviour. Correspondingly, in the modern age there are ways of treating the mad, not merely isolating them but by making them the objects of a moral therapy that subjects them to social norms. There is a move from the merely custodial confinement of the Classical Age to

the modern therapeutic asylum. Though this institution was widely regarded as an advance in humanitarianism, Foucault sees it as merely a more subtle and thorough method of controlling the mad. It is a “gigantic moral imprisonment”. It may seem natural to us that the doctors should rule the mad, because we see the latter as “mentally ill”. But Foucault claims that in the asylum the rule is not really so much by medical as by moral authority. Doctors have authority not because they have knowledge to cure, but because they represent the moral demands of society. This is evident today in the psychiatric practices such as psychoanalysis. The practice is accompanied by the trappings of medical science, but the key to the therapy remains the personal moral authority of the therapist, who serves as an instrument of social values.

In *The Order of Things* as well as in *Archeology of Knowledge* Foucault shows that each epoch has its own underlying ‘episteme’ (the *langue*) which constrains and conditions the explicit discourses (the *parole*) of that age. Thus there is nothing absolute about the modern episteme, and its peculiar conceptions of truth, science, man etc.

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 meant by ‘differance’?

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2) Explain briefly the perception of madness in classical age.

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1.4. Let Us Sum Up

We have examined above the main concepts of two very important and related intellectual movements of contemporary times. For an understanding of both structuralism and poststructuralism their roots in contemporary linguistics should be explored. Therefore we have started by giving a brief account of the main concepts of Saussurean linguistics. Then we examined the structuralist movement, especially as expounded and practiced by two of its most prominent adherents: Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes. Then we examined poststructuralism as a radicalization of certain motifs of structuralism. After looking at some common themes of the movement we examined the central concepts of two prominent poststructuralists: Derrida and Foucault.

1.5. Key Words

Phenomenon: Phenomenon is any observable occurrence.

Deconstruction: Deconstruction generally attempts to demonstrate that any text is not a discrete whole but contains several irreconcilable and contradictory meanings with multiple interpretative possibilities.

1.6. Further Readings and References

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1.7. Answers to Check Your Progress

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Morphology is the study of ‘morphemes.’ A morpheme is defined as the smallest meaningful unit of speech sounds within any one language; that is, a morpheme is composed of one or more phonemes, and is a unit that recurs in a language with the same or at least similar meaning. Some morphemes constitute complete words, e.g., “man” “open” etc. Others occur as parts of words e.g., “dis-” in “disgrace, and ‘-ful’ in “disgraceful”. Morphology studies how phonemes combine to form words and other morphemes.

2. Levi Strauss applied the structural analysis to such phenomena as mythologies, kinship relations, totems etc. His method may be illustrated by examining his treatment of the Oedipus myth. He placed the individual story of Oedipus within the context of the whole cycle of tales connected with the city of Thebes. He then began to look for repeated motifs and contrasts in them, and he used these as the basis of his interpretation. Thus the story and the cycle it is part of are reconstituted in terms of a number of basic oppositions: animal/human, relation/stranger, husband/son and so on. Concrete details from the story are seen in the context of a larger structure, and the larger structure is then seen as an overall network of basic “dyadic pairs” which have obviously symbolic, thematic, and archetypal resonance.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. One of the key terms in Derrida's thought is 'difference'. It is a word coined by him to evoke the instability of the binary oppositions fundamental to logical systems or logocentric discourse. It suggests that binary oppositions reverse and slide into one another. "Difference" is a translation of the French neologism *différance*. He has intended the term to have two connotations: difference and deferral or delaying. The first connotation corresponds to the way in which any pair of binary opposites always fails to match exactly the domain to which it is supposed to apply. There are always irreducible differences between the structure of the actual phenomenon (a historical event, a text, or a personality) and the binary divisions required by a logical system. For instance, Plato wants to make a sharp division between speech and writing. But the phenomena referred to by these words do not correspond exactly to the division. He wants to separate them clearly as binary opposites and privilege speech over writing. But he ends up by saying that 'thought which is expressed in speech, is a writing in the soul'; speech, in other words, becomes a writing, thus erasing the difference that he wanted to set up between them. The second connotation is meant to bring home the fact that in the face of the unstable and recalcitrant phenomena the effort to impose the strict opposition should always be "put off" (deferred).

2. Classical Age (17th and 18th centuries) represents the second stage. In this period the perception of madness changed. It was seen as the negation of the characteristic human attribute of reason. It was nothing but unreason, a plunge into animality. It had no human significance. Accordingly there was a conceptual exclusion of the mad from human society. Corresponding to this conceptual exclusion they were also physically excluded from human society by confinement in institutions. The conceptual and physical exclusion also led to a moral condemnation. The moral fault was not of the ordinary kind. While ordinary moral fault is the violation of one or more norms of human community, madness is a more radical moral fault, where one makes a radical choice of rejecting humanity and the human community *in toto* in favour of a life of sheer animality.

UNIT 2

POSTMODERNISM

CONTENTS

- 2.0. Objectives
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- 2.2. The Characteristics of the Pre-Modern Age
- 2.3. The Characteristics of the Modern Age
- 2.4. The Characteristics of the Post-Modern Age
- 2.5. The Challenge of the Postmodern
- 2.6. Contributions of Postmodernism
- 2.7. Limitations of Postmodernism
- 2.8. Let Us Sum Up
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- 2.10. Further Readings and References
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2.0. OBJECTIVES

Postmoderns would look at history in three periods, namely, the pre-modern, the modern and the post-modern.

- In this Unit, you are expected to look at these three periods of history, as seen by postmodern thinkers. Since postmodernism is largely a Western cultural phenomenon, the history referred to is the intellectual history of the West. Postmodern thinkers want to differentiate themselves from the pre-modern and the modern ways of looking at life and ideas.

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Postmodernism is a much-used and even overused term today in a variety of disciplines. It is hard to define, since it is not really a doctrine, but rather a particular type of sensitivity, a way of looking at things that has influenced styles in literature, in art, in architecture, in religious writings and even in moral and social practices and preferences.

To clarify this rather confusing state of affairs, it may be helpful to know that postmodernism is used in contemporary writings in at least *four different meanings*:

- (a) the state of affairs in a society, that is, how a particular society actually is or works;
- (b) a style in art, as when we speak of a postmodern building or painting;
- (c) a term loosely used to indicate any aspect of today's society that is different from how societies were in the modern period;
- (d) the ideas and theories that try to understand or explain this "new" state of society and its way of organizing things.

Some people use the term postmodernity to indicate the state of society today, and the word postmodernism to mean the thinking or the philosophy typical of today. Others use the term postmodernism to mean both. Now we shall begin with the characteristics of the pre-modern age.

2.2. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PRE-MODERN AGE

By "pre-modern" is meant the world before the arrival of modern science.

Religious dogma was the ultimate reference point in settling issues. Religious leaders held the most powerful posts in public life. Most people went to religious places of worship, not because of conviction or inner experience, but because society expected them to attend public worship and abide by the religious practices of the group, which could punish the person who did not observe the prescribed religious practices. The penalties could include social ostracism (being thrown out of the village or society) or fines, physical punishments or even death.

Religious texts were held to have all the answers, whether on matters referring to one's spiritual life, or on other "secular" matters, such as social relationships (e.g., the way women

were treated in society, or what authority the king had, or how the so-called higher and lower groups in society related to each other), or health and sickness, or the nature of the material world, or even travel. Matters that we today consider purely natural or scientific, were taken to be part of religious revelation. People believed that the nature of the sun, moon and stars or the shape of the earth were matters of religious dogma.

This can, and still does, happen in parts of the world where education has not spread. Many people today still live in cultures and settings that are pre-modern. In such settings, ignorance and superstition still rule. Matters are settled according to village tradition and the opinion of magicians or wizards. Fear of evil spirits and of curses keeps people frightened and easy to manipulate.

There were certainly many good aspects to this pre-modern or unscientific world. There was a great sense of belonging to a community or village. People helped each other in case of need. People knew their neighbours, visited each other frequently, or met often at places of worship or in the market place. Most people knew almost nothing of what happened outside their village or region (in this sense, their village was their world); mutual need and the absence of other resources made people depend on each other in sickness, natural disasters and special events, marriage, funeral or village festivals.

Much of this changed, for a significant part of the world, with the arrival of modern science. Science ushered in a world that was significantly different, in a number of ways. This is the world we refer to as the modern world.

2.3. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MODERN AGE

The modern period is roughly the period lasting from the sixteenth century A.D. up to the middle of the twentieth century—the last four hundred years or so. This period is marked by a strong confidence in reason, particularly scientific reason. Knowledge obtained through “scientific” methods were considered more reliable and higher than other forms of knowledge.

According to postmodern thinkers, the modern period is marked by these characteristics: rationality, dualism, the search for absolute knowledge, belief in progress, pride of place given to science, a centre-periphery division of cultures and nations. Here is a short explanation of each of these traits:

Rationality: A good model of the centrality of reason would be the philosophy of Descartes. For him and other rationalists, the surest and the most evident certainties came through reason. Reason is the highest arbiter of truths. There is nothing we cannot explore through reason. Reason was seen as more reliable and less biased than ordinary experience or religious dogma. Descartes, Kant, Leibnitz, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel would be typical representatives of this modern way of thinking.

Dualism: Reality was seen as divided into the world of reason or spirit, and the world of matter. Of the two, the rational was seen as superior to the realm of matter. Human beings, too, were seen as made of up the dual elements of matter and spirit, which were very different from one another. One of the philosophical problems that would grip many thinkers discuss is the mind-body problem. How can my thinking or decision, for instance, move my hand?

The possibility of, and the search for, absolute knowledge: Descartes and Kant in particular tried to establish unshakable foundations for their philosophy. Their belief or claim was that absolute knowledge was possible. What was needed was to develop a right methodology to discover it. When discovered, such truth would be absolutely valid and unassailable; it would be true for everyone, everywhere, irrespective of the conditions or times.

Belief in Progress: Belief in reason led moderns to believe in unlimited progress. Sigmund Freud, for instance, would speak of reason as “our real God.” He held that all problems could be solved by reason. If we do not have a solution today, human reason will discover the solution tomorrow. Moderns saw history as progression. The diseases which we cannot heal today will be treated by medicines which we will invent tomorrow. In social and political areas, too, moderns were optimists. A hundred years ago, that is, at the beginning of the twentieth century, a number of intellectuals and political leaders believed that there would be no more wars, since countries could now communicate with

each other easily, and settle disputes rationally. Moderns, in this sense, were optimists about the future. Things were expected to get better and better.

Science as supreme: Modern thinkers generally accepted scientific knowledge and technology as the paradigm of knowledge or as the most perfect type of knowledge. The main tool for unlimited progress was science. Science, many moderns believed, will solve most of our problems and make our individual and social lives safer, more comfortable and better in every way. Compared to pre-modern times, the modern world seemed to have been so much better off, in every way. To be modern meant to believe in science and recognize its superiority. All other ways of knowing were considered somehow inferior to scientific learning. This belief in science and technology was at times taken to absurd lengths. In one well-known tragic instance, when the Titanic was built, it was considered unsinkable; the ship did not, therefore, carry enough life boats.

Centre and periphery: Most of this progress and scientific advancement took place in one particular part of the world, namely, the area we refer to as the “West,” that is, Western Europe and North America, together with other nations where Europeans settled in large numbers, like, Australia and New Zealand. The average Westerner was proud of being white and richer than the rest of the world. Western culture considered itself as not only richer than other parts of the world, but as racially and culturally superior. They saw themselves as the “centre” and the rest of the world as “periphery.” In the colonized countries, such as India, they managed to influence a good number of the local people, too, to see Western culture as inherently superior and their own cultures as inferior. This cultural arrogance was used to justify colonization. Instead of seeing it as the economic and cultural exploitation of the rest of the world in extremely unjust ways, it was presented as a civilizing process. Many non-European nations were conquered and exploited by European nations, which became extremely wealthy in the process, while reducing old civilizations like India to extreme penury.

Thus, the centre-periphery contrast was not just a philosophical notion; it had deep economic and political repercussions.

Some call this the *Enlightenment Project*, linking these traits to the European Enlightenment Period, when reason was accepted as the supreme norm in society. People believed that the best way to discover the truth and to organize society was reason (and not, for instance, religious doctrine). Thus, the modern European nations are not organized around a religious dogma or sacred texts, but around reason. The French Revolution and the French Constitution (which, in its turn, influenced the American Constitution, as well as the Indian Constitution) are examples of this way of thinking. People believed that human reason is the best tool for solving human problems. They took a clear stand that was different from, and often in opposition to, pre-modern ways of thinking, which they considered outdated and obscurantist.

2.4 The Characteristics of the Post-Modern Age

The confident, progress-oriented, supposedly rational and scientific way of thinking that marked modernity came under serious shocks in the twentieth century. Far from being a time of peace and harmony, it was marked by the two most destructive wars of history. The blind faith in science was in for a rude shock for a number of reasons. (The Titanic sank!). Besides the two world wars, the human race witnessed atrocious cruelties, such as the genocide of millions of Jews, the exploitation and ill-treatment of human beings on the basis of race, caste and gender. The same human brain that invented medicines invented also the atom bomb. The intellect that composed music and literature was also used to build gas chambers where innocent men, women and children perished. The so-called superior cultures and nations treated others with contempt and created systems of exploitation. In cities, side by side with high rise buildings, slums and crime increased. There were now not only more efficient ways of healing the sick, but also more ruthless forms of torture and murder. Atomic energy created more possibilities for providing electricity; it also led to nightmares like Chernobyl in the USSR, where a dysfunctional nuclear reactor led to the death and disfigurement of many people. The invention of plastic gave us many new useful products; it also created a never-ending problem of waste disposal. Chemicals can kill insects; they also damage our lungs and brain. They can increase the yield of a farm; they also cause cancer on a large scale.

This deep disappointment with modernity's promises and the awareness of the double-edged nature of science and history, led many thinkers to question the certainties on which the

modern period was built. This sense of un-ease with the unquestioned certainties of modernity is one of the marks of postmodernism, which, as we said, is not a fixed doctrine or a set of doctrine, nor an organization or dogma. Postmodern thinkers would take a conscious distance from the modern mental make-up in a number of ways. Rather than accept the ways of the modern period as universal norms valid for all times and places, more and more people started taking unbeaten or formerly unaccepted paths. This they did in art, in architecture, in philosophy, in social science, in politics, in mass media. Let us have a look at some of the traits that mark this new sensitivity. It is impossible to even summarize the main trends of this vast array of movements, but the following characteristics would be somewhat typical of doctrines, ideas and mentalities that call themselves post-modern. We will first look at the new situations and changes in awareness that led to this new type of thinking. Next, we will see how these new (post-modern) ways of thinking challenge earlier patterns of thought. After that, we will have a brief look at postmodernism's main contributions and limitations.

These are the world-changing events and thought patterns that challenged the confident, optimistic, Euro-centric vision of the world that marked modernity.

End of the colonial period: During the colonial period, it was easy for the European colonizing power to present itself as the norm for culture and morals, and present other cultures and civilizations inferior. Thus, European writings—from so-called scientific writings to children's stories and comic books—in general presented Asians as inferior and Africans as savage. British writer Macaulay, for instance, claimed that one shelf of Western books was superior to the whole literary output of other cultures. Western writings presented the European as more cultured, better, more benevolent, bearer of a superior culture. The end of the colonial period showed the world the cruelty and inhumanity that had sustained colonial rule. Colonization, far from being a benevolent arrangement benefiting the conquered peoples, was plunder on an incredibly large scale. The claim of the West to be a superior, caring ruler was exposed as largely false.

Awareness of pluralism: Travel, studies and exposure to different countries and cultures made many people more aware of cultural pluralism. Every human being starts life as a frog in a small well, but there are better chances today or seeing other frogs and other wells, and of seeing one's own way of speaking, living and judging as one among many ways of being human.

Historical and cultural conditioning of truth: This awareness of cultural pluralism also raised serious questions about the claims of particular ways of thinking to be universally valid. How do you judge, say, an Indian or Chinese or African marriage and family life with the criteria evolved in Europe? How far are our values and ethics universally valid? How far are they culturally conditioned?

Reality as evolving: The new discoveries in the sciences made us aware that the universe itself is a constantly changing reality, far more mysterious and incredibly more vast than we had imagined. The world changes; nature changes; our knowledge of nature changes. Subatomic particles change even as we study them.

The new world order: In the place of a world dominated by a few European nations, as was the case during most of the modern period (think of the massive migrations of Europeans to Australia or the Americas, with no thought given to the rights of the original inhabitants), we have a new world order, with rising powers. To give just two well-known examples, China has emerged as the world's largest manufacturing nation, and India is expected to become the world's third or fourth largest economy very soon. This is a far cry from colonial days.

International capitalism and a globalized economy: Multinational companies dominate the world economy today. A number of them have more power and money than most nations have. Globalization, for better or worse, is a powerful movement, enriching some nations and individuals beyond what could be thought of during the modern period, and impoverishing those who cannot compete in the world market.

New meaning and sources of knowledge: The printed word or even radio or television is not the most powerful source of knowledge today. It is the Internet. Knowledge is not only given and received in very different ways today; knowledge is the greatest source of wealth today. Today's IT firms based in Bangalore, for instance, are dealing in a product

that was unknown in the modern period. This is where the strongest part of the economy is.

Under the influence of these changes that marked the twentieth century, thinkers and artists started looking at theory and life differently, a kind of difference that came to be known as postmodernism. Here are the challenges raised by this new form of thinking.

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 do you understand by 'rationality'?

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.....
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.....
.....

2) Write a short note on a "New World Order."

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2.5. THE CHALLENGE OF THE POSTMODERN

Although postmodernism has no founder nor a fixed set of doctrines, most postmodernist thinkers and artists would raise (or have sympathy for) for the following types of criticisms of modern thought.

Critique of metanarratives: Jean-Francois Lyotard, the name most associated with postmodernism, would define postmodernism thus: “I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives.” What did he mean? Lyotard sees any branch of knowledge as just one type of knowledge. In fact, he said, “Scientific knowledge is a kind of discourse.” He does not see science as inherently superior to others. To present one’s position or doctrine as superior or as valid for everyone, everywhere, one needs what Lyotard calls “metanarratives.” By meta-narratives he meant general theories or unexamined world views that would justify a particular position. Thus, if I want to promote science as the best type of knowledge, I would need a meta-narrative that tells me that scientific truths are superior to common sense or that all scientific work is done for the benefit of human beings. Or, when Karl Marx wrote about the exploitation of workers and children in nineteenth century mines and factories, he was narrating a fact. When he proposed Marxism as a solution for economic exploitation everywhere, he is claiming to have a universally valid theory, a diagnosis and prescription that should work in all settings. This would be, for post-moderns, a meta-narrative, and hence suspect. In general, postmodern sensitivity would lie in suspecting any doctrine or view that places itself above criticism and makes absolute claims, and in listening rather to the little stories that lie behind the big theory. This brings us to another important movement associated with postmodernism, namely, deconstruction.

Deconstruction: This term, as well as the intellectual movement it represents, is associated with the French thinker Jacques Derrida. Derrida’s ideas are proverbially hard to understand or summarize. In a few words, deconstruction would refer to a critical study of a subject, examining the language used and the assumptions involved in the writing. To deconstruct a text means to take it apart into its constitutive elements, and see how the text itself in a way undermines the doctrines it holds. We have to use words, since we have no other way of communicating ideas; at the same time, the words we use are inadequate to express what we want to. In this sense, words are both right and wrong. They need to be used, and at the same time, unused (he said much about the need to “erase” what we write.)

End of the autonomous subject, of history and of absolute truth: This is another well-known “slogan” associated with postmodernism. The meaning is this: By “*end of history*,” postmoderns mean three things: They question the assumption that human beings are progressing to an ever better state of being or society. A later stage of history can be worse than the previous one. Secondly, they look at historiography (the writing of history) critically. What we have is not raw history, but historiography done by particular nations or persons or cultures. We do not have any one objective of knowing or writing history. Thus, the history of the British Period in India would look different when written by an English historian—especially one who believed in the superiority of British culture or in the right of conquest—or by an Indian who saw colonization as immoral. Thirdly, postmoderns do not believe that history has a direction or unity. They think rather that the events that make up history are of too many different kinds to fit into any one coherent whole.

When they mention *the end of the isolated subject*, what they mean is this. In Descartes, for instance, we have a philosopher claiming to identify the nature of the thinking subject. Descartes’ claim would be that his conclusions would be valid for all human beings, everywhere. The same is true of other philosophers, like Kant. In these (and other thinkers), we see an attempt to make statements about any human being, anywhere. The abstract conclusions a particular philosopher comes to, are held to be valid for all human beings everywhere. This view is largely discarded by postmodern thinkers.

Why speak of *the end of absolute truth*?

This, too, is because postmodernists are in general more sensitive to the particular situations and conditions under which a so-called truth is developed. They are more reluctant than people in the modern period to think that anyone can propose universally valid abstract truths which cannot be challenged or changed, and which do not depend on the circumstances under which they discovered or proposed.

Language games: “Language games” is an idea mentioned earlier by distinguished philosophers like Wittgenstein. The point made here is this: Each branch of knowledge has

its own rules. We cannot see experimental science as the highest form of knowledge, nor judge other areas of learning by the criteria of science. Thus, music or religious writing or architecture play by different rules when compared to physics or astronomy. This idea frees each discipline to follow its own language and rules. Science is no longer seen as the highest discipline, nor as the arbiter of truth. Thus, how we judge art or the truth of a mystical statement will be different from how we judge the validity or the veracity of scientific statements.

Periphery and centre: The centre and the periphery of the modern and colonial era have largely lost their meaning. What was once periphery can become the centre (e.g., the United States when compared to U.K.), or the world can be seen having many centres of power and influence rather than as having one economic or political or cultural centre. This change in the “pecking order” and the consequent change in international relations and the perception of cultures and peoples will be welcomed as empowering by formerly oppressed and excluded groups, or as threatening and destabilizing by groups that benefited from the earlier hierarchies (whether they be hierarchies of race or nation or caste or whatever).

Pluralism of cultures: No one culture can propose itself as the norm or as inherently superior. Recently, the Australian government apologized for the appalling injustices committed against the original inhabitants of that continent. Such a stand would have been unthinkable earlier. In the modern period, white settlers saw it as their right to take over a continent, exploit the Aborigines (whom they despised as inferior). Today, there is much greater awareness of the richness of different cultures, together with the acceptance of the human rights of all.

Historical nature of many truths: Unlike the quest of Descartes or Kant or Hegel to build a system of universally valid truths, postmoderns are sensitive to the historical conditioning of many truths. So, the question to ask about a doctrine would not simply be: “What is the truth?” We would also need to ask: “In what setting was it said? Why was it said? Would it be valid for me/us/our setting?”

2.6. CONTRIBUTIONS OF POSTMODERNISM

As we have repeatedly stated, postmodernism is not a system or coherent set of doctrines. Hence, it cannot be presented, or defended or rejected as such. We need to see it as a new set of movements that arose independently in different fields, and influenced each other. These new ways of thinking can be credited with the following merits or contributions to the world of thought and culture.

Listening to the forgotten little narratives: The postmodernist suspicion of meta-narratives (accepting an unexamined grand theory that supports many particular doctrines and practices) can help us to listen to the many forgotten stories of ordinary people, smaller nations, less powerful cultures. For instance, colonization supported itself with the metanarrative of European cultural superiority and the claim of bringing civilization to the colonized peoples. In the process, the voices of the conquered peoples were not listened to. The so-called discovery of America in 1492 would mean different things to the conquering European settlers and to the Native Americans who lost all their land. The same can be said about the “progress” made by India by building huge dams; we do not normally hear the voices of the millions of people who lost their homes and land in the process.

The uniqueness and independence of different fields: Postmodernism frees each discipline to be itself, rather than compare itself to experimental science and be treated as inferior. Thus Kalidasa’s writings or the Ajanta-Ellora paintings or the Bhagavad Gita or the Bible cannot be judged by the canons of science. Each field is unique and independent. (And has the right to exist, provided it does not violate the rights of other human beings.)

From a centre-periphery world to a pluri-centric world: No culture (e.g., European) or race (e.g., white) or caste (e.g., Brahmin) has the right to propose itself as superior or as the norm to judge others. Who is to decide who is superior, and on whose criteria? Why should we have this superior-inferior hierarchy at all? Can’t human beings live and treat each other as

human beings, different in some ways (in race or gender, in looks or language or customs), but equal in dignity and worth?

Critique of doctrines with culturally insensitive claims: Postmodernism invites us to look the background of doctrines that claim to be universally valid.

Influence of the non-rational: Reason, the queen in modernity, is seen as just one of the paths for reaching the truth. Postmodernism gives an important place to the role of the non-rational. This is partly because of the frightening truth that very brilliant people did some horrible things to others during the wars or during inter-racial or inter-religious fights. Reason alone does not seem to be a reliable guide and teacher in human affairs. We need to listen to other areas, such as, our emotions, our aesthetic sense, our traditions, our dreams.

Analysis of language: Language is used and abused. We need to examine it critically. Words express ideas; words also betray the ideas they claim to represent. A language is not merely a tool of communication; it is also the bearer of a culture, and defender of particular values. Words can never express human experiences exactly or exhaustively.

Creativity in the arts, architecture and other fields: Refusing to follow the canons of modernity blindly, postmodern thinkers, artists, architects and writers have walked on untrodden paths, exploring new themes and new styles in new ways.

2.7. LIMITATIONS OF POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism has both strong admirers and adamant critics. Here are some of postmodernism's weaknesses

Theoretical critique of theory: This is an age-old issue in philosophy. To criticize a theoretical position, you are using other theoretical assumptions. Thus, for instance, to state that we should reject all meta-narratives is itself a meta-narrative. Human beings cannot speak or survive without some grand theories, whether religious or social or

economical. Even to state that there are other avenues to the truth besides reason, is itself a rational, theoretical statement. We cannot escape the use of reason.

Claiming more than it can prove: Postmodernism's claim that we live in a very different kind of age cannot be proved. Some would see postmodernism itself as a continuation of modernity (as another type of rational critique) rather than as something different from modernity. There are differences among periods of history and among cultures. This does not prove that what human beings have in common from one century to another or from one setting to another is less than the differences. A person living in the third or tenth or eighteenth century has more in common with us than there are differences between that world and ours.

Neglect of the essential and permanent: Why people read old religious books, or respond to a novel or movie from another culture, is because there is something essential and permanent we all share. Each of us is not so unique as to be completely different from others. This essential and permanent element is largely ignored or denied by postmodern thinkers.

Overlooking the contributions of modernity: While there were many flaws in modernity, it had its undeniable achievements. Psychiatric treatment of mental patients, for instance, is certainly an improvement over seeing the mentally sick as possessed by demons and subjecting them to cruel punishments. So, too, our modern means of travel, our mobile phones and computers, the spread of books, the many medical treatments available, are some of the advances the human race made using the gift of reason. Even the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a great achievement. Whatever one's religious faith (or lack of it), people have certain inalienable rights as human beings. The common basis is our human nature, as seen by our reason. Modernity was a greatly beneficial and freeing change for most people living in pre-modern settings. Would any of us like to go back to the pre-modern era?

Neglecting Social reforms: Whether it is the abolition of *sati* in India or of slavery in the West, while one's religious faith was often the motivating force, the real arguments against injustice were based on an appeal to reason. Think of the fight against untouchability or the political action against the enslavement of Africans or for the better treatment of women, or the respect afforded to persons of different religions in a multi-religious society. A modern, rational outlook was a key element in bringing about such changes. Without a common rational forum for exchange, what would a society's decisions be based on? We cannot leave everything to the preferences of individuals or small groups.

Moral relativism: A number of people who study postmodernism accuse it of having no strong ethical principles, of making everything a matter of private opinion. We should not forget that the position, "Everything is relative," is itself a self-contradictory statement. No one can logically hold it without contradicting oneself. To say that we need to respect cultures and that all our learning is conditioned by history and setting, is one thing. To jump from that to the conclusion that everything is relative, and that there are no universally valid truths, is an illogical step. Postmodernism seems to make this mistake.

Unnecessarily complex and obscure language: While studying the use of language and pointing out its limitations, several postmodern writers are notorious for excessive use of complex jargon, and writing in a way that is hard for even an educated person to follow, or for a reader to pin down.

2.8 LET US SUM UP

This short presentation aimed at an introductory, non-technical look at the influential contemporary cultural phenomenon called postmodernism. There is already a vast literature about, and within, postmodernism. A good library or the Internet can put the student in touch with more material.

Postmodernism is more a mood or sensitivity than a doctrine or organization or dogma. It can be seen as progress or as regression, depending on one's style of life, preferred values, close

associates and point of view. There are authors who see it as a bold critique of the excesses of modernity; others see it as a return to the pre-modern; still others look on it as an extension of modernism or even as a faulty abandoning of much that is valid in modernity.

Human beings can be said to be the same all over, and at all times, or very different, depending on what you want to stress. The same can be said of the similarities and dissimilarities among people. Postmodernism stresses the differences more than the sameness or continuity with modernity.

As a call not to let the big voices (meta-narratives) drown the little voices, or to allow the self-styled centre (Europe, or the US, or Western culture or a so-called higher caste) ignore the dignity and voices of the less powerful, it is a bold and challenging critical voice.

How far these ways of thinking, living and looking at the world are widespread, and who are the votaries, are moot questions. In our own country, we have people living in the pre-modern age (think of people looking for religious explanations of diseases like small pox, or the killing of women as witches to ward off evil in a village), in modernity (e.g., our study of mathematics and science, our use of phones and computers and trains and planes, our access to vaccination, blood tests and heart surgery) and in post-modern settings (generally smaller groups found on college campuses and in research circles). No person or country or culture is totally pre-modern or modern or post-modern.

To understand some of the changes taking place in our world, it is good to listen to voices that consider themselves postmodern, so that we may never deify science and reason and progress and a particular culture, not deny its achievements, but have a realistic idea of the power of reason to do good and to do evil, the ambiguous nature of scientific progress, the unclear direction of history, the good and bad found in every culture (no culture being intrinsically superior or inferior), the need to listen to the little voices and not just to the dominant ones, to examine texts and language critically, to be willing to learn from those who are different from us...In all this, postmodernist thinkers have been pioneers inviting us to listen, question, adapt, learn, and not be dazzled by the achievements of reason, science, technology, capitalism and colonial expansion. In taking such bold steps, this trend itself has neglected or denied important and essential aspects of what it means to be human. Postmodernism tends to deny ultimate principles or philosophical or religious truths that are perennially valid.

But then, following the same logic, postmodernism's own ways of thinking cannot be defended or validated. This is why philosopher Richard Tarnas says of postmodernism, "[It] cannot on its own principles ultimately justify itself any more than can the various metaphysical overviews [meta-narratives] against which the postmodern mind has defined itself."

To conclude, just as postmodernism invites us to look at modernity critically, common sense and human wisdom remind us to look at postmodernism itself with critical appreciation, seeing its strengths and not denying its weaknesses.

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 do you understand by 'metanarratives'?

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2) Write a short note on 'periphery and centre.'

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2.9. KEY WORDS

Dogmatism locks itself within systems expressed in absolute formulas of supposed universal value.

Skepticism maintains a position of doubt and asserts that truth does not exist or that it cannot be discovered by the human mind.

Relativism sees truth as partial and changeable, depending on the knower's mode of perception and varying according to the circumstances of place and time.

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2.11. Answers to Check Your Progress

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. *Rationality*: A good model of the centrality of reason would be the philosophy of Descartes. For him and other rationalists, the surest and the most evident certainties came through reason. Reason is the highest arbiter of truths. There is nothing we cannot explore through reason. Reason was seen as more reliable and less biased than ordinary experience or religious dogma. Descartes, Kant, Leibnitz, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel would be typical representatives of this modern way of thinking.

2. *The new world order*: In the place of a world dominated by a few European nations, as was the case during most of the modern period (think of the massive migrations of Europeans to Australia or the Americas, with no thought given to the rights of the original inhabitants), we have a new world order, with rising powers. To give just two well-known examples, China has emerged as the world's largest manufacturing nation, and India is expected to become the world's third or fourth largest economy very soon. This is a far cry from colonial days.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. 'Meta-narratives' means general theories or unexamined world views that would justify a particular position. Thus, if I want to promote science as the best type of knowledge, I would need a meta-narrative that tells me that scientific truths are superior to common sense or that all scientific work is done for the benefit of human beings. Or, when Karl Marx wrote about the exploitation of workers and children in nineteenth century mines and factories, he was narrating a fact. When he proposed Marxism as a solution for economic exploitation everywhere, he is claiming to have a universally valid theory, a diagnosis and prescription that should work in all settings.

2. The centre and the periphery of the modern and colonial era have largely lost their meaning. What was once periphery can become the centre (e.g., the United States when compared to U.K.), or the world can be seen having many centres of power and influence rather than as having one economic or political or cultural centre. This change in the "pecking order" and the consequent change in international relations and the perception of cultures and peoples will be welcomed as empowering by formerly oppressed and excluded groups, or as threatening and destabilizing by groups that benefited from the earlier hierarchies (whether they be hierarchies of race or nation or caste or whatever).

UNIT 3

HERMENEUTICS

Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
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- 3.2 Philosophical Hermeneutics
- 3.3 Historical Development of Hermeneutics
- 3.4 Schleiermacher: Development from Exegetical to Epistemological Hermeneutics
- 3.5 Dilthey: Shift from Romanticist to Historicist Hermeneutics
- 3.6 Heidegger: From Epistemological to Ontological Turn
- 3.7 Gadamer: Hermeneutics of *Truth and Method*
- 3.8 Ricoeur: Language as Discourse.
- 3.9 Let us Sum up
- 3.10 Key Words
- 3.11 Further Readings and References
- 3.12 Answers to Check your Progress

3.0. OBJECTIVES

Philosophical Hermeneutics has captured the centre stage in the philosophical discussions of post-modernity. Until the end of the nineteenth century hermeneutics limited itself mostly to giving methodological directions to the interpretative sciences. The recent recognition of the universality of the interpretative phenomena has paved the way for a philosophical hermeneutics. Consequently, the hermeneutic task has become more ontological rather than methodological.

1. This course introduces philosophical hermeneutics as a well organised, systematic, historically based and independent discipline in philosophy. It will deal with the complex issues of interpretation and emphasize the historic and linguistic nature of our world-experience.

2. It intends to expose the students to the leading theories, influential positions, varying methods and important concepts of the discipline. It will follow the hermeneutic tradition by considering the path-breaking contributions of Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur to the growing awareness of the universality of the hermeneutic problem and to the realization of the fundamentally interpretative character of our being in the world.
3. Inviting the students to delve deep into the art of understanding, the course will foster in them creative, critical, and insightful thinking and make them aware that understanding is not merely an activity of knowing but a way of being in the world.

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Etymologically, the word, 'hermeneutics' is derived from the Greek verb *hermeneuein* and the noun *hermeneia*, to mean 'to interpret' or 'interpretation'. Mythologically, it is related to Hermes, the Greek winged-god, whose chief function was to render the incomprehensible divine messages comprehensible to the human minds. Traditionally, it is linked to the rules for interpretation of texts, especially the sacred and legal ones. The word was used in three directions of meaning, namely, expression (speaking), explication (explanation) & translation (interpretation). But the common denominator fundamental to all three activities is interpretation leading to understanding. It is an art of discovering meaning.

As theory and practice of interpretation, hermeneutics has grown from being traditional hermeneutics that dealt with the exegetical interpretation of written sacred/classical texts to modern hermeneutics that engages in a complex process of unravelling the hidden meaning of both verbal and non-verbal forms and factors of expressions. When Nietzsche said that "there are no facts but only interpretations," he underlined the all-pervading and fundamental nature of the hermeneutic endeavour. It comprehends the universal human behaviour that is orientated towards making sense out of things.

3. 2. PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS

Philosophical hermeneutics owes its existence, to a great extent, to Hans-Georg Gadamer, who is considered to be its father. Situating himself in the hermeneutic tradition of Schleiermacher, Dilthey and Heidegger, he developed in his masterpiece, *Truth and Method*, a complex theory of interpretation that advocates that the meaning of the text, linguistic or non-linguistic, goes beyond its author, and that a dialogical interaction between the horizons of the reader and the author will determine the meaning of a text. Like Heidegger, he saw in hermeneutics an experience that human beings undergo. Paul Ricoeur further enhanced the universal relevance of hermeneutic enterprise by integrating the insights of semantics, philology, linguistics and phenomenology. The following are the salient features of philosophical hermeneutics that distinguish it from traditional hermeneutics:

1. Hermeneutics that was primarily concerned with methodology of interpretation, has assumed the task of engaging the very phenomenon of understanding. Philosophical hermeneutics has surpassed normative and technical function of providing theoretical framework for textual interpretation, in order to show how understanding is practical and tied to human experience of being in the world.
2. The horizons of hermeneutics have moved beyond the regional domain of exegesis of sacred texts to universal concerns of human existence. What was once confined to ascertaining objective facts now focuses on the existential conditions and factors that influence the understanding of the reader. That is, a shift from a way of knowing to the way of authentic being in the world.
3. It is not only interested to understand what is before the text but also what is behind and beyond the text.
4. Now, far from being an auxiliary discipline, philosophical hermeneutics has come to be a full-fledged and prominent course in the philosophical curriculum.

3. 3. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HERMENEUTICS

Although the word, 'hermeneutics', came to common usage in the 17th century, Plato had already employed it several times in his works to designate religious knowledge, which is different from

Sophia, the knowledge of truth. The first use of the word by Aristotle is sighted in his treatise, *Peri hermeneias*, which was later rendered as *De interpretatione* (On hermeneutics). It defined hermeneutics in a limited sense of determining the truth and falsity of logical propositions, which is different from the sense in which it is used today.

A systematic theory of interpretation was first developed by the Alexandrian School of Stoics. Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE—50 CE) employed a method to interpret the myths of the Bible as they contained deeper, non-literal and implicit meanings hidden in the literal meanings of the texts. The allegorical interpretation of myths was further necessitated in order to make them intelligible to people, as they possessed religious and moral significance. In the middle ages, with the arrival of Origen, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas on the scene, hermeneutic activity became an integral part of the theological reflection not only for understanding the different levels of meaning of the scriptures but also for a deeper self-understanding. The contributions of these stalwarts had a profound impact upon the thinkers of the Reformation period and paved the way for modern hermeneutics.

However, it was only during Reformation period that modern hermeneutics came into existence as a well-developed discipline. A group of Protestant scholars lead by Martin Luther contended that the scripture is self-sufficient and non-contradictory by nature and that it does not require the Church authority or tradition to interpret it. This claim of *Sola Scriptura* went counter to the position of the Catholic Church, which reaffirmed its stand in the Council of Trent in 1546. This marked the dawn of Protestantism and hermeneutic tradition. To prove its point, the group developed a mechanism for the interpretation of the Bible.

Matthias Flacius Illyricus, a protestant theologian, in his groundbreaking work, *Clavis Scripturae Sacrae* (1567), established the following fundamental principles for protestant hermeneutics: first, if the scripture is not intelligible, it is because of our insufficient knowledge. By undertaking proper linguistic and hermeneutic study and equipping oneself with skills of interpretation, one can overcome this malady. He argued, “If God has given us scripture for our spiritual health, it is blasphemy to assert that it is dark and inadequate for the purpose of salvation.” Second, there is an internal coherence in the scripture. The apparent inconsistencies

can be resolved if the interpretation of the individual passages is done in the light of the whole theme of the scripture.

The Renaissance movement with its influence on classical philology, jurisprudence and philosophy also contributed to the growth of hermeneutics. First of all, Humanist academicians, in their pursuit to establish the authenticity and correctness of the Greek and Roman classical texts, devised a philological critical method, which included various theories of interpretation. This again proved to be a boon for the growth of Humanist hermeneutic tradition.

Secondly, an increased interest during this period in the Roman law, especially the efforts of Constantius Rogerius (1463) to explicate the Code of Justinian, gave birth to various forms of legal exegesis that gave rise to hermeneutics of jurisprudence. The German Jurist Johannes von Felde in his *Treatise on the Science of Interpretation* in 1689 went a step further to formulate principles of interpretation applicable for classical texts.

Thirdly, the Enlightenment movement's desire to systematise all human knowledge made hermeneutics a branch of philosophy. Thinkers like Christian Wolf and Johann Martin Chladenius were the first ones to give philosophical foundation to the theory of interpretation. Chladenius, for instance, in his *Introduction to the Correct Interpretation of Reasonable Discourses and Books* (1742), formulated a consistent Enlightenment theory of interpretation with its well-defined practical rules.

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 philosophical hermeneutics and how does it differ from traditional hermeneutics?

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2. Identify one major contribution each from the Reformation and Renaissance Movements.
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3. 4. SCHLEIERMACHER: DEVELOPMENT FROM EXEGETICAL TO EPISTEMOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS

Until now, hermeneutics, by and large, remained a discipline that plays a normative function of providing rules for interpretation of classical texts, confining itself to some specific areas, such as sacred scripture (*hermeneutica sacra*), law (*hermeneutica juris*), and classical literature (*hermeneutica profana*). Inspired by the Romantic thinkers like Schlegel, Schelling and Fichte on the one hand, and influenced by Immanuel Kant's Copernican revolution in human understanding on the other, Friedrich Ernst Daniel Schleiermacher (1768—1834) attempts to synthesize the major trends of his time and lay a foundation for universal hermeneutics.

Schleiermacher, the German theologian and classical philologist, worthy to be called the 'father of modern hermeneutics', made a definite departure in the hermeneutic tradition by his unique contribution to the development of general hermeneutics. In his hands hermeneutics became more epistemological than exegetical. He elevated hermeneutics to a scholarly discipline by making it as an "art of understanding". He defined understanding saying, "everything is understood when nothing nonsensical remains, and nothing is understood that is not construed." According to him, the act of understanding should be studied on two levels, namely, grammatical and psychological or technical.

These two levels have their corresponding methodologies for interpretation. At the grammatical level, which concerns the system of language, the meaning is to be determined by the *sitz-im-leben* and by relating the passage of interpretation to the meaning of the textual work as a whole. The latter implies a hermeneutic circle of moving from the part of a given text to the whole of the text and back again, in order to ascertain the meaning of the passage in question. At the psychological level, which concerns the system of thought, the meaning is to be determined by divinatory and comparative methods. The divinatory method seeks to re-experience and reconstruct within the reader the mental process of the author. Schleiermacher supposed that behind every spoken or written word there is something else which is the real object of interpretation. This empathetic experience of the mental process of the author by the reader, for him, is the heart of understanding. The comparative method seeks to grasp the individuality of the author by the generic type of his work and his peculiarities.

Through the analysis of the act of understanding, Schleiermacher argues, hermeneutics should aim at “understanding an author as well as and even better than he understood himself.” For under the influence of Romantic philosophy he saw the mind as a creative unconscious at work in the gifted individuals. This psychological thrust was tempered with the epistemological thrust he gained from the influence of the *Critique* of Kant. It is this critical turn (epistemic) that made Schleiermacher popular among the next generation of hermeneutic philosophers who were interested in evolving a methodology for human sciences.

Schleiermacher’s treatment of hermeneutics as the art of understanding has elevated it to the level of a scholarly discipline. But he allowed the legacy of ambiguity between understanding and interpretation to continue in his work. He does not make a clear distinction between the two. Besides, there is the danger that the empathetic understanding of the author can lead to subjectivism.

3. 5. DILTHEY: SHIFT FROM ROMANTICIST TO HISTORICIST HERMENEUTICS

After the death of Schleiermacher, the pursuit of finding a philosophical foundation for human sciences continued. Hermeneuticians like Johann Gustav Droysen, Leopold von Ranke and, notably, Wilhelm Dilthey made valiant efforts to justify humanities as a discipline in accordance with the rational framework of the university system. Dilthey (1833—1911), a student and biographer of Schleiermacher and who made known his master to the world through his works like “The Life of Schleiermacher,” “The Rise of Hermeneutics,” and *Critique of Historical Reason*, took up the challenge of providing an epistemological and methodological foundation for human sciences, ensuring the justification of their knowledge like that of the natural sciences. Dilthey’s hermeneutics is heading clearly for a shift from the hermeneutic concerns of the 19th century Romanticism.

One of the most significant insights of Dilthey is his conception of “understanding as a category of life”. Understanding is a methodological concept that has its origin in the process of human life and situations. Like Droysen and Ranke, he conceived human sciences as historical documents, and the problem of hermeneutics as the problem of historical knowledge. Making a distinction between the methodologies of natural sciences and human sciences, Dilthey uses the term explanation (*erklärung*) to describe the method of the former and understanding (*verstehen*) to designate the method of the latter. While in the human sciences man grasps knowledge as being *part* of it, in the natural sciences man grasps knowledge as being *apart from* it. According to Dilthey, one mind is able to reconstruct the mental objectifications of another because human beings possess a primordial capacity to transpose oneself in the mental life of another and discover the ‘I in the Thou’. These objectifications articulated through language and art are essential to human life as they are the only ways for human beings to know themselves.

By grounding hermeneutics in human life and expressions Dilthey not only dissociated it from its Romantic roots of human linguisticity but also sowed the seeds for ontological hermeneutics. Although Dilthey tried to liberate hermeneutics from the psychological method of Schleiermacher, he has not fully succeeded in it as his appeal to the human primordial ability to transpose oneself in the mental process of another amounts to empathy.

3. 6. HEIDEGGER: FROM EPISTEMOLOGICAL TO ONTOLOGICAL TURN

Martin Heidegger (1889—1976), a student of Edmund Husserl and a reader of Dilthey, made an immortal impact in the hermeneutic tradition by effecting a radical transformation in understanding hermeneutics. In his famous work, *Being and Time* (1927), he goes beyond Dilthey to declare that hermeneutics is not about providing a rational foundation for human sciences but about the most fundamental conditions of man's being in the world. The hermeneutic question for Heidegger is not 'how does one know?' but 'what is the mode or condition of being of the one whose being is to understand'?

Introducing his favourite German concept of *Dasein*, the English rendering of which is 'being there' or 'being thrown in the world', Heidegger makes a forceful point that we are factually thrown into existence in the world and we try to make sense out of it. Therefore, understanding becomes an essential aspect of our being in the world. *Dasein* relates to his immediate world with familiarity, which is constitutive of his being in the world. This basic intelligibility is brought to awareness through interpretation. Understanding, for Heidegger, arises out of the fact of our being situated.

For Heidegger, interpretation can take place only within a given horizon of pre-understanding. There can be no understanding and interpretation on the part of *Dasein* without such pre-understanding. With this, Heidegger redefines the concept of hermeneutic circle. In the conceptual framework of Schleiermacher, it is referred to the mutual relationship between the text as a whole and its individual parts. Whereas in the Heideggerian thinking, it points to the relationship between our self-understanding and our understanding of the world. *Dasein* is recognised by its self-interpretatory projects. But because *Dasein* is being in the world, the being cannot be understood without making detour through the world and latter cannot be understood without referring to *Dasein's* way of life.

Understanding, as a constitutive dimension of man's being in the world, has a temporal dimension as well. That is the reason why he titled his book as *Being and Time*. Although his lived horizon includes past, present and future, he begins to project himself primarily towards future. Understanding of these projected possibilities also calls for their fulfilment. This act of understanding of *Dasein* leading to self-realisation is what Heidegger called 'explication'. In that sense, understanding is both existential and hermeneutical. This insight that 'interpretations are grounded in understanding and they are explications of what has been already understood' has greatly influenced the later thinkers like Gadamer.

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 Schleiermacher present hermeneutics as the "art of understanding"?

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2. Highlight Heidegger's concept of *Dasein*.

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3. 7. GADAMER: HERMENEUTICS OF TRUTH AND METHOD

Han-Georg Gadamer (1900—2002), the proponent of philosophical hermeneutics, is the best-known student of Heidegger. Gadamer's efforts to see Dilthean methodological foundation of

human sciences within the framework of Heidegger's ontological structure of *Dasein*, and his subsequent claim of truth in human sciences evoked almost an instant response from the intellectuals of his time. Gadamer's main contention is that hermeneutics is not about constructing a method for understanding but about what are the conditions that influence the understanding. In his seminal work, *Truth and Method*, he outlines a philosophical hermeneutics that hinges around the historical and linguistic nature of human understanding.

Historical Nature of Human Understanding

For Gadamer, any interpretation of the past, literary or non-literary creation, is not aimed at producing objectivity of that past but to derive a significance that will transform not only the interpreter but the past (tradition) as well. Just as a given historical phenomenon is a production of its own historical context, so does the interpreter rooted in his historical tradition. Reinstating the concept of **prejudice** (*Vorurteil*), which was rejected by the Enlightenment thinkers, Gadamer asserts, "Prejudice is a component of understanding, linked to the finite historical character of the human being." It is a person's cultural horizon, which makes itself felt in every act of his understanding. It is not something negative but a necessary condition for all historical understanding.

At this point, Gadamer introduces a difficult yet very significant concept called **effective historical consciousness**. It is the outcome of the interplay between the historical or the temporal distance of the object to be interpreted and the interpreter's experience of a sense of belonging to that cultural tradition. The historical distance between the interpreter and the text that was once considered as an obstacle for understanding has now come to be treated as a necessary condition that makes understanding possible. Effective historical consciousness is the consciousness that is shaped and determined by the various shades of meaning of the text that emerged in history. When my understanding of a text is shaped by different meanings of the text that emerged in history, there emerges the possibility for objectivity.

According to Gadamer, effective historical consciousness culminates in **fusion of horizons**. The fusion of horizons is a central concept in Gadamer's theory of understanding. It is a dialogue

between two worlds (Worldviews). That is, the merger of the horizon of the text and that of its reader. One of Gadamer's unassailable convictions is, "truth discloses itself in dialogue." He compares this fusion with the "buoyance of a game" or a "dialogical conversation".

Just as the player loses oneself in the back and forth movement of the game, and that the subject matter becomes the game itself, so also the interpreter gets caught up with self presenting and self renewing structure of the game of dialogue with the text. The back and forth movements point to the interpreter asking questions to which the text is the answer, and the text in turn questioning the interpreter. When all pertinent questions are exhausted, Gadamer states, one has reached a relatively adequate interpretation. The dialectical nature of understanding analogous to the game, transforms both text and the interpreter. This dialogical interplay between the two horizons is Gadamer's extended notion of hermeneutic circle.

Another important ingredient of the fusion is that it is an attempt to find the relevance of the past to the present. Just as a preacher relates the scripture to the situation of his audience, interpretation of a text should be an attempt to discover its relevance to the context of the interpreter. Gadamer clarifies that understanding the meaning of a text is not subjective or arbitrary but should address the concerns and context of the reader.

Linguistic Nature of Human Understanding

One of the marked departures of Gadamer from the Romantic hermeneutics is his conception of the **linguisticity of understanding**. Gadamer is convinced that one can understand only to the extent that he or she can find words to express that understanding. My think-ability cannot be separated from my language-ability. I think and understand to the extent language enables me to do. Fusion of horizons is mediated by language.

Gadamer's insightful reasoning that truth discloses itself in dialogue, which is analogous to play or conversation and that the truth so derived from the historical texts has a transformative appeal is a major breakthrough in the understanding of the texts. But his theory of interpretation is not

critical enough to check power and violence that are part of the very tradition, which the interpreter is trying to make sense out of.

3. 8. RICOEUR: LANGUAGE AS DISCOURSE

Paul Ricoeur (1913—2005) has taken the hermeneutic tradition to its pinnacle in his attempt to overcome the ontological problems faced by Heidegger and Gadamer, and the epistemological difficulties that confronted Schleiermacher and Dilthey. Deeply influenced by the phenomenology of Husserl and existentialism of Gabriel Marcel, he transformed hermeneutic tradition by his innovative understanding of language as discourse. His interpretation theory, as explicated in his book, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (1976), rejects the structuralists' static understanding of language as a system, and focuses on the functional and dynamic aspects of language.

Language as Discourse

According to Ricoeur, language has two units, namely, signs and sentences. Semiotics, which is science of signs, deals with signs that have fixed meaning while Semantics is the science of meaning of language at the level of sentences. Sentence is a new synthetic entity whose meaning is irreducible to the sum total of its signs. Ricoeur conceives discourse as dialectic of event and meaning. Language is an event. It is fleeting. Once it is spoken, it disappears. But the meaning of it, captured in the prepositional content of the sentence, remains, and confers certain stability and communicative power to the discourse. The meaning of the event has two aspects: the utterer's meaning, which is the intention of the speaker, or the utterance meaning, which is the prepositional content.

Ricoeur unearths two aspects of the utterance meaning, namely, the sense, which is the "what" (*sinn*) of the utterance, and the reference, which is the "about what" (*bedeutung*) of the utterance. The sense of the discourse (utterance) is immanent and objective, while the reference

of the discourse is transcendent. The referential aspect of the discourse relates to the language of the world. The dialectic of sense and reference is significant to Ricoeur's theory of discourse.

Concept of Text

Ricoeur's interpretation theory will be incomplete without his idea of text. For him, a text should have three salient features. Firstly, it is a work; its sequence is longer than a sentence. It is arranged in a specific genre, such as poem, fiction, narrative, etc.

Secondly, it is a written work. He defines a text as "discourse fixed in writing." According to Ricoeur, a text fixed in writing effectively distanciates itself from the conditions of original discourse. These characteristics are encapsulated in his key notion of "distanciation" in its four forms. They are:

- a) The surpassing of the event of speaking by the meaning of what is said
- b) The dissociation of the meaning of the text from the mental intention of the author
- c) The liberation of the written text from the original audience and context
- d) The emancipation of the text from the limits of "ostensive reference".

Once fixed in writing, a text is open to a wide variety of readership in different existential situations. It assumes, what Ricoeur calls, "semantic autonomy". Now the author's intention or the original dialogical situation is not the determining factor of the meaning of the text but the text speaks to the reader in the reader's context.

Thirdly, the text reveals a world. The concept of the "world of the text" is Ricoeur's another important concept, which means the referential aspect or the "about what" of the text. To understand the text would mean to understand the world projected by the text. Interpretation is a form of engagement with the text that would amount to taking hold of the disclosure of the text by the reader in such a way that it enhances self-understanding without being subjectivistic.

The process of interpretation unfolds itself in the Ricoeurian dialectic of explanation and understanding, which brings together the epistemological pole (explanation) and the ontological

pole (understanding). It consists of two movements, namely, a simple movement from understanding to explanation and a complex movement from explanation to comprehension.

In the first, understanding takes place in the form of a guess. That is, construing the meaning of the text as a whole, treating it as a particular literary type as it influences the meaning, and, carefully considering of the possible secondary symbolic meanings a text may possess. It should then be subjected to a process of validation by providing logical support.

In the second movement from explanation to comprehension, which is very crucial to all interpretations, the reader attempts to appropriate the meaning by plunging into the world of the text and allowing the disclosure of the text to become part of the interpreter's world. This is similar to Gadamer's concept of fusion of horizons.

Ricoeur aimed at articulating a hermeneutic theory that would answer the questions faced by his predecessors like Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer, and succeeded in elevating it to a higher and comprehensive level by synthesizing their insights. In Ricoeur's conceptual framework, a text is subject to plurality of inexhaustive (surplus) interpretations. Can there be an objective criterion to assess which one of them is most appropriate or more adequate than the other? The question remains.

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

<p>1. Explain briefly Gadamer's key concept of "fusion of horizons".</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>2. Summarize Ricoeur's concept of text.</p> <p>.....</p>

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.....

3. 9. LET US SUM UP

This course has attempted to establish how philosophical hermeneutics had been shaped and transformed into a full-fledged discipline in philosophy. We began our discussion on the meaning of hermeneutics and proceeded to see how it was developed into a tradition, nurtured by the Reformation, Renaissance and Enlightenment periods. We found that in the 20th century the struggle of hermeneutic philosophers was to give a philosophical foundation to it rather than providing a set of rules for interpretation. However, in the final analysis, we discovered hermeneutics maturing into a central discipline in philosophy by bringing together both ontological and epistemic aspects under the purview of hermeneutics and by grounding it in the historical and linguistic nature of human understanding.

KEY WORDS

Allegory: A method of analogy in which each part or aspect of the story or narrative is compared to something else that is more profound.

Intelligible: The quality or the ability of an object to make itself present to the mind of the knower.

Jurisprudence: A science that deals with the legal system, its interpretation and application.

Exegesis: A historico-critical and analytical method that is used to understand the objective meaning of a classical text.

Sitz-im-leben: *It is a German expression used to indicate the life context or the existential situation.*

Ostensive: What is apparent, direct or explicit. Something is said to be ostensive when the meaning of it can be understood obviously.

3. 11. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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3. 12. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check your Progress—I

1. Hermeneutics as a discipline deals with the theory and practice of interpretation. The version of hermeneutics that emerged in the 20th century and was propounded mainly by Hans-Georg Gadamer in his book, *Truth and Method*, has come to be recognised as philosophical hermeneutics. Far from being a normative science that gave methodological directions to interpretative sciences, it has taken up the task of making interpretative phenomena universal. It is a complex theory that believes that the meaning of a text goes beyond the intention of the author and that a dialogical interaction between the horizons of the reader and the writer of the interpretative object can only determine its meaningfulness. It assumes that the task of understanding is tied to human experience of being in the world. It has now become a central discipline in philosophy with its universal and rational foundation.

2. Hermeneutics received its status as a discipline for the first time when the Reformist theologian Matthias Flacius Illyricus provided two keys to the interpretation of the sacred scripture that formed the foundation for protestant hermeneutics. Firstly, if the sacred text is not intelligible, it's because our human knowledge is insufficient. Therefore, equip oneself with the knowledge of interpretation. Secondly, the inherent consistency of scripture can be understood when the apparent inconsistency is related to the spirit and matter of the whole text. The Renaissance period, with its renewed interest to determine the genuineness of classics, its eagerness to interpret the Roman law and the desire to systematise all forms of human knowledge, necessitated the devising of various exegetical and interpretative methods, which in turn gave impetus to the growth of hermeneutics.

Answers to Check your Progress—II

1. According to Schleiermacher, the art of understanding includes two levels. They are grammatical and psychological. The first belongs to the system of language and second to the system of thought. At the first level the objective sense of the linguistic expression is constructed following the rules of the language. At the second level the expression is to be understood as part of the speaker's creative mind. The meaning of an expression as part of a system of language will depend on its context and how it relates itself to the text as whole. At the level of the system of thought, it is important to enter empathetically into the mental process of the author. Besides, the author's originality of thought can be grasped by taking into consideration his distinctive traits and the generic type of his work. Schleiermacher's art of understanding is aimed at understanding the author as well as and even better than he understood himself. This epistemological thrust raised hermeneutics to the level of a scholarly discipline. At the same time it is exposed to the danger of subjectivism.
2. Heidegger's most favourite concept *Dasein* literally means, "being there". By introducing the concept, he underlines the facticity of human existence in the world and the way

humans make sense out of such situations. As Heidegger ventures to restructure hermeneutics, he sees hermeneutic problem as ontological. And so he attempts to know the mode of being of the one (*Dasein*) whose being is to understand. Understanding being the constitutive element of *Dasein*, his initial relationship with his world is one of familiarity, and when familiarity is brought to awareness, understanding takes place. But there can be no understanding on the part of *Dasein* without pre-understanding. Which means, *Dasein's* acts of understanding will lead to self-understanding as well. He is recognised by his self-interpretative projects. In order to understand *Dasein*, one should make a detour of the world of *Dasein* and one cannot understand world without referring to *Dasein's* way of life.

Answers to Check your Progress—III

1. Gadamer's central concept of "fusion of horizons" refers to the dialogical process of merger between two worlds with their respective worldviews and traditions, and between the past and the present. It is the merger of the horizon of the interpretative phenomenon and that of the interpreter. For, he is convinced that truth discloses itself in dialogue. The "fusion of horizons", for Gadamer, is analogous to the buoyance of a game or dialogical conversation. In the buoyance of the game, in the back and forth movement of the ball, a player loses his self and subsequently permits the game to play the player. Similarly, in the interpretation of text, the interpreter tosses questions to which the text is the answer and permits the text to challenge his prejudices. The text in turn will question the interpreter. In all these process, the subject matter is the focus of attention. When all pertinent questions are exhausted, one reaches a relatively adequate interpretation. What is significant to the "fusion of horizons" is the mutual transformation it effects.
2. Ricoeur's concept of text plays a prominent role in his interpretation theory. According to him, a text has three important characteristics. First, it is a work, longer than a sentence, constructed in a specific literary composition. Secondly, it is a "discourse fixed in writing". A written text distances itself from the event of speaking, the intention of the author, the original context and its explicit references. Because it's fixed in writing, the

text becomes available to all sorts of audiences, and the author's intention cannot determine the text's meaning. It becomes autonomous and assumes, what Ricoeur calls, hermeneutic authorship, opening up to inexhaustive interpretations. Thirdly, the text reveals a world of which it is product. To understand a text would mean to understand the world projected by the text and appropriate it, the process of which will facilitate self-understanding. To make the exercise free from being subjective, Ricoeur introduces the dialectic of explanation and understanding that included the epistemological and ontological aspects of hermeneutics. However, according to Ricoeur, there is no objective understanding but only relatively adequate understandings.



UNIT 4

CRITICAL THEORY

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4.0. OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we attempt to understand what is meant by critical theory. Critical theory, it should be emphasized, does not form a unity, it does not mean the same thing to all its adherents. The tradition of thinking which can be loosely referred to by this label is divided into at least two branches – the first centered around the Institute of Social Research and the second around the more recent work of Jurgen Habermas.

Therefore, this Unit introduces one to:

- The historical context and the character of critical theory
- Explain how the critical theorists follow the Marxian and Hegelian legacies
- Understand the contribution of Max Weber, Horkheimer and Adorno
- The effort of the Neo-Marxists and orthodox Marxists to revise Marxism

- The way Habermas attempts to give a new look to the basic objectives and goals of critical theory

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Critical theory in its loose reference centered firstly around the tradition of the Institute of Social Research, established in Frankfurt in 1923, and secondly around the more recent work of Jürgen Habermas. There are many prominent figures associated with the above Institute. The founders of critical theory placed history at the center of their approach to philosophy and society. However, their preoccupation over certain issues included those of the past and looked forward to future possibilities.

After the example of Marx they involved themselves with the forces which moved society towards rational institutions. They conceived of these rational institutions as ensuring a true, free and just life, while at the same time being aware of the obstacles which rendered radical change untenable and difficult. Thus their main concern was with interpretation and transformation. The critical theorists were of the view that although all our knowledge is conditioned and shaped by historical circumstances, we can at the same time adjudicate the truth claims independently of our immediate social interests. Having defended the possibility of an independent moment of criticism, they also tried to justify critical theory on a non-objectivistic and materialistic foundation.

4.2 THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF CRITICAL THEORY

Critical theory developed itself around the axes of various political and historical events. These events had a profound effect on the Frankfurt school and Habermas, directly or indirectly. The prevalence of class-conflict prior to the World War I was successfully subdued by the German nation-state although for a temporary period.

The years that followed World War I witnessed to the turbulent period of crumbling of many of Europe's oldest political systems. After the fall of Tsarism in Russia in 1917 Bolshevik Party seized power within nine months. This revolution saw the Marxist program as a near possibility.

At the end of the World War I the German imperial systems were undermined. A republic was declared in Berlin on November 9 and a coalition of Majority Social Democrats and Independent Social Democrats took office. A Soviet Republic was created in Hungary after the abdication of the bourgeois government. In Italy and Austria strong worker's councils were formed. However the success which was seen in the Russian revolutionaries was not witnessed by those of the central and southern Europe, in that, they proved quite inadequate against the strength of the dominant classes. Then impetus of the Russian revolution was checked and isolated. The end of 1920s saw the repression of European socialist movements and due to various other factors the Russian revolution deviated itself from the path set by Lenin. After the death of Lenin in 1924 Stalin took over the reins of rule.

With the rule of Stalin, there emerged centralized control and censorship and many European communist parties were subjugated to Moscow. The Communist Party, in Germany, the KPD proved ineffective and its allegiance to the International-Bolshevik line, contributed to its failure to win and organize a minority of the working class. Later on, the divisions among the German working class resulted in the rise of the Second International and the German Democratic Party. The Social Democrats in 1914 formally committed themselves to an international struggle against capitalism. But in 1917 the left wing of the Social Democrats formed radical and revolutionary movements. The following decade was marked by massive inflation, unemployment, failed peace settlement, international capitalist crisis of 1929, social and class struggle etc.

With the rise of Nazism and fascism during the period from 1924 to 1933, the liberal and democratic were unable to counter the above movements. Noticing the crumbling force of the Communists, Hitler exploited his chances in Germany and in 1933 the Nazis seized power. The signing of the Hitler-Stalin Pact in August 22, 1939, proved end of an era.

4.3 THE CHARACTER OF CRITICAL THEORY

The events between 1920s and 1930s had surely shaken many a Marxist followers. Their conception of socialism as an inevitable part of history's plan had received a severe blow. There emerged divergent views within the Marxist followers between those who held on to the

importance of history and those who held on to the centrality of the party. The Marxist theory of the day let down the expectations of the followers, for, political events and revolutionary practice had not coincided with the expectation derived from it. The adherents of Marxist theory had to answer the following urgent questions; namely, how could one conceive a relationship between practice and theory? How could one justify the revolutionary ideal in changing historical circumstance? And how could a theory preserve hope for the future?

In the early 1920s Lukács and Korsch by their publication of *History and Class Consciousness*, and *Marxism and philosophy*, respectively challenged Marxist orthodoxy. By trying to rethink Marxism in relation to contemporary events, they set up a basis for a re-examination of Marxist theory and practice. Their basic conviction was that, followers of orthodox Marxism had violated concepts, theories and principles contained in Marx's writings. They thus sought to rectify the mistakes of orthodox Marxism. In order to do this, they were convinced that the examination of the origins of and nature of Marx's thought was essential and inevitable. This, they hoped would help all, whether Marxists or non-Marxists, in the process of their reconstruction of Marxism.

The determinist and positivist interpretation of historical materialism were the main issues for Lukács and Korsch. They argued that the positivist interpretation, that is, the suitability of the methodological model of the natural sciences for understanding the stages of historical development, was rejected by Marx himself. This form of materialism corresponds to 'contemplative materialism' in Marx's understanding, but it neglects the central importance of human subjectivity. They were of the view that the traditional standpoint of orthodox Marxism failed to comprehend the significance of examining both the objective conditions of action and the ways in which these conditions are understood and interpreted. Another prominent drawback of the Marxists was their underplaying of human subjectivity and consciousness and missing of those factors which were so crucial to prevent the emergence of revolutionary agent.

It is important here to note that though the critical theorists retained many of Lukács' concerns, they however were highly critical of his use of certain terms. The critical theorists, in general were inspired by the variety of intellectual currents. German idealism, Kant and Hegel were looked upon to retrieve the philosophical dimensions of the Marxist tradition. They examined

Marx's early works, especially the 1844 Manuscripts, and assessed the contributions of Heidegger and Husserl to the contemporary philosophy. Freud's works helped them to reinvestigate human subjectivity while Weber's writings were considered to be important in contemporary sociology. Among the members of the Institute of Social Research, the impact was reciprocal, in that, Horkheimer and Adorno impressed each other. While Benjamin influenced Adorno, the latter along with Marcuse left a lasting impact on Habermas.

4.4. CRITICAL THEORY: THE MARXIAN AND HEGELIAN LEGACIES

The primary concerns of critical theory are rooted in the writings of Kant, Hegel and Marx. Kant in his extensive literature on the epistemology aimed at inquiring into the nature and limits of human knowledge. For Kant such an inquiry must not be limited to the analysis of the contents of consciousness, because they are already organized and interpreted by the knowing subject. Kant intended his epistemology to be a critique which elucidates and explicates the forms and categories of knowledge. However, for Kant these categories of knowledge had to be understood in line with the ideals of mathematics and natural science, and the status of the knowing subject remained unclear. Having noticed these objections Hegel located epistemology within the context of a historical self-formative process. Here mathematics and science were mere stages in the progress towards truth.

For Hegel the progressive path to the absolute is possible only through an immanent critique of human experience. The aim of such a critique is to unveil conditions of possibility, unmask illusion and error. He visualizes that its driving force is the dialectic, which opens up and exhibits the contradictions involved within each successive mode of experience. The primary task of the dialectic is to show that the sense impressions are not a primordial object of knowledge due to the fact that sense certainty presupposes a subject who, through a struggle for recognition with others, attains self-consciousness. In the process of this self-consciousness subject reaches a certain point at which the self may be seen as an emancipation of spirit. From this point of emancipation of spirit, according to Hegel, the truth may be grasped and understood in its totality and entirety.

Marx learned his lessons from Hegel but was convinced that Hegel's attempt to justify the existing modern state as a manifestation of Reason was deeply wrong. At the time when Marx developed his theory of capitalist society, he was very well aware of the dehumanizing, catastrophic and alienating aspects of the prevailing and emerging capitalist societies of his time. Hegel considered the reconciliation of the universal and the particular and the establishment of a *polis* without slaves as a major achievement of the modern state. This achievement for Hegel was gradually being realized. But for Marx all the above was still to be brought about as a historical task in a communist revolution. Hegel's vindication of the modern state as the highest manifestation of Reason and his concept of the reconciliation of the opposites were merely the ideological formulation of a problem and only a reconciliation in thought.

Hegel once claimed that the greatest contribution of philosophy was the simple ideas of reason, the idea that the world is governed and ruled by reason. For him the world history is nothing but a rational process. Though he took several years to make his claims plausible to the philosophical world, a glimpse at the horrors and disasters both in the political and moral spheres in the last two decades would prompt any reasonable mind to dismiss statement like the above as naive and irresponsible. Marx on his part, besides exposing the negative sides of modern societies, had to show how, the true nature of emancipated society was already prefigured in the dynamics, the crisis, and the logic of development of capitalist societies. Marx envisaged that the end of capitalism results in the emergence of a classless, communist society. The future emancipation of humankind, human society which Marx envisages is construed in terms of a historical dialectics.

Marx had criticized Hegel for justifying some negative features of the prevailing modern state as being in accordance with a fuller co-operation of reason. Marx believed that with his critique of the ideological justification of capitalist property he could tear down the whole edifice of Hegel's political thought, while at the same time finding an alternative explanation of all the phenomena of alienation seen in modern societies. Marx thought that with this new conception he could pave the way for the complete abolition of the dehumanizing features, functional differentiations of the modern state. Subsequently, he hoped that there would emerge unity and solidarity among all human beings in a communist society. However, Marx's historical dialectics seems implausible

even for Marxists. Max Weber has reconstructed historical dialectics, that is, negative dialectics of progress and enlightenment.

4.5 MAX WEBER AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT TRADITION

Max Weber in his analysis of the progressive rationalization of modern life posed a problem which became the central preoccupation of western Marxists, since the early 1920s. Weber, known for his conception of rationalization attempted to comprehend a whole complex of tendencies coming under the purview of scientific and technical progress and subsequently its influences of the institutional framework of traditional society. This process of progress included also the extension of the areas of society subject to criteria of rational decision, the progress of industrialization and its consequences, the bureaucratization of administration and the devaluation of tradition, and the progressive secularization and disenchantment of the world. As Thomas McCarthy notes, “whatever the ambiguities in his own feelings toward this process, Weber clearly regarded it as irreversible: modern man was fated to live in a “shell of bondage.” According to Weber, socialist revolution is not an adequate alternative, for it leads to further extension of bureaucratic control.

Max Weber, described as bourgeois Marx, held the world-historical process of modernization as a progressive rationalization. To an Enlightenment tradition history presented itself as a progress toward Reason and in this respect Weber was rightly described as the heir of an Enlightenment tradition. Weber’s conception of rationality has three aspects, namely, purposive, formal, and discursive. For Weber, rationality in its narrowest sense, means *Zweckrationalität*, that is, purposive rationality. This sort of rationality is seen in the capability to choose efficient means for realizing predefined goals. Rationalization here refers definitively to the rise in economic or administrative efficiency. In its broader sense rationality implied the application and imposition of a coherent and systematic order presupposes that there exist myriads of different chaotic situation, beliefs, and experiences, alternatives of actions etc., which have to be rectified and replaced by the former. Here in this case rationalization means formalization and universalization of law in modern society. Further, rationalization with regard to modes of action and interaction signifies a transition from communal to associative forms of social action.

Weber critically analyzes the transition to modernity as a process of rationalization. He held that in this process of rationalization the social sciences are bound to play an increasingly important role. His concept of progressive rationalization sheds all utopian perspectives. Weber's disciple Lukács termed reification, i.e., dehumanized systems of new kind into which the progressive rationalization led the modern man. One clearly notices here a paradox in Weber's conception of progressive rationalization as it connotes both emancipation and reification simultaneously. Later on Adorno and Horkheimer through their conception of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* tried to resolve this paradox.

4.6 THE CRITICAL THEORY OF HORKHEIMER AND ADORNO

Horkheimer maintained that capitalism, besides other disadvantages, imposes suffering on a massive scale. It breeds the feelings of guilt and inadequacy and this process, while blocking the progressive political change contributes to a new barbarism. Modern science, technology and production, certainly have opened up various possibilities for human beings. Yet, a realistic note to caution would lead to the conclusion that what comes out of all these various possibilities, in Adorno's language, is nothing but a 'real hell'.

True, this already sets the tone of the main concern of Horkheimer and Adorno in their famous *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Their task was nothing less than to discover why mankind instead of entering unto a truly human condition, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism. They both tried to focus on the nexus of rationality and social actuality, and upon what is inseparable there from that of nature and the mastery of nature. Horkheimer and Adorno believed that the fundamental intention to dominate nature is that which underlies the way our world is appropriated and apprehended in its social and natural realms.

Horkheimer and Adorno in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* addressed one of the prime concerns of the Frankfurt school, namely, the rise and domination of instrumental reason. They examined the importance of instrumental reason in the context of the philosophy of the Enlightenment and various forms of enlightenment. While the Enlightenment is understood as referring to the intellectual trends in the closing decades of the eighteenth century in Europe, enlightenment is

understood as referring to more encompassing principles. By doing so, Horkheimer and Adorno hoped to prepare the way for a positive, emancipatory notion of enlightenment released from entanglement in blind domination. Horkheimer and Adorno argued that the seeds of the triumph of *Zweckrationalität* are already contained in the origins of western rationality. Though they were staunch opponents of Heidegger, there is a striking affinity in their analyses of the fate of western rationality.

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) How did the founders of critical theory conceive rational institutions?

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2) Write a short note on Lukács and Korsch's criticism of Marxism.

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4.7 Neo-Marxists and orthodox Marxists: Towards revised Marxism

Following Marx's death the orthodox Marxists attempted to generalize historical materialism into what is called, a universal outlook. They considered that the emergence and the continuance of capitalism would end up in economic crises and armed conflicts. The revisionists however,

stressed the evolutionary aspects of the materialist view. They maintained that the proletariat within the ambience of democratically organized capitalistic society could improve its own economic and political position. Both camps found support in certain passages of Marx's writings, but Engel was a main source of inspiration for them.

In an effort to revise Marxism, the Neomarxists incorporated some of the insights of Weber into the Marxian framework. The philosophers of the Frankfurt school, though they adopted the negative dialectics of progress from Weber, criticized his notion of instrumental reason. For them his notion of rationality which they saw as truncated and prejudiced did not provide even the least possibility of organizing society rationally in accordance with the emphatic conception of reason. For them, the important ideas of freedom, justice and happiness etc., would come under the purview of emphatic conception of reason and this latter concept is the point of reference to criticize the 20th century societies as irrational. In sharp contrast to this aspiration of the Frankfurt school critical theorists, Weber found no possibility of rational justification of norms, values or forms of social organization in a world which he termed, disenchanted world. Therefore the idea of rational organization of society was mere nonsensical to Weber.

The philosophers of the Frankfurt school however, did agree that though Weber's notion of rationality was practical or truncated, it portrayed the true nature of the existing advanced industrial societies. They also acknowledged that this truncated conception of rationality was sufficient enough to articulate the actual process of modernization as occurred in European history and it further exposed the deplorable consequences of capitalism, namely, the ideological deformation of consciousness and the reification of social relationships.

The Marxian perspective of a liberated, rationally organized, classless society enabled the thinkers of Frankfurt school, to reconsider the historical dialectics of progress and revolution. Characterizing the dialectic of progress as a negative one, they thought that the former, instead of aiming at the realization of reason, would aim at the destruction of reason. As a result, one could not conceive of a liberated society as the logical or natural unfolding of the contradictions of capitalism. Ultimately, its realization is the break from the bad continuum of progress and a lead into the realm of freedom. The form of critical theory that developed around the *Dialectic of*

Enlightenment identifies the objective historical and social tendencies and mechanisms that point toward the emergence of a post-capitalist society which is liberated.

4.8 HABERMAS AND CRITICAL THEORY

At the inception it is appropriate to note that Habermas's project is in the direction of developing a theory of society with a practical intent. Habermas's abiding concern has been offering a systematic and theoretically adequate account of the relation of theory to practice. By this project he intends to counter the hegemony of scientism on all fronts. From the practical point of view, Habermas's work emerges from extended reflection on the nature of cognition, the structure of social inquiry, the normative basis of socio cultural tendencies of the age. Habermas undertakes the project of systematically investigating the relationship between theory and practice in the social sciences. We can reiterate this statement in his own words regarding what he said of his aim as to develop the idea of a theory of society conceived with practical intention, and delimit its status with respect to theories of different origins.

No doubt that we must situate Habermas's reformulation of critical theory to the history within which he is identified. Habermas was clearly aware of the major events that characterized the twentieth century history. He took note of the substantial changes in the capitalist and socialist societies which have cast doubt on the validity of Marx's work. Habermas noticed also that the major traditions of social thought have hardly any bearing on the contemporary societies. Therefore he saw in himself an urgent call to assess and reformulate these major traditions and make them relevant. One of the apparent features of his philosophical project has been from the very beginning its radical democratic character in order to expand the sphere of freedom aimed at harmony between theory and practice.

Habermas takes into account various events that shaped the course of history. The 20th century is a witness to numerous major developments and transformations both in the socialist and capitalist societies. However one must realistically question whether all these developments have brought about developments in the notions of freedom, justice, happiness and self-realization. Habermas is more than aware that the rise of nihilism and antimodernism has greatly threatened

to impede the project of modernity and the illusions of Enlightenment have given birth to dogmatism and superstition. Further, fragmentation and discontinuity and loss of meaning have crept into the very heart of human history.

In the political sphere one of the major events of this period was the degeneration of the Russian revolution into Stalinism. Added to this, Marxism proved ineffective in the West and the Marxist theory often fell into either deterministic objectivistic science or a pessimistic cultural critique. With regard to capitalism one could say that state intervention and profit oriented market became the norm of the time. Though capitalism came to be organized rigorously day by day, public sphere came to be threatened by the growth of instrumental reason and bureaucracy. This growing feature of rationalization of administration has curtailed the freedom and self-determination of human being. Though there are a number of reasons in order to consider technical progress a blessing, there are also equal numbers of reasons to the contrary opinion. At this juncture Habermas thinks what we need to do is not the wholesale abandonment of the achievements of modernity but a careful analysis of the maladies and the pathologies of progress in modernity.

During the course of his intellectual journey, Habermas choked out his primary concerns. First to occupy his interest was the need to develop a concept of rationality which is beyond the individualistic and subjectivist premises of modern philosophy and social theory. Secondly he sought to construct a two-level concept of society and thirdly his preoccupation was to sketch out a critical theory of modernity which analyses and accounts for its pathologies in a way that it suggests a redirection rather than an abandonment of the project of enlightenment. Habermas was convinced that with Horkheimer and Adorno, the critical theory had reached its dead end. In order to get over this dead end he proposed a shift of paradigm for critical theory away from the philosophy of consciousness.

From 1920s through 1960s Critical Theory moved in a direction which was very different from Marx's development. There was a turn to more generalized critique of instrumental rationality which finally culminated in Adorno's "negative dialectics." But for Habermas this development threatened the explanatory-diagnostic function of Critical Theory. By virtue of its ability to

specify those real potentialities in a concrete historical situation which would further the processes of human emancipation and overcome domination and repression, the Critical Theory had distinguished itself from traditional social theory. In order to achieve this objective it was necessary to undertake the task of a scientific understanding of the dynamics of contemporary society. At this point, the need of the hour for Habermas was to root out the errors in the Marxist legacy and show how it was insufficient in the twentieth-century. He sought to appropriate the most promising developments in the social sciences and integrate them into a critical social science.

In spite of the differences between him and Horkheimer and Adorno, he however shared their preoccupation with the way in which enlightenment (in the form of instrumental or means-end rationality), turns from a means of liberation into a new source of enslavement. We can mention three directions in which this preoccupation of Habermas took and which we can clearly notice in his early works. First of all, he took to the thorough reading of the classical philosophical texts. Secondly, due to his preoccupation with technology, he attempted to construct an alternative to the technological determinism. Thirdly, he engaged himself with rational political discussion or practical reason in modern technocratic democracy.

Habermas started to chart a course for himself, beginning in the 1960s. He sought to retain the power of his predecessor's critique of modern life. This affinity required that one has to clarify a distinctive conception of rationality. He worked towards the notion of just or "emancipated" society. In general Habermas's philosophical journey commences with a clear cut departure from the positions of Horkheimer and Adorno.

Habermas's views have changed over time and, indeed, are still in the process of development. He often gives his positions a tentative and programmatic status – they are part of an ongoing project. A major concern of Habermas has been the spread of instrumental reason to many areas of social life. The rise of technocratic consciousness, with its disintegrative effect on the public sphere, is discussed at two fundamental levels. At the level of social theory Habermas argues that the increasing tendency to define practical problems as technical issues threatens an essential aspect of human life; for technocratic consciousness not only justifies a particular class interest

in domination, but also affects the very structure of human interests. Accordingly, reflection on this state of affairs must, penetrate beyond the level of particular historical class interests to disclose the fundamental interests of mankind as such.

At the level of the theory of knowledge, Habermas investigates the way instrumental reason has dominated modern thought. Focussing on the dissolution of epistemology and the ascendance of positivism during the last century, he examines the way the significance of the epistemic subject – and the capacity for reflection by the subject on his or her activities – has been gradually eclipsed. He argues, that if emancipation from domination is to remain a project of humanity, it is essential to counter this tendency and to reaffirm the necessity of self-reflection for self-understanding.

Habermas contends that knowledge is historically rooted and interest bound. He develops a theory of cognitive interests (or knowledge – constitutive interests) and this is the first stage in his elaboration of the relationship of knowledge to human activity. It is his contention that the human species organizes its experience in terms of *a priori* interests. He argues that there is a basis of interests. He understands humans as both toolmaking and language – using animals. They must produce from nature what is needed for material existence through the manipulation and control of objects and communicate with others through the use of intersubjectively understood symbols within the context of rule-governed institutions. Thus, mankind has an interest in the creation of knowledge which would enable it to control objectified processes and to maintain communication.

There is however, a third interest: an interest in the reflective appropriation of human life, without which the interest-bound character of knowledge could not itself be grasped. This is an interest in reason, in the human capacity to be self-reflective and self-determining, to act rationally. As a result of it, knowledge is generated which enhances autonomy and responsibility. Hence it is an emancipatory interest.

The theory of cognitive interests, as developed in *Knowledge and Human Interests* represents Habermas's initial attempt to specify the relation between knowledge and human activity. He has

however, recognized the need to examine this relation further, particularly, the distinction between processes of constitution and justification. This he has attempted to do in the theory of communicative competence. In this theory he argues that all speech is oriented to the idea of a genuine consensus – a discursively achieved consensus – which is rarely realized. The analysis of consensus, he claims, shows this notion to involve a normative dimension, which is formalized in the concept of what he calls an ideal speech situation. ‘A consensus attained in this situation, referred to as a rational consensus, is, in his opinion, the ultimate criterion of the truth of a statement or of the correctness of norms. The end result of this argument is that the very structure of speech is held to involve the anticipation of a form of life in which truth, freedom, and justice are possible. On Habermas’s account, the critical theory of society makes this its starting point. Critical theory, therefore, grounded in the normative standard that is not arbitrary, but inherent in the very structure of social action and language. It is just a normative standard for a critique of distorted communication. It is Habermas’s contention that in every communicative situation in which a consensus is established under coercion or under other similar types of condition, we are likely to be confronting instances of systematically distorted communication. This is, in his view, the contemporary formulation of ideology. The process of emancipation, then, entails the transcendence of such systems of distorted communication. This process, in turn requires engaging in critical reflection and criticism. It is only through reflection that domination, in its many forms, can be unmasked.

4.9 LET US SUM UP

Critical theory in its loose reference centered firstly around the tradition of the Institute of Social Research, established in Frankfurt in 1923, and secondly around the more recent work of Jürgen Habermas. After the example of Marx they involved themselves with the forces which moved society towards rational institutions. They conceived of these rational institutions as ensuring a true, free and just life, while at the same time being aware of the obstacles which rendered radical change untenable and difficult.

Critical theory developed itself around the axes of various political and historical events. The events between 1920s and 1930s had surely shaken many a Marxist followers. The Marxist

theory of the day let down the expectations of the followers, for, political events and revolutionary practice had not coincided with the expectation derived from it.

The primary concerns of critical theory are rooted in the writings of Kant, Hegel and Marx. Horkheimer and Adorno, Max Weber and Benjamin Marcuse, these latter personalities had tried to make Marxism more viable and suited to their own time. However, their conception of what a critical theory should be was implausible for Habermas. He tries to revise Marxist tradition and reformulate it. Habermas was clearly aware of the major events that characterized the twentieth century history. One of the apparent features of his philosophical project has been from the very beginning its radical democratic character in order to expand the sphere of freedom aimed at harmony between theory and practice. He basically understands that knowledge is historically rooted and interest bound. In this theory of communication he contends that all speech is oriented to the idea of genuine consensus. For him critical theory is grounded in a normative standard that is inherent in the very structure of social action and language.

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 Habermas' theory of cognitive interests.

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2) What do you understand by distorted communication?

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4.10. Key Words

Materialism: It is an understanding of the reality as matter. The fundamental principle is considered under this theory to be material.

Historical Materialism: It is materialistic interpretation of history that states history is a product of human beings, men and women make history but they make it under given conditions.

4.11. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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4. 12. Answers to Check Your Progress

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. After the example of Marx the founders of critical theory involved themselves with the forces which moved society towards rational institutions. They conceived of these rational institutions as ensuring a true, free and just life, while at the same time being aware of the obstacles which rendered radical change untenable and difficult. Thus their main concern was with interpretation and transformation. The critical theorists were of the view that although all our knowledge is conditioned and shaped by historical circumstances, we can at the same time adjudicate the truth claims independently of our immediate social interests. Having defended the possibility of an independent moment of criticism, they also tried to justify critical theory on a non-objectivistic and materialistic foundation.

2. The determinist and positivist interpretation of were the main issues for Lukács and Korsch. They argued that the positivist interpretation, that is, the suitability of the methodological model of the natural sciences for understanding the stages of historical development, was rejected by Marx himself. This form of materialism corresponds to 'contemplative materialism' in Marx's understanding, but it neglects the central importance of human subjectivity. They were of the view that the traditional standpoint of orthodox Marxism failed to comprehend the significance of examining both the objective conditions of action and the ways in which these conditions are understood and interpreted. Another prominent drawback of the Marxists was their underplaying of human subjectivity and consciousness and missing of those factors which were so crucial to prevent the emergence of revolutionary agent.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. The theory of cognitive interests, as developed in *Knowledge and Human Interests* represents Habermas's initial attempt to specify the relation between knowledge and human activity. He has however, recognized the need to examine this relation further, particularly, the distinction between processes of constitution and justification. This he has attempted to do in the theory of communicative competence. In this theory he argues that all speech is oriented to the idea of a

genuine consensus – a discursively achieved consensus – which is rarely realized. The analysis of consensus, he claims, shows this notion to involve a normative dimension, which is formalized in the concept of what he calls an ideal speech situation.‘ A consensus attained in this situation, referred to as a rational consensus, is, in his opinion, the ultimate criterion of the truth of a statement or of the correctness of norms. The end result of this argument is that the very structure of speech is held to involve the anticipation of a form of life in which truth, freedom, and justice are possible.

2. It is Habermas’s contention that in every communicative situation in which a consensus is established under coercion or under other similar types of condition, we are likely to be confronting instances of systematically distorted communication. This is, in his view, the contemporary formulation of ideology. The process of emancipation, then, entails the transcendence of such systems of distorted communication. This process, in turn requires engaging in critical reflection and criticism. It is only through reflection that domination, in its many forms, can be unmasked.

BLOCK 4

The philosophy that dominated the English speaking world during the 20th century is generally termed as Analytic philosophy. The regions that fall in this category are United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and United States of America. It was G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell who began the whole move by getting away from the then dominant schools of philosophy in England, which laid emphasis on idealism. Its whole aim was to bring about clarity in the discipline through an analysis of language by following a method of formal logic. This analysis of language is said to be the subject matter of analytic period. This resulted in a linguistic turn in the philosophical direction. Within the analytic philosophy itself there were a number of moves. Initially, as the analytic movement began it was opposed to British Idealism, later, it found itself opposed both to classical Phenomenology of Husserl and the following movements such as Existentialism of Sartre, Camus, and so on and also 'Continental' or 'Postmodern' philosophy of Heidegger, Foucault and Derrida.

This block includes four units that will present various moves within analytic philosophy such as logical atomism and positivism, Ordinary Language Philosophy and Pragmatism.

Unit 1 highlights two views: Logical Atomism and Positivism. These two theories developed simultaneously following a mathematical method in order to bring about a kind of clarity in language. Bertrand Russell came up with logical atomism. This is followed by Logical positivism and Verifiability theory of meaning. One of the striking philosophical consequences of the positivistic analysis of knowledge is its apparent rejection of metaphysics as meaningless.

Unit 2 highlights the contributions of Ludwig Wittgenstein. He is said to have two phases within himself, the first being 'the Picture Theory of Meaning,' in his work *Tractatus* and 'Tool-Use Model of Language' in *Philosophical Investigations*. We also deal with his analogies of language games, family resemblance and form/stream of life.

Unit 3 introduces the Ordinary Language Philosophy. A number of thinkers like J.L. Austin, Ludwig Wittgenstein and P.F. Strawson are the major contributors. The unit includes an analysis of particular concepts of philosophy itself, of language, both artificial and natural, and of science.

Unit 4 is on Pragmatism. In this unit we study the definition, meaning, nature and the different theories of Pragmatism. Finally, attention is given to its importance in human life. Pragmatism, being the 'Child of America,' has C. S. Perce, William James and John Dewey as its important advocates.

Although contemporary philosophers, who call themselves as “analytic,” have widely divergent interests, assumptions, and methods, today it is more and more understood as a method of philosophizing characterized by precision and thoroughness.

UNIT 1

LOGICAL ATOMISM AND POSITIVISM

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Definition of Logical Atomism
- 1.3 Philosophy of Logical Atomism
- 1.4 Logical Positivism: Major Thrusts
- 1.5 Verifiability Theory of Meaning
- 1.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.7 Key Words
- 1.8 Further Readings and References
- 1.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.0 OBJECTIVES

Modern analytical empiricism, which we shall discuss in this unit, differs from that of Locke, Berkeley and Hume by its incorporation of Mathematics and its development of a powerful logical technique. Mostly following the scientific method it was able to achieve definite answers to specific questions in philosophy. Due to its peculiar methodology it has the advantage of being able to tackle its problems one at a time. This is a definite improvement on the earlier philosophies of the system builders who were habituated to resolve at one stroke all major philosophical puzzles with a block theory of the universe. Analytic philosophers strongly believed that in so far as philosophical knowledge is concerned, it is by such methods that it must be sought. Closely following the footsteps of science, they were convinced that by there methods many ancient philosophical problems are completely soluble. In this unit an attempt will be made to expose how scientific methods are adapted to resolve problems in philosophy. The main objective of this unit is:

- To introduce logical atomism and positivism which were simultaneously developed during the first half of the by-gone century, as adjuncts to analytic Philosophy.

- The unit will discuss the main features of the philosophy of logical atomism propounded mainly by Bertrand Russell.
- Regarding logical positivism the unit will explore its viability and feasibility as a method in philosophy.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

There are, of course questions traditionally included in philosophy, where scientific method proves inadequate. Ethical and Aesthetic issues fall under this category. Analytic thinkers declare that the failure to separate these two kinds, the theory as to the nature of the world on one hand, and the ethical or political doctrine on the other, has been a source of much confused thinking. They categorically affirm that whatever can be known, can be known by scientific method and those which are matters of feeling are to be kept outside this province. Such a viewpoint would be a drastic deviation from our accepted and well-trodden path in philosophy down the ages. For successfully or not philosophy has been surviving all these years addressing issues encompassing all varieties of questions, be it epistemological, metaphysical, ethical or religious. This they decline on both moral and intellectual grounds. Morally speaking, when a philosopher uses his professional competence for anything except a disinterested search for truth is guilty of a kind of treachery. It is presumed that the true philosopher is prepared to examine every preconception that is involved in his theory. When a philosopher adopts unexamined presuppositions as part of his theoretical constructions and places a censorship over his own investigations it results in making philosophy a trivial exercise. Intellectually too, the traditional attempts made by philosophers to justify ethical/ religious beliefs ended up in falsifying logic, making mathematics mystical and plead for their deep rooted prejudices on the guise that they were heaven-sent intuitions. This unit, therefore, intends to instruct the learner on the significant deviation from the long resorted philosophical methods, both in logical atomism and positivism.

1.2 LOGICAL ATOMISM: DEFINITION

Bertrand Russell, a stalwart in 20th century analytic tradition has advocated a species of realism in terms of the logic, which characterizes it, namely atomic. He held that logic is what is fundamental in philosophy, and that schools should be characterized rather by their logic than by their metaphysics. In his classic *Principia Mathematica*, which he wrote along with Whitehead, gives stress on this point. The concept of philosophy, its problems and methods, developed by Russell and Moore was provided with a rigorous procedure by the formulation of a new logic developed by them, which had greater scope and power than any known previously.

1.3 PHILOSOPHY OF LOGICAL ATOMISM

Russell's logical atomism is a resultant product of his philosophy of mathematics. He calls his logic atomistic, as opposed to the monistic logic of the people who more or less follow Hegel. By calling it *atomistic* he shares the commonsense belief that there are separate things. Russell does not consider the multiplicity of the world as consisting merely in phases and unreal divisions of a single indivisible reality. It is multiplicity in its real and true sense of the term. He calls his doctrine logical atomism because the atoms that he wishes to arrive at as the last residue in analysis are logical atoms and not physical atoms. Some of them he calls particulars.

The basic thesis of logical atomism is that if one could construct an ideal language, that language would be identical with the structure of reality. This ideal language will, unlike the ordinary language be precise, in which each particular will be called by one name. Similarly each atomic sentence will be composed of elements, which get their meaning by direct co- relation with experience. What constitutes the experience is the sense data. The world will be seen to consist in a vast number of separate and independent facts, and knowledge of the world will be seen to depend upon acquaintance with immediate experience.

The sort of analysis, which Russell is running in logical atomism, can proceed in two directions. First, by breaking down sentences containing disguised descriptions in to sentences containing overt descriptions of things in the world. This may be termed as *horizontal analysis*. It starts from the level of things in the world and ends there. The second analysis is of the object in the external world in to descriptions of sense data. This is a deep analysis because it takes us

down to things of an entirely different kind. As we concern ourselves with this deep analysis a few things are to be sorted out.

Propositions

For Russell propositions are the sorts of things, which are true or false. They are expressed by sentences that assert and symbolize something. While complex symbols may be understood by learning language, simple ones cannot be so understood. For instance, to understand the word *red*, there is no other way but to see red things. Propositions are either atomic or molecular. An atomic proposition is a proposition none of whose parts are propositions.

Russell has come to concede that propositions are not real constituents in the world. Among the furniture of the world we find only facts and particulars, but no propositions.

Proper names

Proper names are words used to name particulars. If a name fails to refer to an individual or particular, then it is no name. Russell makes it clear that the only word that is capable of standing for a particular is a proper name. When we name an individual or particular we are describing it. For example, when we use the word *Socrates*, we are describing him either as 'the master of Plato' or 'the philosopher who drank the hemlock.'

Individuals/ Particulars

For the atomist, individuals are the ultimate entities of the world. There are an infinite number of kinds of individuals: particulars, qualities, relations etc. These individuals/ particulars can be thought of as the ultimate subjects of sense acquaintance. Particulars are also simple things, which cannot be decomposed or defined, but merely pointed out.

Atomic facts

Russell discerned varieties of facts: atomic facts, general facts, negative facts and intentional facts. A fact is defined as that which exists in the world, which makes the proposition

corresponding to it either true or false. The expression of fact invariable involves a sentence. An atomic fact is a combination of a particular and a relation, like say, 'this is red'. The particular may be a sense datum and the component may be a predicate. In cases when one predicate or relation is involved Russell calls them *monadic facts*. When there are two particulars and one relation those are called *dyadic facts*. In this fashion there could be triadic, quadratic etc. In general where there is one relation and n constituents it is *n-adic facts*

General facts

When it is said that world consists of atomic facts, it may appear as though the general facts of the form 'All x's are y's' are just derived by the accumulation of the atomic facts. But no matter how many of them you count you will not be saying the same thing as when you say 'All x's are y's'. By 'all' we are not saying that we have observed a sufficiently big number, or indeed any number what so ever. It is saying something else. It is picturing a new fact. This new kind of proposition pictures a new kind of fact called general fact.

Negative facts

Negative facts are kinds of atomic facts. Russell construed negative facts since he found it extremely difficult to say what exactly happens when you make a positive assertion that is false; hence negative facts. But Russell is left with the problem of saying either that the word 'not' named some element in the world or not.

Intentional facts

Propositions containing verbs such as wishes, wants, beliefs and the like are not truth functional propositions. The truth or falsity of propositions such as 'Johns believes that p' cannot be determined from the truth or falsity of p. But if propositions about intentional facts cannot be treated truth functionally and analyzed into atomic propositions, then we must allow this new type of fact into our metaphysics. As Russell observes, it becomes a new species for the zoo.

Logical atomism as it got developed moderately began to exhibit cracks and strains. So much so that its very proponents were lead to abandon it. Its flaws were visible as they began to elaborate it. The initial simplicity of a logically perfect language mirroring the relations of a small number of readily describable types of ultimate constituents of the world became progressively more complicated. The result was to burden the theory beyond the point where its beauty and utility were attractive.

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 logical atomism?

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2) What do you understand by proposition?

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1.4 LOGICAL POSITIVISM: MAJOR THRUSTS

Logical positivism, as a name for a method, not a theory as such, maintains that there is no special way of knowing that is peculiar to philosophy. As we have already noted, positivism confines knowledge in philosophy to factual assertion, and therefore, it can be decided by the empirical methods of science. Factual questions cannot be determined without appeal to observation. What cannot be decided by the empirical methods of science are either mathematical or logical. However what is distinctive of positivism is its attention to mathematics and logic, and emphasis upon linguistic aspects of traditional philosophical problems. British empiricists were least influenced by mathematics while continental philosophers like Kant regarded mathematics as the pattern to which other knowledge ought to approximate. Logical positivism features this peculiarity that it is able to combine mathematics with empiricism by a new interpretation of mathematical propositions. It was in fact mathematical logic that gave the technical basis for positivistic school. Mathematics, from Pythagoras onward was mixed up with mysticism. Plato's eternal world was inspired by mathematics. Aristotle though more empirical than Plato still thought the capacity for doing sums so remarkable that the arithmetical part of the soul must be immortal. In modern times, both Spinoza and Leibniz adopted mathematical model to conceive reality. Leibniz in fact went up to say that if controversies were to arise between two philosophers, what they need to do is to sit down and calculate just like how two accountants would do in the case of disagreement. Kant believed that his theory of knowledge couldn't be disentangled from his belief that mathematical propositions are both synthetic and *a priori*. Hegel made a quite different use of mathematics in his dialectical method. He "...fastened upon the obscurities in the foundation of mathematics, turned them in to dialectical contradictions and resolved them by nonsensical syntheses". The puzzles that were created by these great men of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were cleared up during the nineteenth century, not by heroic philosophic doctrines, but by patient attention to detail. For example, the definition of the number 1 had great importance in clearing up metaphysical confusions. The middle age scholastics used to say, "One and being are convertible terms." It now appears that 'one' is a predicate of concepts, not of the things to which the concepts are applicable. For example, 'one' applies to 'satellite of the earth', but not to the moon. Similarly 'being' applies only to certain descriptions, never to what they describe. These distinctions put an end to many arguments of metaphysicians from Parmenides and Plato to the contemporary thinkers. In fact such a

development in the *Principles of Mathematics* suggest that philosophical puzzles need to be dissolved rather than solved. Logical positivism arose largely out of this suggestion.

Logical positivism originated in Vienna circle in the early twenties. It has in fact, historical affinities with the skeptical empiricism of David Hume and the scientific conventionalism of Mach and Poincare. It is a matter of interest to philosophers that most of the members of Vienna circle were non philosophers; they were specialists in various disciplines like mathematics, physics, history and sociology.

Though it is difficult to cast the main features of positivism as it has undergone radical transformation in the course of its development at the hands different representatives of the movement, one may, in general identify the core of positivism as the employment of verifiability criterion of meaning.

1.5 VERIFIABILITY THEORY OF MEANING

According to this theory an empirical statement is significant/ meaningful *iff* it is verifiable by appeal to experience. This version of verifiability was marked as the strong sense that requires that a statement, if it is to be meaningful, should admit of verification or falsification by direct confrontation with experience. A few early members of the circle like Mortiz Schlick insisted on this narrow sense of verifiability. Later thinkers, however, found it too restrictive and proposed a wider sense which would include direct as well as indirect verifiability. By direct verifiability it is meant verifiability in practice and by indirect verifiability they meant verifiability in theory. They were forced to adopt this wider sense of the term since many of the commonly used types of sentences, such as general statements, historical statements about an inaccessible past, statements which are not practically verifiable etc are all meaningful and essential in our daily life though not directly verifiable.

Look at the sentence, “If atomic warfare is not checked, it may lead to the extermination of life on this planet”. This may or may not be true, but it is significant. It is however, one which cannot be verified, for who would be left to verify it if life were extinct? Probably, Berkeley’s God, whom positivists entertained little hope! Similarly going in to the past, we all believe that there was a time before there was life on the earth. Verifiability, for sure, do not wish to run

down such possibilities, but to make sense of such sentences we must use verifiability some what loosely.

Some times a proposition is regarded as verifiable if there is any empirical evidence in its favor. That is to say 'All a is B' is *verifiable*, if we know of one A that is B and do not know one that is not B. However, this view leads to logical absurdities. This shows that the above wide definition of verifiability is useless. All the same unless we allow some such wide definition we cannot escape from paradoxes.

Similarly, there are propositions about unrealized situations; take such a proposition as 'Rain some times falls in places where there is no one to see it'. No one disputes this, but it is impossible to mention a raindrop that has never been noticed. Can anyone seriously maintain that the planet Neptune or the Antarctic continent did not exist until it was discovered? Adherents of verifiability interpret such facts hypothetically. According to them the statement "There is undiscovered iron in the interior of earth." is abbreviation, and the full statement should be: 'if I did certain things, I should discover iron'. This solution is not appealing for it is unlikely that anybody will ever find this iron. In any case, how can it be known what then a person would find?. A hypothetical proposition of which the hypothesis will probably be false obviously tells us nothing. Let us consider yet another proposition of this kind: "There was once a world without life." This cannot mean: "If I had been alive there I should have been that nothing was alive."

Let us look in to verification theory more intently. The theory that the meaning of a proposition consists in its method of verification follows two positions: 1) That what cannot be verified is meaningless, 2) That two propositions verified by the same occurrences have the same meaning. Both these propositions are difficult to maintain. To consider first (1), practically every advocator of this theory would admit that verification is a social exercise which the individual takes up at a later stage, and definitely not as he acquires experiences in early stages. Further the hypothesis that nothing exists barring my perceptual experience is too naïve a position for, there are other people who also perceive and remember. If we are to believe in the existence of these other people (as we must) and admit testimony as a valid means of knowledge, it is difficult to identify meaning with verification.

To consider (2), the theory that two propositions whose verified consequences are identical have the same significance is acceptable provided we confine verification to a limited time span. For this reason, we may use 'verified' and not 'verifiable', if the verifiable consequences are to be identical. For example, the proposition that "all men are mortal" may be true as on now, but it may be that on 10th January 2010 an immortal man will be born. That is to say, the verifiable consequences of "All men are mortal" in fact amounts to "all men born before the time *t* are mortal but not after that".

Positivism on *a priori* and *a posteriori*

One of the prime motives of logical positivism has been to investigate the formal or *a priori* aspects of knowledge and the *a posteriori* or empirical ones. Rejecting Kant's claim of the validity of *synthetic a priori* knowledge, positivists maintained that *a priori* is always analytical or tautological. The whole of formal logic and pure mathematics consists of such tautologies. For positivists, therefore, all cognitively significant statements are either empirically verifiable statements of fact or tautological statements, depending on the structure of language.

Rejection of Metaphysics

One of the striking philosophical consequences of the positivistic analysis of knowledge is that it rejects the whole of metaphysics as meaningless, given that only analytical or empirical statements are knowledge producing. Positivist philosophers observe that philosophical works down the history are filled with statements that are neither empirical nor analytic tautologies, and therefore nonsensical.

Function of philosophy

If metaphysical, ethical and aesthetic judgments are non-cognitive, (issues in these areas which were functions traditionally assigned to philosophy), what then is the new function of philosophy? For positivists, the prime task of philosophy is to analyze philosophical concepts, and resultant clarification of philosophical meaning. Apart from this philosophers may also formulate speculative generalizations of a cosmological sort based on the factual evidence of

empirical sciences like physics, biology, astronomy etc. Yet another function of philosophy is to construct conjunctures regarding the past history of the physical universe, the origin of life etc. Such factual hypothesis must be meaningful as they are at least verifiable in principle. Philosophers can also engage themselves in the elucidation of the philosophical categories such as possibility, existence, probability, causality etc. Though such categories will be construed as purely analytical and tautological, and not *synthetic a priori* as Kant claimed. Positivists point out that the philosophical analysis of the linguistic type may be significant and fruitful even though it cannot be expected to yield synthetic truth.

Later versions of positivism in America and England

Positivism was transplanted in America by Roudolf Carnap with slight alteration, making it more flexible and philosophically tolerant. He explored positivism's inherent vitality and flexibility best and made it congenial with such American philosophical tendencies as *pragmatism* and *operationalism*. Carnap was largely responsible for giving Positivism a vigorous and precise formulation and transformed it to a more adaptable Logical empiricism. Carnap's Logical empiricism retains the anti- metaphysical claims of the earlier Positivism, but assigns an important task to philosophy, the task of clarifying language and its meaning. This is to be carried out in the following disciplines:

- 1) Syntax: This is concerned with the formal inter connections of linguistic signs and specifies the structural rules for sentence formation.
- 2) Semantics: This deals with the examination of meanings of linguistic expressions by reference to extra- linguistic facts.
- 3) Pragmatics: This investigates the functions of language at sociological and psychological levels.

The favorable reception of Positivism in England is to be accounted for its closeness to Anglo- American empiricism. In England the analytic and empirical philosophies of G. E Moore and Bertrand Russell provided a philosophical temper favorable to the reception of Positivism. Ludwig Wittgenstien, the dominant figure in the philosophic circle at that time, in his *Tractatus*

Logico Philosophicus supporting the anti—metaphysical position of Positivism wrote: “Most propositions and questions that have been written about philosophical matters are not false, but nonsensical”. We cannot therefore, answer questions of this kind at all, but only state their senselessness” (*Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, 4.003). Along with Carnap, Wittgenstien too voiced that philosophy is nothing but a critique of language. Philosophy as a discipline should not compete with other disciplines in raising true propositions. The function of philosophy is rather to bring out logical clarification of our thoughts; it must make our propositions clear.

Positivistic analysis of Ethics

Positivists had two approaches towards ethical propositions. It was possible for them to consider ethical propositions either as empirical statement, which is factual in nature, or as non- cognitive one. Mortiz Schlick adopted the first approach where by he observes that valuation, approbation etc. are actually psychic occurrences and therefore, ethical statements are purely psychological one. Some others have felt that like other natural sciences ethics too must become the science of moral consciousness.

Among those who argue in favor of non- cognitive states of moral judgments, A.J Ayer is the most prominent philosopher. Ayer points out that one class of ethical statements- exhortations to moral virtue - are in fact not propositions at all, but rather commands designed to provoke the reader to act in a particular way. Most of the ethical words are emotive. A highly suggestive and original version of emotive theory is propounded by C.L Stevenson. His work *Ethics and Language* testifies the versatility of the positivistic theory and the fruitfulness of positivistic analysis in clarifying non- cognitive status of ethical sentences.

1.6 LET US SUM UP

Bertrand Russell’s Logical Atomism as opposed to the monistic logic of the people who followed Hegel shares the commonsense belief that there are separate things in our world of experience and this multiplicity is real and true. It is logical because the atoms that Russell wants to arrive at as the last residue in analysis are logical atoms and not physical atoms. The basic thesis of Logical Atomism is that if one could construct an ideal language that language would be identical with the structure of reality. This ideal language will be precise which is capable of

taking up a deep analysis of the object in the external world in to descriptions of sense data. In order to conduct this a few elements of this are to be sorted out, such as propositions, proper names, Individuals, atomic facts, general facts, and Intentional facts.

Logical Positivism stands for a method and not for a theory and maintains that there is no special way of knowing that is peculiar to philosophy. Positivism confines knowledge in philosophy to factual assertions and shown that it can be decided by the empirical methods of science. Factual questions are to be determined by appeal to observation, and what cannot be decided by empirical methods is either mathematical or logical. What is distinctive of Positivism is its attention to mathematics and logic and emphasis upon linguistic aspects of traditional philosophical problems. One may, in general identify the core of positivism as the employment of verifiability criterion of meaning. According to this theory, an empirical statement is significant *iff* it is verifiable by appeal to experience.

One of the prime motives of Logical Positivism has been to investigate the formal or *a priori* aspects of knowledge and the *a posteriori* or empirical ones. Based on this distinction they rejected the whole of metaphysics. The function of philosophy according to them is nothing but conceptual clarification.

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 the function of philosophy according to positivists?

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2) Why do positivists reject metaphysics?

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1.7 Key Words

Theory of Verification: The Theory, which holds that an empirical statement is significant/meaningful *iff* it is verifiable by appeal to experience.

Positivism: A method that holds that there is no special way of knowing that is peculiar to philosophy and factual propositions can be known resorting to scientific method. Positivism combines mathematics with empiricism by a new interpretation of mathematical propositions.

Logical Atomism: The school that holds that a logically perfect language can mirror the relations of a small number of readily describable types of ultimate constituents of the world.

Proposition: Those sort of things expressed by sentences which are either true or false.

***Iff* :** If and only if (expressing a set of necessary and sufficient conditions)

Proper names: Proper names are words used to name particulars.

Individuals: Ultimate entities of the world revealed through sense data

General Facts: That category of facts, which would account for general propositions.

Negative facts: Kinds of atomic facts construed to account for positive assertions that are false.

Intentional facts: Propositions containing verbs such as wishes, wants, believes and the like which are not truth functional propositions and therefore are classified as a separate type of fact.

General facts: That category of facts, which would account for general propositions.

A priori Propositions: Those propositions, which are formal and known prior to experience.

A posteriori propositions: Those propositions, which are empirical and known after experience.

1.8. Further Readings and References

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Hylton, P. *Russell, Idealism and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy*. Oxford, 1990

Irvine, A., and Wedeking, G. *Russell and Analytic Philosophy*. Toronto, 1993

Russel, Bertrand. *Logic and Knowledge*. Routledge: London and New York, 1956

1.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Bertrand Russell has advocated a species of realism in terms of the logic, which characterizes it, namely atomic. It's logic is atomistic unlike the monistic logic of the people who more or less followed Hegel because it shares the commonsense belief that there are separate things, a multiplicity in its real and true sense of the term. It proclaims

that a logically perfect language can mirror the relations of a small number of readily describable types of ultimate constituents of the world.

2. Propositions are the sorts of things which are true or false and are expressed by sentences to assert facts. Propositions are either atomic or molecular. However, propositions are not real constituents in the world. Among the furniture of the world we find only facts and particulars, but not propositions.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. For Positivists the prime task of philosophy is to analyze philosophical concepts and resultant clarification of philosophical meanings. Apart from this philosophers may also formulate speculative generalizations of a cosmological sort based on the factual evidence of empirical sciences like physics, biology, astronomy etc. Yet another function of philosophy is to construct conjectures regarding the past history of the physical universe, the origin of life etc. Philosophical analysis of the linguistic type may be significant and fruitful even though it cannot be expected to yield synthetic truth.
2. Given that only analytical or empirical statements are knowledge producing, Positivist philosophers observe that metaphysical statements that are neither empirical nor analytic tautologies are nonsensical.

UNIT 2

WITTGENSTEIN

CONTENTS

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
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2.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this Unit is to introduce Ludwig Wittgenstein, the leading figure of twentieth century analytic and linguistic philosophy. By the end of this Unit you should be able:

- to have a basic knowledge of the life and works of Wittgenstein;
- to have a critical view of his earlier philosophy as propounded in the *Tractatus*;
- to understand the key concepts as given in the *Philosophical Investigations*;

- to have a critical understanding of his earlier and later thoughts on philosophy and philosophizing.

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Western Philosophy is characterised by a logical and linguistic turn and Ludwig Wittgenstein played a significant role in the development of various contemporary philosophical traditions like Analytic Philosophy, Logical Positivism, and Ordinary Language Philosophy. He continues to influence the Hermeneutic and Postmodern trends in philosophy today. His works are immensely challenging, and he raises fundamental questions about the nature of philosophy and philosophizing. He has had, and continues to have, a pervasive influence on philosophical thought.

In this unit, after a brief sketch of his life and works, his earlier and later thoughts will be critically analysed showing the originality of Wittgenstein and the continued influence of his philosophy in the contemporary thought. Wittgenstein's first book, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, published in 1921, had a major impact on the philosophical world. By showing the application of modern logic to metaphysics, via language, he provided new insights into the relations between world, thought and language and thereby into the nature of philosophy. His later philosophy, epitomized in the *Philosophical Investigations* and published posthumously in 1953, is critical of his earlier views and would change the character of philosophy since then.

In the Preface to *Investigations*, Wittgenstein states that his new thoughts would be better understood by contrast with and against the background of his old thoughts, those in the *Tractatus*. Most of Part I of *Investigations* is essentially critical of the *Tractatus* way of philosophical thinking. The *Tractatus* used an a priori, logical method with the assumption that language must be purified and analysed to conform to the logician's ideals. In contrast, the *Investigations* uses a descriptive method: 'One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to look at its use and learn from that' (*PI* 340). According to the *Tractatus* philosophical problems arise because 'the logic of our language is misunderstood' (*T* Preface). We have these problems, according to the *Investigations*, because 'we do not command a clear view of the use of our words' (*PI* 122). Though in both works he was concerned to find the limits of language and thought, in the

Investigations, he moves from the realm of logic and form to that of ordinary language and actual use as the centre of the philosopher's attention and from an emphasis on definition and analysis to description of 'language-games', 'family resemblance' and 'stream of life'.

2.2 LIFE AND WORKS

Wittgenstein was born on April 26, 1889 in Vienna, Austria, to a wealthy industrial family. After his schooling at home, in Linze and later in Berlin, in 1908 he began his studies in aeronautical engineering at Manchester University where his interest in the foundations of mathematics led him to Gottlob Frege. Upon Frege's advice, in 1911 he went to Cambridge to study under Bertrand Russell. During his years in Cambridge, from 1911 to 1913, Wittgenstein worked on the foundations of logic and nature of philosophy under the direction of Russell and Moore and was expected to succeed and carry on the analytic philosophical tradition to greater clarity and success. He retreated to isolation in Norway in order to work out their solutions. In 1913 he returned to Austria and in 1914, at the start of World War I (1914-1918), joined the Austrian army. He was taken captive in 1917. It was during the war that he wrote the notes and drafts of his work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. In 1920 Wittgenstein, having, to his mind, solved all philosophical problems in essentials, in the *Tractatus*, engaged himself as gardener, teacher, and architect in and around Vienna. He returned to Cambridge in 1929 to resume his philosophical vocation, after having been drawn to discussions on the philosophy of mathematics and science with members of the Vienna Circle. In the 1930s and 1940s Wittgenstein lectured and conducted seminars at Cambridge, developing most of his ideas in the *Philosophical Investigations*. He resigned his Chair of Philosophy at Cambridge, but continued his philosophical work vigorously and travelled to the United States and Ireland, and returned to Cambridge, where he was diagnosed with cancer and died in 1951.

The *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* was the only book published during his lifetime. Throughout his life Wittgenstein wrote down his thoughts in notebooks, returning to the same topics repeatedly for conceptual clarity. The *Notebooks* are preliminary versions of ideas which was later crystallised in the *Tractatus*. He was never fully content with any of the arrangements of the remarks and thoughts in the notebooks and left to his literary editors to publish from his manuscripts. *Philosophical Remarks* contains his thoughts in 1930 also showing considerable

philosophical affinities with the thoughts expressed in the *Tractatus Philosophical Grammar*, a collection of his remarks from 1932-34, contains some of the early expressions of the central themes of his later philosophy. The *Blue and Brown Books* were prepared so as to help his students in 1932 and 1933. From 1936 onwards he worked on various versions of what we now know as the *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), which he hoped would provide a definitive presentation of his thought. *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (1956) contain ideas he worked on from 1937 to 1944 and which he intended at that time to form the second part of the *Investigations* (rather than the psychological topics we now have). From 1944 onwards he worked mainly on philosophical psychology: *Zettel*, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology I* and *II* and *Last Writings on Philosophical Psychology I* and *II* are from these years. From 1950 to 1951 we also have *On Certainty* and *Remarks on Colour*. Another source for his views is records of his conversations and lectures taken by friends and pupils.

2.3 THE EARLY WITTGENSTEIN

Coming out of the *Notebooks*, written in 1914-16, and showing Schopenhauerian and other cultural influences, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is a continuation of and reaction to Frege and Russell's conceptions of logic and language. Despite their differences in style and content, they share the goals of (1) repudiating traditional metaphysics, (2) reducing language to a series of elementary propositions that would represent facts, and (3) developing a theory of language that would establish the boundaries of meaning. Running less than eighty pages in length, *Tractatus* consists of a series of short, numbered statements and its structure purports to show its internal essence. It is constructed around seven basic propositions, numbered by the natural numbers 1-7, with the rest of the text numbered by decimal figures as numbers of separate propositions indicating the logical importance of the propositions. For example, 1.1 is a comment on proposition 1, 1.22 is a comment on 1.2, and so on. The last part of the book is characterised by oracular and mystical utterances. Wittgenstein was setting the limits of thought and language, in this work. He holds that whatever can be thought can be spoken, and the limits of thought can be set out by determining the limits of language which in turn gives us the limits of what can be said with sense. The book can be summed up, in his words: 'What can be said at all can be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent' (*T* Preface).

2.4. PICTURE THEORY OF MEANING

The *Tractatus* addresses the problems of philosophy dealing with the relation between the world, thought and language, and presents a logical solution. The world, thought, and proposition share the same logical form and hence the world is represented by thought, which is expressed in proposition. The world consists of facts and not of things (*T* 1.1). Facts are existent states of affairs (*T* 2), which are combinations of objects. Objects have various properties and combine with one another according to their internal properties. The states of affairs are complex by nature which can be analysed into constituent simple objects. The states of affairs are contingent and could have been otherwise. The totality of the actual and possible states of affairs makes up the whole of reality and the world is totality of the actual states of affairs. The thought and the proposition serve as pictures of the facts.

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein presents a picture theory of thought and language. Pictures are models of reality (*T* 2.12) and are made up of elements that represent objects, and the combination of objects in the picture represents the combination of objects in the state of affairs. The logical structure of the picture, whether in thought or in language, is isomorphic with the logical structure of the state of affairs which it pictures. The possibility of this structure being shared by the picture (the thought, the proposition) and the state of affairs is the pictorial form. 'That is how a picture is attached to reality; it reaches right out to it' (*T* 2.1511). The picture can picture the world but cannot picture its own pictorial form. According to the *Tractatus*, to have meaning the structure of the proposition must conform with the constraints of logical form, and the elements of the proposition must have reference. The function of language is to represent states of affairs in the world. 'A proposition is a picture of reality. A proposition is a model of reality as we imagine it' (*T* 4.01). Obviously, a proposition does not give us a spatial and empirical representation of a situation; it is not an empirical picture but a logical picture of the states of affairs. The logical relationships among the elements of a proposition represent the logical relationships among the objects in the world. A proposition has a sense if it describes a possible state of affairs; otherwise, it is meaningless. Thus, the only meaningful language is the fact-stating language of the natural sciences. 'The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science' (*T* 4.11).

According to the *Tractatus*, philosophy does not give us any information about reality; it just clarifies our thought and language by removing misunderstandings. 'Philosophy', according to Wittgenstein, therefore, 'is not a body of doctrine but an activity. . . . Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions' (*T* 4.112), which is done through a logical analysis. As we have seen, 'every statement about complexes can be analyzed into a statement about their constituent parts, and into those propositions which completely describe the complexes' (*T* 2.0201). This linguistic and logical analysis is hoped to provide the clarity, the goal of philosophy. Logic is based on the idea that every proposition is either true or false. This bi-polarity of propositions enables the composition of more complex propositions from atomic ones by using truth-functional operators (*T* 5). Wittgenstein supplies, in the *Tractatus*, the first presentation of Frege's logic in the form of what has become known as 'truth-tables'. This provides the means to analyze all propositions into their atomic parts. He also provides the general form of a proposition (*T* 6), showing that any proposition is the result of successive applications of logical operations to elementary propositions.

2.5. WITTGENSTEIN'S SILENCE

Having developed a picture theory of world-thought-language, and relying on the one general form of the proposition, Wittgenstein asserts that all meaningful propositions are of equal value. According to him, 'Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical. Consequently we cannot give any answer to questions of this kind, but can only establish that they are nonsensical. Most of the propositions and questions of philosophers arise from our failure to understand the logic of our language' (*T* 4.003). He ends the journey with the admonition concerning what can (or cannot), and what should (or should not) be said (*T* 7), leaving outside the realm of the sayable the propositions of ethics, aesthetics, and metaphysics. Wittgenstein's views on values are radically different from that of logical atomism and logical positivism. According to the *Tractatus*, there are only propositions of science within the boundary of meaningful language. For the positivists there is nothing to be silent about. Wittgenstein, however, believed that 'There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical' (*T* 6.522). The propositions of the *Tractatus* themselves are also

to be included in the class of the inexpressible. As we have seen, a proposition is meaningful only if it can be analyzed down into one or more elementary propositions each of which refer to an atomic fact. *Tractatus* does not make a claim about some particular fact in the world but describes the relationship between propositions and facts. They make claims about the relationship between language and the world. Wittgenstein acknowledged that his propositions are outside the domain of meaningful language; they are not propositions of science. 'My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me finally recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them— as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up it)' (T 6.54). They are attempts to show the unsayable.

Ethical and spiritual values also are in the realm of the mystical. Wittgenstein says we will not find values among the facts of the world, for everything is what it is (T 6.41). Therefore, the sense of the world, what constitutes its value, must lie outside the world. It cannot be one more fact among the scientifically observable facts in the world. Consequently he held that 'ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental' (T 6.421). 'How things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself in the world' (T 6.432). Wittgenstein closes his discussion of the mystical and ends the *Tractatus* with his final, oracular statement: 'What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence' (T 7). The *Tractatus*, on this reading, is part of the ineffable, and should be recognized as such.

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 philosophy according to *Tractatus*?

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2) How does Wittgenstein interpret ethical and spiritual values?
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2.6. The Later Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations*

The complex edifice of the *Tractatus* is built on the assumption that the task of logical analysis was to discover the elementary propositions, whose form was not yet known. What is 'hidden' in our ordinary language could be 'completely clarified' by a final 'analysis' into 'a single completely resolved form of every expression', which would bring to the goal of 'complete exactness'. Wittgenstein recognizes this as an illusion in the *Investigations*. Rejecting this dogmatism, he moves from the realm of logic to that of ordinary language as the centre of the philosopher's attention; from an emphasis on definition and analysis to 'family resemblance' and 'language-games'; and from systematic philosophical writing to a collection of interrelated remarks. He rejects the former conceptions such as: a proposition has one and only one complete analysis; every proposition has a definite sense; reality and language are composed of simple elements; there is an essence of language, of propositions, of thought; and there is an a priori order of the world. With the rejection of the assumption that all representations must share a common logical form, the conception of the unsayable disappeared; what remains are language-games of conversation and collaboration in the stream of life. 'What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use' (*PI* 116). The meaning of a word is not determined by the object it represents, but by the way it is used in language games. The same word can be used in many different language games, and this variability means that the meaning of words are not fixed with necessary sufficient conditions, but the various uses form a family in the stream of life. The picture theory of meaning is replaced by a tool-use model of language.

2.7 Tool-Use Model of Language

The *Investigations* begins with a quote from Augustine's *Confessions* which gives 'a particular picture of the essence of human language,' based on the idea that 'individual words in language name objects,' and that 'sentences are combinations of such names' (*PI* 1). This picture of language is at the base of the mainstream philosophy and Wittgenstein in *PI* replaces this name-reference picture with a tool-use model: 'the meaning of a word is its use in the language' (*PI* 43). The referential theories of meaning were intent on pointing to something outside of the language which could be located either in the world or in the mind or in the Platonic realm, as the reference. When investigating meaning, according to the later Wittgenstein, the philosopher must 'look and see' the variety of uses of the word in the language: 'Don't think but look!' (*PI* 66). We learn the meaning of words by learning how to use them, just as we learn to play chess, not by associating the pieces with objects, but by learning how they can be moved. We do not acquire new words that we use in the day to day life by learning formal, exact definitions, but by learning how to use them in various contexts.

A sign becomes a meaningful word not because it is associated with a reference, but because it has a function in the stream of life. One can elucidate the meaning of a word by describing how it is used in a variety of situations, showing the similarities and differences of the uses. Wittgenstein compares words to tools, each having distinctive functions: 'The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects' (*PI* §11). 'Pain' and 'pen' are both nouns and 'to speak' and 'to think' are both verbs; the difference between these words, however, are revealed by looking at their various uses as a hammer is distinguished by a chisel by the way it is used. One and the same word can have different meanings: To know the height of Mount Everest is different from knowing how a mango tastes. The former can be expressed in a proposition the latter is not susceptible for propositional knowledge (*PI* 78). This is because the word 'know' functions in different ways.

It has been objected that there are misuses and therefore we should be concerned not with how we use words, but with why we use them the way we do. By a description of what is the case,

how a word is actually used, Wittgenstein is elucidating how a word can be used meaningfully in a particular language. A language is a rule governed normative practice and the use determines meaning not causally but logically. A description of what is the case shows also what ought to be the case, the rules governing the meaningful use of a word. It is not the intention of the speakers but the grammar determines the use of the word objectively. The meaning, however, is not fixed forever; there are variety of uses and similarities and differences in the meaning. Wittgenstein explains this dimension of language with the analogies of family resemblance and language-games.

2.8 LANGUAGE-GAMES

In order to address the variety of language uses, and their being 'part of an activity', Wittgenstein introduces an investigational tool, 'language-game'. Wittgenstein's choice of 'game' is based on the over-all analogy between language and game. As he was watching a game, he thought that in language we are playing with words. Wittgenstein asks the following question concerning games: 'What is common to them all?—Don't say: "There must be something common, or they would not be called 'games'—but look and see whether there is anything common to all.—For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that' (*PI* 66). Similar to the diversity of games, our multiple ways of language use do not conform to a single model. In contrast to the one-dimensional picture theory of name-object of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein gives a random list of language uses such as giving orders, and obeying them; describing the appearance of an object; speculating about an event; making a joke; translating from one language into another; asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying (*PI* 23). Just as we cannot give a definition of 'game', so we cannot find 'what is common to all these activities and what makes them into language or parts of language' (*PI* 65).

A second reason why Wittgenstein compares the use of language to games is to emphasize that language use is an activity: " ... the term 'language-game' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life" (*PI* 23). Words and deed as are interwoven in the stream of life: 'the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, [is] the language-game' (*PI* 7). The problem with the name-object theory of

language is not only that there are other uses of language besides referring to objects, but also that the act of referring to objects plays no role unless it is an activity within the context of a particular language-game (*PI* 49). Suppose I point to an object and say 'pen'. That remains a mere noise unless it has a use in a language-game. For example, if I am teaching English, the pupils would repeat 'pen'. If I am teaching German, the pupils would respond with the correct German equivalent. If I am in my office, the secretary might respond to the word by bringing a pen to me. Apart from the linguistic responses and activities that make up such language-games, my saying 'pen' would make no sense. We don't simply speak; we use language to do things by means of speaking.

Wittgenstein used the notion of language-games also to illustrate that we run into confusions when we do not pay attention to the fact that the function of words vary from one language-game to another. Basketball and football, for example, have different set of rules. Rules of basketball are not applicable for football and vice versa; such illegitimate applications create confusions. With respect to language, the logical positivists treated scientific discourse as the only meaningful discourse and judged all other ways of speaking (aesthetic, religious and ethical discourses) to be meaningless. According to Wittgenstein, language-uses (like basketball and football) must be judged on their own terms, by their own standards. Not paying attention to the differences in the governing rules in different language games is the cause of many traditional philosophical problems. Wittgenstein thinks the proper role of the philosopher is not to propose new theories but to remove 'misunderstandings concerning the use of words, caused, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language' (*PI* 90).

2.9. RULE-FOLLOWING

The analogy of language-game also points to the fact that both language and games are rule-governed activity. Like games, language has constitutive rules; they determine what is normative in a language/game. A rule is not an abstract entity, transcending all of its particular applications; knowing the rule is not grasping that abstract entity and thereby knowing how to use it. Wittgenstein begins his exposition with an example: '... we get [a] pupil to continue a series (say + 2) beyond 1000 — and he writes 1000, 1004, 1008, 1012' (*PI* 185). The teacher corrects his mistakes explaining that he is not doing rightly. According to the pupil, however, he continued in

the same way. The pupil exhibited how he grasped the rule, and what he wrote was in accord with his understanding. Wittgenstein proceeds further to clarify how rule following is fundamental to language game. His investigations free one from the bewitchment of Platonic, Augustinian and Cartesian picture of language use. He wants to show that we need not posit any sort of external or internal authority beyond the actual applications of the rule. These considerations lead to *PI* 201, often considered the climax of the issue: ‘This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule. The answer was: if everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made out to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict.’ Wittgenstein’s formulation of the problem was wrongly interpreted as a sceptical problem concerning meaning, understanding and using of a language.

According to Wittgenstein, ‘Obeying a rule’ is a practice’ (*PI* 202) and involves objectivity, regularity and normativity. First of all, rule-following is something that an agent actually does, not merely something that seems so to the agent. It is only in the actual use of a rule, that is, in the actual practice, a rule is revealed, understood and followed. Secondly, rule-following is a repeatable procedure. It is repeatable over time and across persons. It can be taught and learned. Thirdly, there is normativity; meaning, regularity is subject to standards of correctness. The distinction between is and ought is kept; there is a correct way of following a rule. Rule-following actions are not just regularities of behaviour but regularities that have normative force, ways one ought to act. ‘Following a rule is analogous to obeying an order. We are trained to do so; we react to an order in a particular way’ (*PI* 206). As a practice there is no gap between a rule and an action following a rule; they are distinct but inseparable.

2.10. PRIVATE LANGUAGE

The rule-following remarks are followed by the so called “the private-language argument”, one of the most discussed among the Wittgensteinian themes. A private-language is something in which ‘individual words ... are to refer to what can only be known to the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations’ (*PI* 243). He considers the idea that I simply associate a sign, ‘S’, with a sensation by concentrating my attention on the sensation and saying ‘S’ to myself (the

private analogue of ostensive definition), and clarifies that if this is to be a genuine definition it must establish a persisting connection between sign 'S' and that sensation: "I impress [the connection] on myself" can only mean: this process brings it about that I remember the connection right in the future (*PI* 258). In the future, however, I cannot experience the same sensation; it is a fresh sensation and naming will be at best a fresh ostensive definition. Besides to make an ostensive definition of 'S', a technique for the use of 'S' must be established, one which leads to my using 'S' in the same way as before. There can be such definitions only where there is an objective, regular, and normative practice. Just pointing and making noises does not establish a connection between object, word and meaning, even in the public world. As a private linguist I cannot even do that; at best I can only concentrate my attention. The fact that I have had a sensation and simultaneously inwardly muttered 'S' is not enough to make 'S' the name of that sensation. And if one thinks a private linguist could remember the meaning of 'S' by remembering rightly the past correlation of 'S' with a certain kind of sensation, one presupposes what needs establishing: that there was such an independent correlation to be remembered. Fallibility of memory, even of memory of meaning, is neither here nor there: there has to be the right sort of occurrence in the first place to be a candidate for being remembered; and if there is not, no memory is going to create it. If, alternatively, we do not suppose that there is something to be remembered which is independent of the memory, then 'what seems right to me is right', that is, there is nothing right or wrong about it. It is impossible, thus, for a private linguist to establish and maintain a rule for the use of an expression. Only operating in a world independent of one's impressions of it, in which one's operations are in principle available for normative criteria, can there be correlations of signs with objects and consistency in the usage of those signs. The nature of mental phenomena is grasped not by introspection but by examining 'language and the actions into which it is woven', an objective and normative practice of using words: with pain, this involves crying, complaining, comforting, administering analgesics and so on (*PI* 7).

Wittgenstein has, thus, shown that if sensations are metaphysically (only I can have it) and epistemologically (only I know it) private, one cannot have a language about sensations. A language in principle unintelligible to anyone but its user would necessarily be unintelligible to the user also, because no meanings could be established for its signs. The proposed language is

not a useful language; for words can only be correctly or incorrectly applied if there are objective criteria for using them correctly. Rules of grammar determine whether a particular language use is correct or not. Private linguist cannot build up grammar for a private language. The signs in language can only function when there is a possibility of judging the correctness of their use, 'so the use of [a] word stands in need of a justification which everybody understands' (PI 261). Even apparently the most self-guaranteeing of all sensations, pain, derives its identity only from a sharable practice of expression, reaction and use of language. Agreement in human behaviour is fundamental to language use. The common behaviour of human beings and the very general facts of nature make particular concepts and customs, including those about sensations, possible and useful. Like any practice, language use must have objective and normative standards.

2.11. FAMILY RESEMBLANCE

To illustrate the relationship of language-games to one another, Wittgenstein uses the concept of 'family resemblances' (PI 67). The members of a family share many similar features, such as eye colour, temperament, hair, facial structure, and build. However, there will be no one particular feature that they all share in common. A son may have his father's eyes, mother's hair, and uncle's smile. With this analogy, Wittgenstein is attacking the theory of essentialism, which is the Platonic thesis that for things to be classed together they must share some essence. Wittgenstein's point, however, is that while our modes of discourse are all examples of language, the fact that they belong to the same category does not imply there is a single essence they all possess. Instead, the different language-games 'are related to one another in many different ways' (PI 65). Instead of general explanations, and definitions based on sufficient and necessary conditions, there are 'family resemblance' among the various uses of a word and among various language games. The meaning of a word is located in the logical form which is common to all uses of that word, but in the 'complicated network of similarities, overlapping and criss-crossing' (PI 66). 'The strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres' (PI 67).

From a Wittgensteinian point of view, the concept of rule-following is better understood as a family resemblance concept: 'This and similar things are called rules and this is how we follow

rules actually in our lives'. We typically point to rule-following practices to teach and learn particular rules and the concept of rule-following. Wittgenstein is not saying that the language-games have clear-cut, hard-and-fast rules, fixed forever. Rules are drawn for special purposes, and they may vary depending on our purposes (*PI* 499). The general purpose of the language-games metaphor was not to catalogue linguistic usages but to remove confusions. Wittgenstein says that the language-games serve as 'objects of comparison which are meant to throw light on the acts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities.' (*PI* 130) The mistake of the *Tractatus* was to impose on language the standards of 'the crystalline purity of logic' as though human language were some sort of calculus (*PI* 107). Family resemblance, thus, serves to exhibit the variety as well as vagueness that characterize different uses of the same concept. It is neither Platonic Idea nor Aristotelian form, or the logical form of the *Tractatus* that govern the various uses of words. Language games are interwoven in the web of life.

2.12. FORM/STREAM OF LIFE

According to the *Tractatus* language is an autonomous, abstract system of symbols in which the role of the human subject is insignificant. In striking contrast, for later Wittgenstein, language is something living and growing. Language use is an activity that takes place within the stream of life. The notion of 'form/web/stream of life' captures this insight: 'To imagine a language means to imagine a form of life' (*PI* 19). Wittgenstein introduced the term 'language-game' 'to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life' (*PI* 23). What enables language to function and therefore must be accepted as "given" is precisely forms of life. Our ways of speaking are not bound by logically necessary structure but are intimately tied into the common human practices, the hurly-burly of our everyday actual life. He is emphatic: 'Only in the stream of life words have meaning'.

Philosophers often held that a philosophical justification had to be given for every belief we have. This is, however, a hopeless and useless task. There is simply a point where justifications come to an end: 'If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: "This is simply what I do." (*PI* 217) 'What has to be accepted, the given is—so one could say—forms of life.' (*PI* p. 226). There can be no justification for our most basic concepts

and ways of viewing the world because ‘what people accept as a justification—is shewn by how they think and live’ (PI 325). In Wittgenstein’s terms, agreement is required ‘not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments’ (PI 242), and this is ‘not agreement in opinions but in form of life’ (PI 241). Forms of life can be understood as changing and contingent, dependent on culture, context, history, etc. It is also the form of life, “the common behaviour of mankind” which is “the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language” (PI 206), giving a certain shape and continuity to the stream of life.

2.13. LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have seen briefly the biography of Wittgenstein, the most influential philosopher of the twentieth century in the English speaking world who had contributed significantly to the logical and linguistic turn in the analytic philosophy. The *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is a classic in the analytic tradition which sought to reveal the logical structure of an Ideal Language, which could serve to solve all philosophical problems. The *Philosophical Investigations* proposes therapeutic methods in philosophy to dissolve philosophical problems, by presenting a perspicuous view of ordinary language uses. His picture theory of meaning in the *Tractatus* and the tool-use model of language in the *Investigations* made significant contributions in the philosophical thought of the twentieth century. His analogies of language games, family resemblance and form/stream of life has shown new ways of doing philosophical therapy and the remarks on rule-following and private language have initiated philosophical discussions and debates in many branches of philosophy.

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 do you understand by ‘language-game’?

Hacker, P.M.S. *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-Century Analytical Philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

Monk, R. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*. London: Vintage, 1991.

Wittgenstein, L. *Philosophical Investigations*. Tr. G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1953.

Wittgenstein, L. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Tr. C.K. Ogden and F.P. Ramsey, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922.

2.16. Answers to Check Your Progress

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. According to the *Tractatus*, philosophy does not give us any information about reality; it just clarifies our thought and language by removing misunderstandings. 'Philosophy', according to Wittgenstein, therefore, 'is not a body of doctrine but an activity. . . . Philosophy does not result in 'philosophical propositions', but rather in the clarification of propositions' (*T* 4.112), which is done through a logical analysis. As we have seen, 'every statement about complexes can be analyzed into a statement about their constituent parts, and into those propositions which completely describe the complexes' (*T* 2.0201).

2. Ethical and spiritual values also are in the realm of the mystical. Wittgenstein says we will not find values among the facts of the world, for everything is what it is (*T* 6.41). Therefore, the sense of the world, what constitutes its value, must lie outside the world. It cannot be one more fact among the scientifically observable facts in the world. Consequently he held that 'ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental' (*T* 6.421). 'How things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself *in* the world' (*T* 6.432). Wittgenstein closes his discussion of the mystical and ends the *Tractatus* with his final, oracular statement: 'What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence' (*T* 7). The *Tractatus*, on this reading, is part of the ineffable, and should be recognized as such.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. In order to address the variety of language uses, and their being 'part of an activity', Wittgenstein introduces an investigational tool, 'language-game'. Wittgenstein's choice of 'game' is based on the over-all analogy between language and game. As he was watching a game, he thought that in language we are playing with words. Wittgenstein asks the following question concerning games: 'What is common to them all?—Don't say: "There must be something common, or they would not be called 'games'"—but look and see whether there is anything common to all.—For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that' (*PI* 66). Similar to the diversity of games, our multiple ways of language use do not conform to a single model. In contrast to the one-dimensional picture theory of name-object of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein gives a random list of language uses such as giving orders, and obeying them; describing the appearance of an object; speculating about an event; making a joke; translating from one language into another; asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying (*PI* 23). Just as we cannot give a definition of 'game', so we cannot find 'what is common to all these activities and what makes them into language or parts of language' (*PI* 65).

2. To illustrate the relationship of language-games to one another, Wittgenstein uses the concept of 'family resemblances' (*PI* 67). The members of a family share many similar features, such as eye colour, temperament, hair, facial structure, and build. However, there will be no one particular feature that they all share in common. A son may have his father's eyes, mother's hair, and uncle's smile. With this analogy, Wittgenstein is attacking the theory of essentialism, which is the Platonic thesis that for things to be classed together they must share some essence. Wittgenstein's point, however, is that while our modes of discourse are all examples of language, the fact that they belong to the same category does not imply there is a single essence they all possess. Instead, the different language-games 'are related to one another in many different ways' (*PI* 65). Instead of general explanations, and definitions based on sufficient and necessary conditions, there are 'family resemblance' among the various uses of a word and among various language games. The meaning of a word is located in the logical form which is common to all uses of that word, but in the 'complicated network of similarities, overlapping and criss-crossing' (*PI* 66). 'The strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres' (*PI* 67).

UNIT 3 ORDINARY LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY

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3.0. OBJECTIVES

Ordinary language philosophy began with Ludwig Wittgenstein who wrote *Philosophical Investigations* in 1953 in which he presents a radical critique of his and Russell's earlier work. In this work he argues that language is basically imprecise but that is not a drawback, but merely one of its properties. Philosophy has for its activity the clearing up of conceptual puzzles, which the incorrect use of language brings about. The way out for all the metaphysical puzzles is to pay attention to the various functions of language. Wittgenstein and the later ordinary language philosophers believed that concern with language is not merely some preliminary to getting things straight, but is very close to the very business of philosophy. That is the reason why they concentrated their efforts heavily on analyzing ordinary language to see how it functions and what properties it has to aid dissolving philosophical puzzles. After Wittgenstein most of the philosophers in England have by and large tended to stay in the Wittgenstenian mold. The important names among them are Gilbert Ryle, Peter Strawson and J.L. Austine. Ryle attempts to show that the traditional mind- body problem arose through a series of logical errors in thinking about mental and physical phenomena. John Austin also from Oxford, held that ordinary

language analysis was one among many ways of doing philosophy. He had an intrinsic interest in cataloging and tracing down different shades of meaning that represent different concepts. Peter Strawson, also an ordinary language philosopher claimed that in order to understand descriptive and denoting phrases it is necessary to understand that language is lived and spoken, not rigid and written down in logic texts.

The objective of this Unit is:

- to undertake a detailed study of the contributions of later Wittgenstein, Gilbert Ryle, J.L. Austine, and Peter Strawson towards ordinary language philosophy.

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Though analytic philosophy began doing philosophy as a comprehensive description of the whole of reality, it came to concern itself less and less with giving such a description and more and more with the analysis of particular concepts. Among these are the concepts of philosophy itself, of language, both artificial and natural, and of science. They turned more often toward attempts to understand our talk about the world than on attempts to understand the world. This made it inevitable for them to take a preoccupation with language. Three areas of concern about language may be singled out. The earliest was the concern to use words precisely so as to formulate problems clearly and unambiguously. The next was the construction of formal or artificial language. The last was the systematic analysis of ordinary or natural language as philosophers usually speak it. Using these three areas the history of analytic philosophy can be divided into five stages. The first stage is called early realism and analysis practiced by Moore and Russell, where they took upon themselves the task of digging out the meaning of a philosophic proposition by reformulating it so as to make it plain. This stage was followed by a concern for constructing formal languages. Russell's Logical atomism and Wittgenstein's *Tractatus – Logico - Philosophicus* were engaged in constructing a language whose syntax mirrored the relations of the basic entities of which the world was made up. The third stage attempts to abandon metaphysics as meaningless. This was achieved by constructing a formal language which is adequate for scientific purposes but not for metaphysics. The fourth stage concerns the performance of analyses of what philosophers usually say in natural languages, and is a repudiation of stages two and three. It was practiced by later Wittgenstein and Gilbert Ryle,

who believed that philosophical problems could be dissolved by discovering the linguistic traps into which philosophers have fallen. The fifth and last stage was initiated by J.L. Austine and P.F. Strawson. Though both these philosophers were concerned with ordinary language philosophy, their concern was not confined to dissolving philosophical problems, but to the philosophical ambiance of the diversity, subtleties and nuances of language as well.

3.2 ORDINARY LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY: LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

A few early positivists, especially Russell attempted to construct an 'ideal language' a language the terms of which are all precisely defined and the sentences of which unambiguously reveal the logical form of the facts to which they refer. Such a perfect language must rest upon atomic propositions. Therefore, the fundamental philosophical problem is to describe the structure of those atomic propositions. This stream of thought, popularly known as Logical Atomism, was strongly criticized by a group of philosophers led by Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein when he wrote *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus* was fully in agreement with Russell's theory that structure of language has an isomorphic representation of the reality and hence understanding language would resolve all the philosophical puzzles. What more, since reality was construed in terms of a logical structure, the language, which represents it too must be logically perfect. This he revised in to in his later writings. Later Wittgenstein came to realize that philosophers had made the mistake of trying to model their activities on those of scientists. Logical atomism, from its title to its contents reasserts that since Plato's time philosophers are in look out for strict definitions for philosophical concepts. For example, take Socrates' endeavor to get a definition of *knowledge* from Theaetetus (as depicted in the dialogue *The Theaetetus*). Even though Theaetetus came up with various cases in which we would ordinarily be said to have knowledge, Socrates was not contented. Nothing less would content him than an attempt to state "the essence of knowledge", by offering a strict definition. This Wittgenstein feels is neither desirable nor possible. Instead we need to undertake a detailed examination of the cases in which people actually use the word *knowledge*, the special roles the word plays in our ordinary every day language. These divergent roles cannot be summed up in a brief formula, especially because the words that interest philosophers quite unlike scientists are words with a variety of jobs with no rigidly definable responsibilities. But without attempting for a formal

definition how can we collect the various uses of a word under one single umbrella? Wittgenstein points out that if we observe a word we will find a complicated net work of similarities overlapping and criss - crossing: some times overall similarities, some times similarities of detail. Such a network, he calls a family. Consider the word *game*: board games, card games, football, ring-a- ring- a- roses, chess are all games. The family resemblances of these would reveal the essence of a game. The essence is expressed by grammar: grammar tells us what kind of object any thing is.

In his discussion on meaning, Wittgenstein concentrates on two principal temptations to which we commonly yield. First, regarding every word a name. This eventually leads us to postulate mysterious pseudo entities to serve as the objects of reference. The second temptation is to think that understanding a word or learning a word's meaning is some sort of mental process. In fact, Wittgenstein observes, if we keep clam and look without prejudice at the way words are actually used, the mystery of meaning will disappear.

To understand language we may better consider possible rather than actual languages, says Wittgenstein. The possible language Wittgenstein speaks of is something, which we could possibly use, in our ordinary affairs of life. He describes the mode of social behavior of a community (some times imaginary and not real community) and asks us to consider the sort of language, which would be useful within such a form of life. For example, a tutor working with his student teaches him to bring him a slate when he says slate! A pencil when he says pencil! and so on. But even in this simplified language words are not names. To understand the word *slate* is to grasp how it is used in a certain language-game, here the game of receiving and giving orders. Of course in order to obey the order of the tutor the pupil must understand ahead ostensive ' that this is a slate'. But such processes called 'learning the names of objects' are just preliminaries to the use of a language, not examples of it. 'Naming is not so far a move in the language-game' he writes, ' any more than putting a piece in its place on the board is a move in chess.'

What Wittgenstein attempts to assert is this that the meaning of a word, say *slate* does not consist in its name, but in the way it is used in a language. If the actual slate, the concrete

physical object were part of the meaning of *slate*, we ought to be able to say things like 'I broke part of the meaning of the word 'slate''. Such a sentence is an obvious nonsense. Learning what labels to put on object is no more understanding a language than repeating what the teacher says, though both labeling and repeating are useful exercises as preliminaries to understanding language.

Naming or ostensive definition has been given undue importance down the history of language studies because philosophers thought that pointing clears matters up. But Wittgenstein argues that there is no way of removing the risk of misunderstanding as we can misunderstand what somebody is pointing at. For example, if a teacher points to a yellow colored triangle and says yellow!, the pupil might conclude that he is telling him the name of a triangle.

Early positivist analysis of language had supposed that there must be an ultimate analysis of an expression's meaning, an analysis consisting of simple elements to which we would point in order to make that meaning perfectly clear. But alas! There are no simples in the sense that logical atomism requires them. Russell's logically proper names, the so-called ultimate constituents of the world are in fact not *simple* in the metaphysical sense. The correct conclusion, he thinks, is that there are no logically proper names. Deluded by the ultimate analysis offered by the ideal language we ask such questions as 'What is the real form of a proposition?' or 'What are the constituents of the ultimate language?' and are in turn held captive by this ideal. The first task, therefore, is to destroy the attractiveness of that ideal. "My critics", says Wittgenstein, "would accuse me to destroying what ever is great and important... but I am destroying nothing but houses of cards." These houses of cards any way could collapse on their own as soon as we come to understand the ways in which we actually use words like 'knowledge', 'propositions' names' etc. in our every day language.

In order to over come the temptation to suppose that understanding is a mental process, Wittgenstein points out that understanding involves processes that are both mental and physical. Though it is true that we will have mental images of the things we claim we understand, some thing else could always replace them. Again we could have the image say a formula to ourselves, and still not understand.

If understanding is not a mental process what is it? In his *Investigations* Wittgenstein sets out to discuss this though he does not come forth with a precise and definite answer. He absorbs the problem of understanding into a more general problem about 'psychological words.' While considering how do such words function Wittgenstein once again adopt a therapeutic method to cure us of our tendency to suppose that psychological words must name private experiences which we alone can know. The possibility of having private experiences opens up the possibility of a private language. According to Wittgenstein, the very idea of a private language is an unintelligible one. First of all a language by definition is, that which proceeds in accordance with rules. It uses names in accordance with these rules. But in a private language how can we assert that the names are used consistently according to the (implicit) rules? It is not enough to reply that 'they seem to me to be used consistently', for a criterion is used to assert what *seems to be the case is in fact the case*. In brief, there is no criterion for determining whether the so-called private language is being used consistently following the implicit rules and hence there is no such language.

This does not imply that words cannot refer to sensations. They do, and we talk about sensations every day. The question is how do we learn to use sensation words? When a child gets hurt the adults talk to him and teach him exclamations to be uttered when he is in pain. Thus the child is taught new pain behavior. Does this amount to say that 'I am in pain' can be replaced by crying and moaning? Can crying and moaning be taken as uses of language? Yes, indeed, says Wittgenstein, for when one is in pain he need not express it in a statement. In fact judging is one of the very many ways in which we use language. Therefore, the question what does 'I am in pain' really mean has no single answer. We have always to take account of the context the language gave in which the words are uttered. The point Wittgenstein wants to stress here is that as far as psychological words are concerned it is not the case that one attempts to describe a state of mind when he utters such statements.

Substantiating Wittgenstein's appeal to ordinary language John Wisdom, a pupil of Wittgenstein says, the queer thing about philosophers is that they hold views, which from a strict logical point of view are obviously false. Their blatant refusal to accept the regular methods of

dispute settling is because they disjoin from the ordinary language practices. The fact is that philosophers are dissatisfied with our ordinary usage and so will not accept as decisive an appeal to it. They are advocating a linguistic innovation: where we see a logical dispute, they see a conflict.

Deviating from ordinary language, therefore, would create metaphysical puzzles. Suppose a psychologist says, ‘every body is neurotic’. In common parlance this proposition expresses an empirical discovery to the effect that more careful psychiatric observation will always reveal a neurosis like a pathologists discovery that every living organism has cancerous cells within it. But we should miss the whole point of the psychologist’s statement if we were to reply thus; “that isn’t true, only 14% of the population has a neurosis”. Wisdom points out that the proposition ‘every body is neurotic’ is *a priori* and not empirical; here the psychologist is recommending that we change our way of using the word ‘neurotic’. We can dispute what he says only by drawing attention to the inconvenient results of his verbal recommendations. This is exactly what philosophers do. Philosophical paradoxes are verbal recommendation, backed by unconscious motives.

Not all ex students of Wittgenstein look with kindness on the ordinary language philosophy. However, the philosophical scene at Oxford shows clear signs of Wittgenstein’s influence. The best known of Oxford ordinary language philosophers is Gilbert Ryle.

3.3. GILBERT RYLE’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO ORDINARY LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY

Gilbert Ryle in his “Systematically Misleading Expressions” announced that the task of philosophy is the detection of the sources in linguistic idioms of current misconstructions and absurd entities. He argues that a great many of the expressions of every day life are, in virtue of their grammatical form, ‘systematically misleading.’ For example, a sentence like ‘Mr. Pickwick is a fiction’ is grammatically analogous to ‘Mr. Pawar is a statesman.’ Therefore, we are tempted to read it as if it were a description of a person - a person with the property of being fictitious. However the statement under consideration is not about a fictitious person, but rather about a

person with odd properties, but real indeed. But if we are to take the statement as one describing Mr. Pickwick, then it would imply such propositions as 'Mr. Pickwick was born in such-and-such a year, which would go to contradict the original assertion. "Paradoxes and antinomies are the evidence" he says, "that an expression is systematically misleading."

Just like in the above example, metaphysicians, taking the grammatical forms of statements at face value, are led to wrongly presume that a moral statement like 'Punctuality is a virtue' is grammatically parallel to 'Plato is a Philosopher'. It amounts to saying that like Plato, *punctuality* is a name. Therefore to avoid the misleading suggestions of every day speech the philosopher must learn to restate sentences the manner, which exhibits the form of the facts. Ryle held both that philosophy is therapeutic and that it has a positive task to reveal the real form of facts.

According to Ryle, philosophers have made a great many mistakes in speaking about minds because they spoke of things that belonged in one category as if they belonged in another entirely different one. The category to which a concept belongs is the set of ways in which it is logically legitimate to operate with it. But an explicit definition of category is not possible. This Ryle explains resorting to examples. In his "Categories" he gives the following example: consider the incomplete expression- "... is in bed." We can without absurdity insert *Jones* or *Socrates* in the gap the sentence frame leaves unfilled, but not *Saturday*. This is enough to prove that 'Jones' belongs to a different category from 'Saturday.' But this does not prove that *Jones* and *Socrates* belong to the same category for, there might be other sentence-frames into which *Jones* could be inserted but *Socrates* would not fit without absurdity. Indeed philosophers, Ryle points out, are led to distinguish between categories only because they light on unexpected antinomies, situations in which a category-distinction lies concealed. Criticizing the early analysts Ryle points out that those who defined philosophy as analysis overlooked the fact that category distinguishing involves ratiocination.

According to Ryle, every proposition has certain logical powers. But we are conscious only of a limited number of the logical powers of the propositions we use. At least we know how to use them in practice under ordinary circumstances. When propositions have something in

common it is some times convenient to abstract this common factor as a concept. For Ryle a concept is merely a handy abbreviation for a family of propositions, a brief way of referring to the logical powers of all those propositions, which are similar in virtue of possessing a certain common factor.

Analyzing the logical powers of mental concepts, Ryle points out that though we work quite well with these concepts in our day to day life, we are confused when we try to discover the category to which such expressions belong. In order to overcome such puzzles we have to map the various mental concepts, determining their geographical position in a world of concepts. Ryle tries to destroy the official Cartesian myth that mental concepts are distinguishable from the physical in virtue of being private, non-spatial and knowable only by introspection. He says that it is a 'category mistake' to suppose that mental - conduct - expressions, say *intelligence*, name any entity what so ever. The function of the word *intelligence* is to describe human behavior, not to name an entity. It is a mistake to maintain with the idealist that in reality man is a ghost, or with the materialist that in reality he is a machine. The human being is neither a ghost, nor a machine, nor a ghost in a machine, he is a human being who sometimes behaves intelligently, some times stupidly, some times acts and some times is quiescent.

Often philosophers suppose that acting intelligently is synonymous with theorizing. But the fact is that, Ryle points out, theorizing is just one species of intelligent behavior, the species of 'knowing that'. Most intelligent action consists in 'knowing how', such as, knowing how to play chess, to speak French, to build a house etc. If we try to maintain that practice can be intelligent only when it is preceded by theorizing we are at once involved in an infinite regress. For example, if we suppose that cricket playing must be preceded by intelligent theorizing about cricket, there would be as much reason for supposing that intelligent theorizing must in turn be preceded by intelligent theorizing about theorizing and so on *ad infinitum*. Instead why don't we recognize that a form of activity is intelligent? Knowing how, therefore, concludes Ryle, is dispositional. To say we have a disposition is to assert that our conduct is law-like, that it follows a regular pattern.

Ryle has also attempted to resolve some of the problems in philosophical psychology. For instance, the problem how are we to overcome the apparently irresolvable dilemmas which beset the philosopher, like the familiar problem, how the world of science is related to the world of every day life. On the one hand we have physicists trying to tell us that things are really arrangements of electrons in space, neither colors, nor solid, nor sharply-defined, on the other we have before us the empirical world where chairs and tables are real, colored solid and so on. Ryle here tries to show that the conclusions of the physicist do not really conflict with our every day judgments. The supposed dilemma therefore, turns out to be no more than a difference in interest.

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) How did Ryle destroy the Cartesian myth that mental concepts are private, non- spatial and arrived at by introspection?

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3.4. ORDINARY LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY: J.L AUSTINE

While Ryle did not engage in close linguistic analysis we have J.L.Austin, yet another Oxford intellectual who engaged himself in the nuances of ordinary language for its own sake. He stands in opposition to both Ryle and Wittgenstein in that he does not conceive of

philosophical analysis as merely a puzzle-solving activity. He is interested in distinctions in language themselves, the study, analysis and cataloging of the tremendous variety of language is an end in itself for him. It is a kind of knowledge, which may be sought for its own sake rather than ridding ourselves of conceptual muddles, though it is of great use. Austin feels that the real job of Philosophy is to indicate the precise way in which various formulations and meanings are related to different concepts and not merely different ways of talking about the same concepts.

At no time Austin believed that ordinary language is for all philosophical purposes the final court of appeal. However he believed that our common stock of words embodies all the distinctions men have found worth drawing in many generations. Hence with regard to every day practical affairs the distinctions which ordinary language incorporates are likely to be sounder than any of our armchair philosophical theories. Ordinary language exercises are to be neglected at our peril, if not the end-all, they are certainly the begin-all of philosophy.

Austin is never reluctant to admit that ordinary man's authority extends only to practical affairs. As a preliminary even though the philosopher is advised to track down the ordinary use of words, in the end he will be compelled to straighten them up to some degree. In cases where philosophers' interests out grow those of the ordinary man, it will be necessary to point to new terminology.

In opposition to Moore Austin tries to point out the subtlety of grammatical distinctions *ifs* and *cans* carry. Highlighting the subtle differences they carry while substituting for another, Austin argues, we better pay attention to these words since *if* and *can* are words, which constantly turn up in Philosophy. By studying such linguistic distinctions we become clearer about the phenomena they are used to differentiate. Ordinary language philosophy, Austin suggests, would better be called linguistic phenomenology.

Austin hoped to destroy two doctrines: 1) what we directly perceive are sense data and 2) propositions about sense data are incorrigible. However he does not seriously revise the general question why sense datum theory has had a long and honorable philosophical career. Instead he turns his attention to such questions as the function of the word *real*. *Real*, he says is not a

normal word; it cannot stand alone as a description, as *pink* can. Hence he calls it substantive hungry. Such discriminations are highly relevant to the issues Austin is ostensibly discussing. In his symposium on “Other Minds” Austin points out that ‘I know that’ cases are the best examples of *descriptive fallacy*. Comparing *knowing* with *promising*, Austin argues that like promising, knowing too is a performative word. To say that *I know*, according to Austin, is not to describe my state, nor to take a pledge, but to give others my word or authority.

What is it for a proposition to be true? Obviously when it corresponds to facts; Austin tried to clarify the meaning of correspondence in terms of descriptive conventions which relate words to types of situations, and demonstrative conventions which correlate sentences with actual historical situations. To say of ‘S is p’ is true, is to say that the situation to which it refers is of the sort that it is conventionally described in the manner in which it is now being described.

In terms of the kind of acts they perform Austin distinguishes three modes of utterance: locutionary- act of using a sentence to convey a meaning, e.g., ‘George is coming’. Illocutionary- act of using an utterance with a certain force, e.g., ‘X warns us that George is coming.’ Perlocutionary- act of producing a certain effect by the use of a sentence e.g., when some body, without actually telling us that ‘George is coming,’ succeeds in warning us that he is on his way. Having made these distinctions, Austin impresses us that elucidation is always of the total speech act, therefore, there is no question of analyzing the meaning as something sharply distinguishable from the force of a statement as logical analysts thought there was. Stating and describing are merely two kinds of illocutionary acts. They carry no special significance with which philosophy has commonly endowed them. Similarly, *truth* and *falsity* are not names for relations or qualities as philosophers traditionally supposed them to be. They refer to a ‘dimension of assessments’ of the satisfactoriness of the words used in the statement in relation to the facts to which they refer. It follows that the standard philosophical distinction between factual and normative would also fade away side by side.

3.5. P.F. STRAWSON ON ORDINARY LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY

According to Strawson, Russell made two mistakes: first he over looked the fact that sentences can have a variety of uses and, second, he wrongly supposed that if a significant sentence is not being used to make a true statement it must be making a false statement. Strawson points out that Russell's trichotomy- true, false or meaningless collapses once we realize that a sentence can be meaningless, but is never true or false. Russell's *theory of description* begins from the presumption that since 'The king of France is wise' is neither true nor meaningless it must be false. Again, since it obviously does not describe 'the king of France' when there is no such person, it must really describe something else. Finally, Russell concludes that all propositions really ascribe predicates to logically proper names. But this solution has to meet the further complication that there are no such names. However we may recognize that the question whether the King of France is wise has a meaning is quite independent of the question whether there is in fact such a king. Secondly, the sentence is not used to assert that there is in fact a king of France. Routinely formal logicians have concentrated their attention on context-free sentences, which are in fact not ordinarily used. This explains why they have failed to distinguish between sentences and statements. Had they attended to sentences with words like "I" or phrases like 'round table', sentences, which can be used in an entirely different fashion, the difference between sentences and statements would have been bound to strike them forcibly.

This does not however, mean that Strawson is all opposed to formal systems. Formal systems are useful, he contends, in appraising context free discourse such as those in mathematics and physics. However, in order to cope up with ordinary discourse the formal logic must be supplemented with logic of every day discourse. The four logical norms, the conditional, negation, conjunction and disjunction are in fact abstractions from ordinary use of language. There are many kinds of entailment, Strawson points out, which formal logicians overlook. It is difficult for formal logic to have an effective deal of what is temporal and contextual. These limitations can be overcome with ordinary language logic. This kind of logic begins by asking questions like 'what are the conditions under which we use such- and – such expression? Though this logic is not so elegant or systematic as formal logic, it has to its credit high intellectual utility, richness through variety and complexity.

3.6. LET US SUM UP

Ludwig Wittgenstein, when he wrote *Tractatus*, was fully in agreement with Russell's theory that the structure of language has an isomorphic representation of the reality and hence understanding language would resolve all the puzzles in philosophy. However, later Wittgenstein came to realize that philosophers have made the mistake of modeling their activities on those of scientists. Instead of searching for strict definitions of conceptual terms we need to examine how people use the word in their ordinary language. To understand a word is not to name it, but rather to grasp how it is used in a certain language. It is necessary that philosophers get over the attraction towards logically constituted ideal language.

After Wittgenstein most of the philosophers in England have, by and large tended to stay in the Wittgenstenian mold. The important names among them are Gilbert Ryle, J.L. Austine and Peter Strawson. Ryle attempts to show that the traditional mind - body problem arose through a series of logical errors in thinking about mental and physical phenomena. Peter Strawson, also an ordinary language philosopher claimed that in order to understand descriptive and denoting phrases it is necessary to understand that language is lived and spoken, not rigid and written down in logic texts. John Austine, also from Oxford, held that ordinary language analysis was one among many ways of doing philosophy. He had an intrinsic interest in cataloguing and tracing down different shades of meaning that represented different concepts.

Check Your Progress II

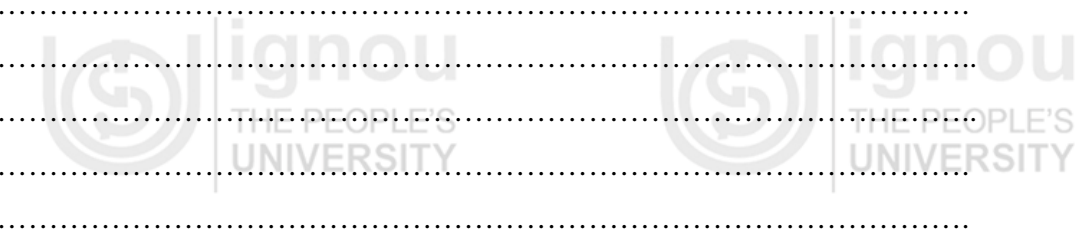
Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) Explain Austin's three modes of utterances



2) Why does Strawson demand for ordinary language logic?



3.7. Key Words

Ostensive definition: Define a word by pointing the object which it names

Ordinary language: Informal, everyday language

Private language: a language that an individual would employ to assert one's private experiences.

Family resemblance: the network of similarities of the various uses of a word in a particular language all brought under one umbrella.

Therapeutic method: A method of analysis used not merely to describe, but to cure from some disease as well.

Idealists: Those philosophers who maintain that ideas are the real entities.

Incorrigible propositions: Propositions that are infallible.

Factual propositions: Propositions conveying mere facts.

Normative propositions: Propositions that involve norms.

Formal logic: Logic that deals with abstract forms.

3.8. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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3.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Ryle says that it is a category - mistake to suppose that mental conduct expressions say, intelligence, name any entity what so ever. It is a mistake to maintain, with the idealist that in reality man is a ghost or with materialist that in reality he is a machine. Human being is neither a ghost, nor a machine, nor a ghost in a machine. He is a human being who acts at times intelligently and at other times stupidly.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. Locutionary – act of using a sentence to convey a meaning
Illocutionary – act of using an utterance with a certain force
Per locutionary – act of producing a certain effect by the use of a sentence.

2. According to Strawson we need logic of every day discourse as a supplement to formal logic to cope up with ordinary discourse. Apart from the four logical norms there are many kinds of entailment which formal logicians over look. Further, formal logic cannot account for temporally and contextually presented statements.

UNIT 4

PRAGMATISM

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4.11. Answers to check your progress.

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to give a basic understanding of the theory of Pragmatism which is one among the six ways of knowing, namely, Rationalism, Empiricism, Authoritarianism, Scepticism and Intuitionism. In this unit, definition, meaning, nature and the different theories of Pragmatism is dealt with. Finally, attention is given to its importance in human life. By studying this theory, one will be able to:

- Have the basic understanding of the word- Pragmatism
- Definition of Pragmatism
- Meaning and nature of truth
- Pierce's conception of Pragmatism

- William James theory of Pragmatism
- John Dewey's conception of Instrumentalism
- Its significance in practical life.

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Pragmatism emerged at the end of 19th century as the most original contribution of American thought. This theory was first developed by Charles pierce in 1857 in his paper, "How to make our Ideas clear". William James revived and reformulated it in 1898 and developed it not as a method, but primarily as the theory of truth. He says, "it is only an attitude of orientation; the attitude of looking away from first things, principles, categories and supposed necessities ; of looking towards the last things, fruits, consequences, facts". John Dewey and F.C.Schiller are the later famous advocates of the theory of Pragmatism. Thinkers like G Simmul, W.Ostward, E.Husserl, Henry Bergson etc. developed and popularized the pragmatic thinking in the continent.

Pragmatism mediates between Empiricism and Rationalism, Combining all its significant aspects. It unifies the realms of fact and value, making it possible to utilize both science and philosophy in a coherent and creative way. It insists not upon antecedent phenomena but upon the consequent phenomena, not upon the precedents, but upon the possibility of action. It can be described as a bio-centric philosophy which accepts the operating life of man as the fundamental basis of philosophy. It stands for the experimental attitude to truth, characterized by an emphasis on activity. In other words the existence of an object is judged by its function. 'A thing is what it does'. That means the workability of an idea determines its truth. For example, the meaning of electricity consists in what electricity does. In other words, we discover the presence of electricity not by looking at it, but by its effects. Thus any belief or idea is true only when it produces the expected result.

1.2. DEFINITION

The term pragmatism is derived from the Greek word 'Pragma' meaning action, from which our words 'practice' and 'practical' come. C.S.Pierce emphasizes the fact that words derive their meaning from actions of some sort. Our ideas are clear and distinct only when we are able to translate them into some mode of operation. If a word refers to an object or a quality about which no practical effects can be conceived, such a word has no meaning. For him, meanings are derived not by intuition but, by experience or experiment. So meanings are not individual or private but social and public. Again, if there is no way of testing ideas by their effects or public consequences, such ideas are meaningless. That means the meaning of an idea or a proposition lies on its observable practical consequences. For pragmatists, action is the end of life and is subordinating to thought and rational activity. An idea which cannot be tested by action is devoid of all significance and becomes purely an empty verbiage.

According to William James, the meaning of conceptions is to be sought in their practical bearings. That means the function of thought is to guide action, and that truth is to be tested by the practical consequences of belief. Thus practical consequences are the criteria of knowledge, meaning and value. In his opinion Pragmatism is a temper of mind, an attitude, a theory of the nature of ideas and truth and finally, it is a theory about reality. More specifically it may be said that pragmatism offers as a theory of meaning, a theory of truth and a theory of knowledge.

In the opinion of John Dewey, ideas are the instruments which should guide our actions and their value is measured by their success. Thus pragmatism is a philosophical system stressing practical consequences and values as standards by which the validity of the concepts are to be determined. He uses the word 'idea' as synonymous with plan of action or intention to act in a certain way. 'Things are what they are experienced as being or that to give a just account of anything is to tell what that thing is experienced to be, is the essence of pragmatism.

4.3. MEANING AND NATURE OF TRUTH

Generally the word truth is used as a synonym for Reality which is infinite, eternal and changeless. This ultimate truth of reality is regarded as objective, systematic, independent of human thinking, considering truth and reality as identical. But for

pragmatists, the definition of truth is that, our idea should be in conformity with the fact. Truth of our idea must be verified within our experience and its trueness consists in its verification. Hence verification becomes the process of making it true. Verification process consists of telling the truth of an idea, asserting it and then applying it. So truth of our idea depends on its assertion and application and in giving satisfaction. Hence for Pragmatists, satisfaction is indispensable for truth building. Truth is that which works best and viceversa. Successful working is the tag or earmark of testing a true idea.

Idea becomes true in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relations with the other parts of our experience. 'An idea is true' so long as to believe 'it is profitable to our lives'. According to pragmatists truth is not a separate category but happens to an idea which is made true by events. Therefore a true idea must agree with reality. So a belief may be considered true if its effects are good. In their opinion, we cannot reject any hypothesis if consequences useful to life flow from it. So if the hypothesis of god works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word and if it gives a person courage, confidence and happiness, then James says that, he has the right to believe in His existence.

Pragmatism is neither religious nor irreligious, but essentially a doctrine concerning the nature of - meaning, truth and knowledge. It is epistemological and logical, rather than metaphysical, theological and ethical. It does not imply any ontology but, reflects the practical experimental outlook on life. It is an unique doctrine concerning not with any metaphysical aspects and considers them as unreal ones, devoid of meaning.

Questions to 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 Pragmatism? Explain its significance.

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-
2. Explain the meaning and nature of truth.
-
-

4.4 PIERCE'S THEORY OF PRAGMATISM

The principle of Pragmatism was first enunciated by C.S.Pierce (1839-1914) who maintained that in order to attain clearness in our thoughts of an object; we need only consider what conceivable efforts of a practical kind the object may involve. Pierce was not a systematic writer and never expounded his ideas in a single system. The article which he wrote in 1878 - 'How to make our ideas clear' commanded almost no attention from philosophical circles which were then under the dominating influence of Neo-Kantian Idealism of T.H.Green, Caird etc. But a wide circulation to his idea was given by William James through his lucid essays and it was methodically implemented into the daily affairs by John Dewey. Pierce was essentially interested in logic and science while James was in Psychology and religion and Dewey in ethics and social thought.

James and Dewey being contemporaries were highly skilled academicians having the common conviction that there must be a close connection between thinking and doing. As Socrates said 'the unexamined life is not worth living,' they concluded that the behaviour which does not rest upon thought will be lacking an important ingredient. Between these two, there is a difference of emphasis. Dewey's outlook was scientific as his arguments are derived barely from an examination of scientific method while James is concerned primarily with religion and morals. For all these original Pragmatists, the term 'Practical' meant the way the thought works in action.

4.5. WILLIAM JAMES, CONCEPTION OF PRAGMATISM

William James (1842-1910) took a fresh look at Pragmatism and developed Pierce's thought in a novel way. He enlarged Pierce's expression of particular consequences for the general rule or method applicable to future experience. He was much more of a nominalist than Pierce. He gave his attention to Pragmatic method,

Pragmatic theory of truth, role and status of human will and the relevance of the 'will to believe' in his scholarly works - The principles of Psychology, Pragmatism, The will to believe, Essays in Radical Empiricism, The varieties of Religious Experience and others.

James being an educator, wished to force the general public to realize that certain philosophical problems have a real importance to mankind, as the beliefs in it lead a very different mode of conduct. So he accomplished a new advance in pragmatism by the theory of the 'Will to believe' as he himself calls it the right to believe. He says that the greater part of philosophical and religious fields is of such nature that they are not susceptible of decisive evidence. He claims that man has the right to choose his belief either that has proof or that has the absence of evidence. So both acceptance and refusal are equivalent to a choice.

James gave a new colour to pragmatic method while determining the meaning of philosophical, theological and religious problems. He wished to establish a criterion which would enable one to determine whether a given problem had an authentic vital meaning or not. He extended the use of pragmatic method to the problem of the nature of truth. Pragmatic method is an instrument he says, in determining the meaning of words and the vital importance of Philosophical belief. Since truth is a term and has consequently a meaning, he justifies the affirmation of certain beliefs by means of the nature of their consequences. In pragmatism general ideas have a very different role to play than that of reporting and registering past experiences. They are the basis for organizing future observations and experiences.

Idea is true in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relations with other parts of our experience. 'An idea is true' so long as to believe' it is profitable to our lives, According to pragmatists, 'truth' is not a separate category but happens to an idea which is made true by events. Therefore a true idea must agree with reality. In their opinion, we can not reject any hypothesis if consequences useful to life flow from it. According to James, truth must be the cash value of an idea. In his opinion, ideas are made true by events. That means, truth happens to ideas. Ideas become true in so far as they help us to make successful connection between various parts of our experience. Therefore, truth is a part of the process of experience, of living. For James, as truth is bound up with

personal interests, it must lead to successful action and it must work. In the long run, a true belief must work beneficially, just as untrue one will work destructively. Thus his pragmatism recognized a close relation between thinking and doing, between belief and action. Hence he considers 'the will to believe' as a relevant one in relation to truth. He says, truth is nothing already there in the outer world for us to find. But on the contrary, it is something effected by man - a successful adjustment between his purpose and the world. Truth is merely the normal functioning of ideas in our life as a whole, as health that designates the normal functioning of the various bodily organs.

In his opinion truth frequently changes. He tries to explain it with an example. When the assumption of earth moving round the sun is proved, the Ptolemaic system of astronomy became false. That means, the Copernican theory of truth was considered true, making the earlier one false. In the same way, in future, some altogether different but most useful theory may replace the Copernican theory. Hence scientific truths keep on changing from time to time. So James believes that truth changes as if it is merely a relation between our human ideas and the rest of our experience. Truth always refers to action that takes place in future. As truth is subject to constant modification, absolute truth is not at all possible. In his book 'will to believe' he believes that in morality, metaphysics, religion and even in science, we are justified in testing the truth of a belief by its usefulness.

James considers that this world is neither absolutely good nor absolutely bad and the course of events in the world order is not completely determined. It is capable of improvement. By exercising our choices, we can help to make the world better. Novelties occur when we make choices. Through our free choices we can help in our own humble way to make the world better.

James's contributions to the field of philosophy of course, not to metaphysics, entitle him to be one among the great philosophers of modern times. He has introduced a new spirit into modern philosophy which is invaluable. His proposals for the reform of education, his illuminating analysis of the process of logic and reflective thinking, his courageous facing of the difficulties of the present era are his main contributions.

As James, Dewey believed that novelties keep arising within experience and that truth must be constantly revised and reconstructed. If James was concerned mainly in religious aspects, Dewey was interested primarily with social reforms and improvements in education. James being a pluralist thinks that the world consists of many disconnected elements while Dewey retains enough Hegelianism to unify things and see them as mutually interested in organic wholes that are socially significant. Both being influenced by the advances in natural science, believe that philosophies must be tested in practice and truth is revealed in action.

4.6. JOHN DEWEY'S CONCEPTION OF PRAGMATISM

John Dewey (1859-1952) was the most influential philosopher whose expression of Pragmatism were in the social realm rather than in the individual realm. As he was influenced very much by Darwin's theory, looked upon man as a biological organism. As such, man can be understood in his relation to environment. As any other biological organism, man also struggles for his survival through his thinking and doing which are intimately related. A perplexed, troubled, confused situation at the beginning gives rise to a clear, unified resolved situation at the end through his thinking mode. So he emphasizes that thinking is always instrumental, in solving problems. Hence he names his theory as 'Instrumentalism' or 'Experimentalism'.

Instrumentalism means that, thought is to be considered simply as an instrument for promoting life and not as an organ for reaching a knowledge of things as they are in themselves. Thus instrumentalism holds that reflective thought is always involved in transforming a practical situation. Thinking is the act of trying to achieve an adjustment between man and his environment. In his opinion thinking is not an individual act carried on in private isolation from practical problems but as, a reaction against the idealistic interpretation of Bradley and Bosanquet. He considers that thought is an instrument by which man adapts himself to his environment. When an idea is verified practically and if it produces the expected results, then it is true, otherwise it is false. In the words of Dewey, 'Ideas are tools' and as in the case of all tools, their value resides not in themselves but in their capacity to work. Thus idea is an instrument to a practical act. Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true and is made true by events.

Dewey does not consider any judgment as absolutely true or condemn any judgment as absolutely false. In his opinion, there is a process called 'inquiry', which is one form of mutual adjustment between an organism and its environment. For him, 'truth' is to be defined in terms of 'inquiry' and not vice-versa. He considers truth as the opinion which is considered to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate.

He divides belief into two classes - 'good' and 'bad' and not as 'true' and 'false'. Whether a belief is good or bad, depends upon the consequences that are satisfactory and unsatisfactory. So a belief may be classified as good and bad depending upon its future effects. That means, he judges a belief by its effects and holds that, it has 'Warranted assert ability' which he substitutes for truth, if it has certain kinds of effect. So truth depends upon the future consequences, which is in our power to alter what is required. Thus it enlarges the human power and freedom.

Dewey gives up the classic theory of truth which claims that truth is the ultimate end of mans life and also the theory of utilitarianism which gives importance to desires and pleasures and adds a rigorous element to his procedure of evaluation. For him, desire is only a starting point. It is necessary to engage in critical inquiry before one makes choice. A moral choice will admittedly begin with a person's or society's desire, which must be submitted to the critical power of intelligence. What intelligence does under these circumstances is to consider the consequences of any given form of satisfaction of desire. Therefore value is not simply satisfaction of desire, rather the satisfactory solution of the problem reflected by desire.

In other words, values for Dewey are not wholly relative and subjective, but is something that must be worked out in concrete experience. That means, it must be subject to critical scrutiny in the end. Dewey's theory appears to rest on the assumption that experience gives a person or society, the end towards which life and behaviour should move. In his experimentalism, he believes that apart from pooled and cooperative experience, there is no reliable source of knowledge, wisdom or guides for collective action. So he says, each generation should formulate its own ends in the context of democracy.

Thus Dewey rigorously objects to conceiving any value in an absolute way. In his opinion, values ought to undergo perpetual modification and re-construction in the course of reflective thinking with reference to changing social conditions and increasing scientific knowledge. Motives, character and self are integral in conduct and cannot be ignored. They are subject to growth and modification in the course of reflective experience. Even the ethical values should be proved satisfying in the light of all foreseeable consequences to all persons affected. All ethical values and standards which emerge in a moral situation are organically related and they are subject to gradual growth. From one age to another, it keeps on undergoing constant reconstruction and therefore they can not be definitely stated.

To sum up, pragmatism has got three fundamental characteristics viz., Practicalism, Futurism and Relationism. Practicalism means every idea should be tested only in practice in the actual life. Every idea can be tested to be true or false only with reference to future consequences - is the implication of Futurism. Truth according to pragmatists is not absolute, universal, eternal and unchanging but dynamic, relative and purely temporal. So truth of every idea is relative to certain condition is the concept of Relationism.

Questions to 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. Give an account of William James's theory of Pragmatism.

2. Elucidate John's theory of instrumentalism.

4.7. ASSESSMENT

It is often said that pragmatism makes action the end of life, subordinating thought and rational activity to particular ends of interest and profit. But thought can not always be regarded as a practical drive to action. Because thought has yet another aspect i.e. speculation. Therefore one must realize that an important function of thought is to - speculate about the nature of the Universe and to build a system of metaphysics.

As pragmatists say, it is not always possible for us to verify an idea with reference to future consequences. For example many historical ideas have no future consequences and therefore they can not be verified pragmatically.

In Pragmatism there seems to be a serious logical error and that is called 'Illicit conversion'. Because, it tries to convert the proposition 'What is true is useful' (SAP) into 'What is useful is true'. In other words a doctor may tell, a lie to a patient regarding his health. But however useful that lie may proved to be, yet it is only a lie and not the truth. Therefore it is necessary for us to make a clear distinction between truth and utility. Our motto must be to 'achieve truth' and not to sacrifice it for the sake of utility. We must remember here Gandhiji's statement that 'not only the end must be good but, the means should also be good'. Thus pragmatism is far from being glorification of 'action for its own sake'.

It is often said that pragmatism makes action the end of life, subordinating thought and rational activity to particular ends of interest and profit. This theory may be true and satisfactory to the pragmatists. But with equal certainty, it may not be true to the non-pragmatist. For, to him, it is not satisfactory and has not been verified. So in their opinion, pragmatism cannot be recognised as a serious philosophical doctrine at all.

Pragmatism has no dogmas and no doctrines. It is just a method, not committed to any particular system of philosophy. As it orients thinking around results, fruits and consequences, we can say that pragmatism is close to life. Though it stands for no particular results as a method in practice, its essence is precisely to assure results. Thus pragmatism is not a 'ism' or a 'system', but a logical method of ascertaining the meanings of intellectual concepts by reference to practical consequences. In Pierce's opinion, "it is not a solution or answer to anything; it is not a philosophy but a technique which helps us in finding out solutions to scientific and philosophical problems".

4.8. LET US SUM UP

Pragmatism being the 'Child of America' has C.S. Perce, William James and John Dewey as its important advocates. Main motto of this theory is 'A thing is what it does' and practical consequences are considered to be the criteria of - knowledge, meaning and value. Pragmatic ideas hinted by Pierce in his article, 'How to make our ideas clear' was implemented very much by William James and John Dewey. James gave a new colour to the pragmatic method while determining the meaning of philosophical, theological and religious problems. John Dewey through his 'Instrumentalism' explains that 'Ideas are tools' used to achieve the practical result. His doubt - inquiry investigation aspects are of much importance in solving the philosophical problems. To sum up, practicalism, futurism and Relationism are the most fundamental characteristics of pragmatism.

4.9. KEY WORDS:

Action means practice or practical aspects

Truth of an Idea implies profitability of the Idea to our life

Instrumentalism means that Ideas are tools in solving our problems

4.10 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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4.11. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS.

Answers to Check your Progress I

1. Pragmatism aims to formulate for us a method of choosing our problems which shall eliminate a number of meaningless questions and helps us to see what is worth discussing and what is not. It is a way of approach to a number of diverse but related philosophic doctrines rather than itself a new philosophy. Pragmatism which is considered 'as the child of America' has its most original thoughts from the American philosophers like Charles Pierce, William James, F.C.Shiller, John Dewey and many others. The doctrines of Pragmatism are so healthy, delightful, clear-cut, simple and helpful that it has the salt air of the sea and the Ozone of the mountains.

The term 'Pragmatism' is derived from the Greek word 'Pragma' meaning 'action'. Pierce emphasizes the fact that words derive their meaning from actions of some sort. In his opinion, if a word of an object has no practical effects in it, then it has no meaning at all. For pragmatists the main question of a word is 'Does it work?'. The meaning of electricity consists in 'what it does'. That means its presence is felt not at looking at it, but by its effects. So an 'idea' is true only when it produces the expected result and the meaning of it lies in its observable practical consequences.

2. For pragmatists, its working is practically more important than its theoretical results and the test of it lies in its successful working. Unless it works, it can not be true. So, truth and usefulness are both forms of value for them. According to pragmatists, by their utility we can know that the truth is that which works best and that which works is the truth. Hence truth and best, trueness is in conformity to fact and further they identity the truth with its successful working.

Pierce laid down the thesis that the whole meaning of any object consists in the habit of reactions it establishes or induces (directly or indirectly) in us. He uses the word 'Practical' in its strict etymological sense as referring to 'acts' on par with the word 'Practical'.

According to Schiller, "what are commonly called theoretical consequences are practical in the broader use of the word and that in fact, all consequences are practical sooner or later".

According to James, the function of thought is to guide action and its truth is to be tested by its practical consequences. For him, practical consequences are the criteria of knowledge, meaning and value. In his opinion an idea is true so long as it is profitable to us. Ideas are made true by events and truth is bound up with personal interests which must lead to successful action. In the long run, a true belief must work beneficially just as, untrue one will work destructively. Hence he considers the will to believe, as a relevant one in relation to truth.

Answers to Check your progress II

1. It was William James who practically revived and reformulated the moral doctrine of Kant and gave a specific attention to the Pragmatic method, theory of truth, role and status of human will and the relevance of the will to believe. He believed that no other Philosophical problem has so great and a permanent hold upon the interest of mankind as that of religion. If theological ideas prove to have a value for concrete life, they will be true in the sense of being good for so much. He believes that in morality, metaphysics, religion and science we are justified in testing the truth of a belief by its usefulness. In his opinion, the effective measuring of any philosophical problem can always be brought down to some particular consequences in our future practical experience whether active or passive. The point lying rather in the part that experience must be particular, than in the part that it must be active. James interprets the term 'practical' as measuring concrete and particular rather than as, referring to action.

James defines Pragmatism as the doctrine that, the whole meaning of a conception expresses itself in practical consequences. If the hypothesis of god works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word, it is true. The message of William James' theory of Pragmatism is that - you may believe that there is a god because all you mean by a god is certain adjustments of our attitudes, of hopes and expectations.

According to James, the meaning of conception is to be sought in their practical bearings. That means, the function of thought is to guide action and that truth is to be

tested by the consequences of a belief. Thus for him, practical consequences are the criteria of knowledge, meaning and value. In his opinion, Ideas are true in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relations with the other parts of our experience. An idea is true as long as it is profitable to us. He says Ideas are made true by events and truth happens to idea. Thus as truth is bound up with personal interests, it must lead to successful action and it must work. In the long run, a true belief must work beneficially, just as untrue one will work destructively. Hence he considers, 'the will to believe' as a relevant one in relation to truth.

In James' opinion, truth frequently changes from person to person and from time to time. As truth is subject to constant modification, absolute truth is not at all possible. To banish the abstract from Philosophy as far as possible and to substitute for it the individual concrete in the interests clear thinking has been one of the great and excellent aim of pragmatism.

2. In contrast to William James, Dewey was primarily interested with social reforms and tries to see things as mutually interested in organic wholes that are socially significant. In other words, his expression of Pragmatism was in social realm rather than in the individual realm. He emphasises that thinking is instrumental in solving both the individual and social problems. Hence he names his theory as Instrumentalism or Experimentalism.

Instrumentalism means that, thought is to be considered simply as an instrument for promoting life not as an organ for reaching a knowledge of things as they are in themselves. This theory holds that reflective thought is always involved in transforming a practical situation. He uses the word idea 'as synonymous with' plan of action 'or' intention to act in a certain way. Our beliefs are intellectual tools which serve us in more or less useful ways. In the words of Dewey, Ideas are tools and their value resides not in themselves but in their capacity to work. Thus idea is instrumental to a practical act.

In his opinion, no judgment is neither absolutely true nor absolutely false. By the process of 'inquiry', truth is to be defined and it must be considered agreeable by all who investigate. He considers that the goodness or badness of a belief depends upon the consequences that are satisfactory and unsatisfactory. Thus a belief may be classified as

good and bad depending upon its future effects and truth depends upon the future consequences.

In his opinion, desire being the starting point, engages itself in critical inquiry before one makes choice. The values are formed because of this critical inquiry. So they are formed not just because of the satisfaction of the desire, rather the satisfactory solution to the problem reflected by desire. That means values are something that must be worked out in concrete experience. That is why he calls his theory 'Experimentalism'.

According to this theory, he believes that, each generation should formulate its own ends in their contexts, situations and circumstances. So values in his opinion are not absolute ones but they have to undergo perpetual modification and reconstruction in the course of reflective thinking with reference to changing social conditions. Even the ethical values should be proved satisfying in the light of all foreseeable consequences to all persons affected. Thus in his instrumentalism, Dewey tries to say that all values, beliefs and ideas must keep on undergoing constant reconstruction with reference to the needs of the society.