BLOCK 1

Knowledge is a relation between two beings: the known and the knower. Through this relation the knowing subject (knower) opens oneself to the world. The one who knows leaves oneself and turns to the surrounding world. However, in knowledge one returns to oneself as the known being 'penetrates' into the subject in some way since knowledge takes place not outside, but inside the subject. In knowledge an object makes itself present to the subject. The known 'reproduces' itself in the knower, e.g., when the colour blue is known, the blue of the thing penetrates into the subject. This process takes place immaterially. For we cannot observe the intentional presence of colour in a subject, as the blue colour in a flame is observed. The intentional presence is an unobservable and absolutely private fact. Epistemology is the theory of human knowledge in so far as it contemplates on the origin, process, nature, structure, validity and truth value of human knowledge. This block, consisting of four units, deals with the definition, nature, history of epistemology and various epistemological concepts.

Unit 1 begins with the Definition and Nature of Epistemology. It studies the concept of knowledge along with its traditional definitions and probes into how knowledge is different from belief. One of the important movements that has challenged epistemology is skepticism and it is in the face of this challenge that epistemology has developed. Rationalism and empiricism are the theories that have been put forward to discuss the origin of knowledge.

Unit 2 deals with a Brief History of Epistemology. The discussion has begun from the very ancient time itself, period of Ancient Greek Philosophy, Medieval Epistemology, Rationalism, Empiricism and Synthesis in Kant, Post-Kantian Epistemology, and Phenomenological Epistemology of late19th Century, Realism of 20th century and recent Developments in Epistemology.

Unit 3 studies some of the Basic Concepts and Assumptions. Epistemology is a science which deals with knowledge and hence it has some important concepts like belief, justification, truth, certainty, skepticism and foundationalism which need to be clarified.

Unit 4 highlights the Theories of Truth put forward by various thinkers. This unit begins by disclosing the problem of truth that has been discussed for a long time. Along with this we have the nature and criteria that tells what truth is, the various perspectives on truth, classical theories of truth, and the importance of studying the concept of truth.

This block becomes introductory note to what is to follow in the following units and makes us well equipped with the terminologies that are used in this discipline. Notions like belief and truth which have a highly ambiguous connotation are clearly dealt in these units.

BPY 010   EPISTEMOLOGY (4 CREDITS)

COURSE INTRODUCTION

Epistemology is one of the main branches of systematic philosophy. It is concerned with the nature, sources, and limits of valid and true knowledge. The subject matter of epistemology is knowledge itself. The term 'knowledge' has a number of connotations, but here in philosophy we are concerned with propositional knowledge, that is, knowledge that such-and-such is true. It begins with some of the basic questions like, 'what is knowledge,' 'what are the sources of knowledge?' 'What is the certainty of the knowledge that one has?, etc. All these questions were taken up for discussion from the ancient times and a number of approaches and views have been put forward. It   forms one of the bases of many other disciplines because all other disciplines have something to do with cognition and even the modern computer which uses artificial intelligence in some way resembles the human's capacity to use knowledge. So this field of philosophy is an area of frequent discussion even to this day and many thinkers contribute to its growth.

This course is broadly divided into Four Blocks with 16 units.

Block 1 introduces the term 'epistemology'. This block highlights the definition, nature, brief history of epistemology, including the basic concepts and assumptions and the theories of truth.

Block 2 deals with various sources of belief. Beginning with perception, which is very common, this block deals with hermeneutic or constructivist view of perception, inference and testimony.

Block 3 is on the Methods and Justification of Knowledge. Other subtopics in this block are Metaphysical Method of Aristotle and Aquinas, Foundationalism and Coherentism, Introducing some complexity, and Popperian Method and Naturalized Epistemology.

Block 4 probes into the Knowing Subject. The block brings to light the various views like the mirroring mind, revolt against the mirroring mind, not mirrors but maps, critical appraisal and synthesis contributed by various philosophers.

These various topics form the core of Epistemology and make a detailed study of one of the important branches of Philosophy

UNIT 1 DEFINITION AND NATURE OF EPISTEMOLOGY

Contents

1.0. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit is to introduce you to epistemology and to determine its nature and scope. We will explore what it means to say that someone knows, or fails to know something and how much do we, or can we know. We will see both an etymological and traditional definition of knowledge, together with a general understanding of the term 'to know'. We shall also briefly cover different attitudes with regard to our ability to know reality. Finally, we will conclude with the importance of epistemology in human life.

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

- To give a definition of knowledge;
- To differentiate between knowledge and belief;
- To know the role of scepticism as an adversary to knowledge;
- To know the role of reason and the senses in acquiring knowledge;

- To know the scope of epistemology;

- To know the importance of epistemology in comprehending the world we live in.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Aristotle begins his work *Metaphysics* with the observation 'All men by nature desire 'to know.' Kant raises the question 'What can I know?' The drive to know is fundamental to being human. Epistemology tries to fulfil this desire. Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature, origin and scope of knowledge. Epistemology focuses on our means of acquiring knowledge and how we can differentiate between truth and falsehood. The term 'epistemology' was coined by the Scottish Philosopher James Fredrick Ferrier (1808-64). It comes from the Greek word 'episteme' (knowledge) and 'logos' (theory or science).

It addresses the following questions:

What is knowledge?

What can we know?

How can we know it?

How is knowledge acquired?

Can knowledge be certain?

Is there a distinction between knowledge and belief?

What is the scope of knowledge?

Why do we believe certain claims and not others?

1.2. EXPLAINING THE CONCEPT OF KNOWLEDGE

Before we go into the traditional definition of knowledge we should know what 'to know' means. An analysis of the concept of knowledge has to be done to see how this term is used in everyday language. Expressions such as 'know that,' 'know how,' 'know why,' 'know him,' 'know where,' and 'know whether,' needed to be examined in detail. In the English language the word 'knowledge' is used in a variety of senses. It is used in the sense of 'being acquainted with' or 'being familiar with'. We commonly speak of 'knowing' a person, place or a thing in this sense. We also use it in the sense of 'being aware' of something. Sometimes it is used as an

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expression of 'psychological conviction'. Philosophers give multiple senses of knowledge such as: i. 'knowing that,' ii. 'Knowing which,' iii. 'Knowing how,' iv. 'Knowing what,' v. 'knowing what it is like.' Plato, used the term *techne or* skill for 'knowing how' (to do something), and the term *episteme* for a more forceful kind of knowledge in which claims can be true or false. There is a difference between 'knowing that' and 'knowing how'. 'Know how' is used to refer to a kind of skill or ability, such as knowing how to swim. Here even if one knows what it is, he may not be able to explain the rules or laws of a skill. However, the expression, 'know that,' in contrast, seems to denote the possession of a specific piece of information, and the person who has knowledge of this sort generally is able to convey this knowledge to others. Philosophers are mainly concerned with 'knowing that' something is the case and it is in this sense of the word that a claim is either true or false. This meaning of 'to know' is called 'propositional knowledge'. Epistemologists from ancient Greeks to the present have focused on propositional knowledge—that is, the 'knowing that' kind of knowledge. Propositional knowledge encompasses ordinary perceptual knowledge, scientific knowledge, geographical knowledge, ethical knowledge, mathematical knowledge, religious knowledge, self-knowledge, and knowledge about any field of study whatever.

A proposition is a declarative sentence which purports to describe a fact or a state of affairs, such as 'Dogs are mammals,' '2+2=7.' A proposition may be true or false; that is, it need not actually express a fact. Propositional knowledge, then, can be called 'knowing-that.' Statements of propositional knowledge are properly expressed using 'that'-clauses, such as 'He knows that Delhi is in India.' Not all sentences are propositions. For example, 'what is the time?' This sentence is not a proposition because one cannot ask whether what the sentence expresses is true. Propositions can be doubted and believed. They are to be either true or false. Hence, they can be asserted or denied and such an assertion or denial is called a judgment. On this level the question of truth and certitude arises and the question of knowledge is posed.

1.3. TRADITIONAL DEFINITION OF KNOWLEDGE

Plato suggested that to 'know' something is to believe it and to provide an adequate account of its essential features. Knowledge is therefore belief plus understanding. The definition is based on Plato's *Theaetetus*, and holds that there are three essential components of knowledge. They

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are: *justification, truth and belief.* Hence, propositional knowledge is 'justified true belief'. One implication of this definition is that just because one believes something and it turns out to be true, it does not mean that one 'knew' it, because belief lacks justification.

BELIEF

Beliefs crowd our minds. We have various types of beliefs like perceptual, scientific, moral, political, and theological beliefs. Belief is defined as a conviction of the truth of a proposition without its verification. There are two different meanings of belief that must be distinguished. In the first sense it is to 'believe in', that is 'to trust'. I might believe in my cousin while lending a loan. That is I trust that he will pay it back. Often, statements of 'belief' in this sense predict that something will prove to be useful or successful in some sense. In the second sense, to believe something means to think that it is true. To believe P is to believe that P is the case. Here the cognitive content is held as true. For example, to believe that the sky is blue is to think that the proposition 'The sky is blue' is true. It is this sort of belief that is discussed with regard to knowledge.

However, merely true belief is not sufficient for knowledge. Many true beliefs obviously do not qualify for knowledge. If you believe that your uncle will come to see you this evening and this turns out to be true, it does not become knowledge. The belief turned out to be true coincidentally but lacked supporting reasons. If one has to have knowledge of something one has to have true justified belief about it. Knowledge is distinct from belief and opinion. We can be mistaken about our beliefs but in knowledge there is no place for falsehood. With regard to opinion there is room for falsehood, as it is a hesitant assent. For something to count as knowledge, it must be true. Hence, mere belief is not sufficient for knowledge, because many beliefs turn out to be false. Hence, a second condition for knowledge is truth, that is, 'We know that P only if P is True.'

TRUTH

As we saw above, knowledge requires belief but not all beliefs constitute knowledge because sometimes we are mistaken in what we believe. In short, some of our beliefs are true and some

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are false. In the process of acquiring knowledge we get rid of false beliefs and increase the number of our true beliefs. The purpose of belief in acquiring knowledge is to describe reality as it is. However, some of our beliefs fail to do this role of representing the world accurately and turn out to be false and those that represent the world accurately are true or factual. Here we are assuming an objective truth. Hence it is possible for beliefs to match or fail to match with reality. Truth is a condition of knowledge and if belief fails to be true then it cannot constitute knowledge. However, merely belief and truth do not as yet constitute knowledge. For that we need one more criterion to be involved, that is, justification

JUSTIFICATION

Merely true belief does not constitute knowledge. The satisfaction of our belief condition has to be appropriately related to the satisfaction of the truth condition. Genuine knowledge requires that a knower has an adequate indication that a believed proposition is true. Hence, only those true beliefs that are arrived in a right way constitute knowledge. The right way is a way of *sound reasoning and solid evidence* to acquire knowledge. A lucky guess, even if it turns out to be right on certain occasions, cannot constitute knowledge. A belief is justified if it is based on sound reasoning and rock-solid evidence. This kind of justification is called epistemic justification. The justification of belief does not mean that knowledge requires absolute certainty. Such a demand would lead to absolute scepticism.

The requirement of the condition of justification is to ensure that knowledge is based on solid evidence rather than on luck or misinformation. It is interesting to note that an unjustified belief can be true because of luck, but a justified belief can be false because of human fallibility. For example, the astronomers before Copernicus were justified in holding their geocentric model of the universe even though it was false. The way the world actually is need not agree with what our best evidence indicates. This goes to show that truth and justification are two independent conditions of belief. True belief does not tell us whether it is justified or not, similarly a justified belief does not tell us whether it is true or false. However, a justified belief is more likely to be true than to be false.

In summary, what we see in these conditions is that thought passes from belief to knowledge. One first believes and only then arrives at knowledge. So only when belief is confirmed by

justification can it become knowledge. Therefore, for a belief to become knowledge it must correspond to reality and must be derived from valid evidence and argumentation.

It is appropriate to end this section with a reference to the 'the Gettier problem.' In 1963, Edmund Gettier in a short article criticised Plato's definition of knowledge by pointing out situations in which a believer has a true belief justified to a reasonable degree, but not to a certainty, and yet in the situations in question, everyone would agree that the believer does not have knowledge. After this article some epistemologists revised the traditional definition of knowledge and added a fourth condition. They held that the three conditions are not sufficient for knowledge and a fourth condition needed to be added, namely, 'no false beliefs be essentially involved in the reasoning that led to the belief'. However, for our introductory purposes, we may define knowledge for the most part as 'justified true belief'.

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 an epistemological understanding different from the common understanding of the term 'to know'?

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2) How does belief become knowledge?

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1.4. THE ROLE OF THE INTELLECT AND THE SENSES IN HUMAN KNOWING

In the previous section we defined what knowledge is etymologically and traditionally. It is not enough to know what knowledge is by merely defining it. One must know how it arises, that is, what are its sources? Knowing the origin of knowledge will help us determine the nature of knowledge. Accordingly, in this section we will study the origin of knowledge. There are various sources of knowledge like perception, memory, inference, testimony, authority, intuition, etc. Some schools in Western philosophy did not believe that knowledge is possible at all. They are the 'skeptics.' But the two main schools which believe that knowledge is possible are the 'rationalists' [Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz] and the 'empiricists' [Locke, Berkeley and Hume].

SKEPTICISM

It is not only the question, 'What is knowledge?' that disturbed the human mind but also how far human knowledge can be extended. How much do we know or can we know? The very possibility of knowledge confronts every epistemologist. The problem is, 'Is genuine knowledge attainable at all?' Some philosophers held the position that humans can know everything or every truth about reality, while others held that humans can know nothing. Some rejected the possibility for knowledge on the grounds that humans are finite beings and as they are limited, their knowledge is also limited. Furthermore, conflicting views, arguments and counter arguments in philosophy led some to skepticism. Skepticism is a philosophical position which holds that the possibility of knowledge is limited either because of the limitations of the mind (of understanding reality) or because of the inaccessibility of its objects (e.g., metaphysical realities). Pyrrho founded the Skeptic school and invited people to suspend judgment in order to obtain 'peace of mind.' The term 'skepticism' is derived from the Greek word '*skeptomai*' meaning 'to look carefully,' 'to doubt,' to examine.

There are two types of skeptics: absolute skeptics and relative (or methodical) skeptics. Absolute skeptics claim that no knowledge is possible at all. However, this claim itself can be seen to be self-contradictory. For how can one *know* for sure that one cannot know anything? Furthermore, why should one believe this claim (that knowledge is not possible), if no knowledge claim is to be believed at all? Relative (or methodical) skepticism, however, can play a useful role because it cautions us about the errors that may creep into common sense

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knowledge. In modern times Descartes used it as a method to arrive at the undeniable truth of *cogito ergo sum*. Descartes' methodical or tentative skepticism is based upon the fact that our senses can deceive us, and as a result, some of our beliefs may be false. But to possess justified belief we must be able to distinguish truth from falsity. In doing this he came upon the sure foundation of knowledge that at least, 'I think, therefore I am'. From this, he went on to establish many more knowledge claims of which he was certain. Later, however, Hume challenged these certain assumptions about the self, substance and causality, showing that there is no self nor substance that exists, and that the laws of causality are based on habitual expectation. Kant's critical epistemology too shows the limits of knowledge through the distinction between the *phenomenal* and the *noumenal* world. The phenomenal world is the knowable world, while the *noumenal* world is the unknowable world. A similar position is held by logical positivists who held that what is knowable [verifiable] is meaningful, and that what is unknowable [unverifiable] is meaningless. Skepticism is not to be out rightly rejected. Skepticism should be used as a purificatory process in obtaining knowledge.

However, very few philosophers are absolute skeptics. While some are methodological skeptics, they often land into two primary camps, those who believe that knowledge is based more upon what the mind and its faculties give us (the rationalists) and those who believe that knowledge is based more upon what the senses and their powers reveal to us [the empiricists]. We shall briefly outline these two positions as alternatives to skepticism.

RATIONALISM

Rationalism is the theory which maintains that valid knowledge has its origin in reason alone. Etymologically, the word is derived from the Latin noun *ratio* meaning reason. Philosophers who stress the role of reason as opposed to the senses in the acquisition of knowledge are called rationalists. According to the rationalists our sense experiences are always elusive. They deceive us on many occasions because the objects given to the senses are always changing and fleeting. If we are deceived on some occasion then there is no guarantee that we cannot be deceived on other occasions. Remember the famous example from Indian philosophy of mistaking the rope for the snake. Hence, truth learned from sense perception cannot be relied upon, and is thus open to correction. Consequently, such truths cannot be taken as universal and necessary.

Philosophical knowledge cannot be based on such propositions. Rather, knowledge needs propositions which are universal, necessary and absolutely valid.

Thus, one major epistemological debate concerning the sources of knowledge is the role of sense experience in our acquisition of knowledge. Common sense holds that all our knowledge is gained through sense perception. You see things, touch them, smell some of them, you hear about some of them and you say you know the particular thing through these senses. However, all knowledge is not derived from *sense experience*. Some knowledge is derived from *reason*. Epistemologists call these two types of knowledge *a posterior* and *a priori* respectively. The difference between propositions of these two types are, empirical propositions can be knowable but not believable, like the a priori propositions of mathematics, for example, '2+2 =4.' Here one need not engage in any factual or empirical inquiry in order to obtain this knowledge. Secondly, there is a difference in our mode of establishing them. With regard to *a priori* proposition, once we grasp the truth of it, we do not search for further evidence. But with regard to empirical propositions we need more evidence to establish their truth. We learn empirical generalizations and validate them through induction. For example, 'All crows are black'. The more black crows we observe, the more strongly the truth of an empirical proposition will be established. Our confidence in the truth of an empirical generalization is increased by the addition of further instances of it. Here mere understanding of the words is not enough. Rather, knowledge can be obtained only through certain kinds of experience.

However, one must not forget that the rationalist does not deny the possibility of getting knowledge from experience. His basic objection is that knowledge obtained *a posteriori* (that is, from or after experience) is not free from error or doubt. Therefore, it cannot give us valid judgments. In brief, *a posteriori* knowledge cannot give us true knowledge of reality. As soon as philosophy rejects the common sense view or the popular view of the universe, rationalistic theories of knowledge arise. Some rationalists distrusted, suspected the senses as unreliable and consequently they either diminished or dismissed the role of senses in human knowing. While others conceded that sensory experience is in some sense necessary for the development of knowledge but not sufficient. All rationalists maintained the possibility of *a priori* knowledge, with reason being superior to the senses in obtaining knowledge. They considered the senses as an occasion for the rise of an innate idea in the consciousness but never the cause of it. Rationalist held that 'ideas' are innate, that is, inborn. Scientific knowledge cannot come from

the senses, because universality and necessity are essential to it. Thus, knowledge according to them is the product of understanding. They held that reason is the faculty of man which evolves certain principles and notions from within, and not from experience. These are products of pure thought and so *a priori*, that is, given independently of and prior to all external experience. Rationalists considered these principles to be general conditions and concepts of knowledge, and therefore universal. Every human mind is equipped with these general conditions and concepts, and so these are necessarily valid. Their validity cannot be doubted and reasonably contradicted.

EMPIRICISM

This is a doctrine named after Sextus Empiricus [C200 AD], who advocated its main principles. It is a view that all knowledge and all understanding have their roots in experience—particularly in the experience we obtain through the senses. It is in sharp contrast to rationalism. Empiricists reject *a priori* possibilities of knowledge, such as the knowledge claim that, 'every event has a cause.' Instead, they held the view that, 'there is nothing in the intellect that was not first in the senses.' Hence, prior to experience, the mind was a blank slate, and whatever ideas we have are obtained from our contact with nature. Thus, obtaining factual knowledge by *a priori* reasoning is impossible. Experience gives us factual knowledge but not logically certain knowledge. Ideas are received through sensation and reflection. Sensations give us ideas of colours, tastes, smells, etc., whereas reflection gives us information with regard to the inner states of mind. All our knowledge can be traced back to experience.

Empiricism as theory became popular with the British philosopher John Locke who is considered the father of empiricism. He began by rejecting the Cartesian theory of innate ideas. He declared that the mind at birth is a 'tabula rasa', that is to say a clean slate. He held that if ever there were innate ideas in the mind, then every mind would have been conscious of them. But we find that children, idiots and uneducated people have no idea about such ideas. According to him it makes no sense to say that someone could have a thought without having access to its contents. Hence, it is wrong to say that certain principles are present in the mind from birth.

After Locke another British empiricist was David Hume for whom all knowledge is constituted by sense impressions. We can go no further than sensations. He distinguished between impressions and ideas and held that ideas are dependent on the former. It is from these

impressions that all knowledge is obtained. Hume's theory of impression leads to skepticism which is the direct outcome of Locke's empiricism. This is the reason why the Logical Positivists of the 'Vienna Circle' claimed Hume as one of their forerunners. This is because Hume's extreme empiricism questioned the meaningfulness of concepts which do not have a foundation in experience.

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 skepticism?

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2)   Explain the controversy between rationalism and empiricism.

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1.5. THE SCOPE OF EPISTEMOLOGY

Epistemology illustrates all potential domains of knowledge, whether it be religious, political, mathematical, logic, scientific, ethical, or psychological. Here we deal with the scope of epistemology in relation to metaphysics, logic, ethics, psychology and sociology.
Speculative philosophy embraces metaphysics and epistemology as its two branches. Metaphysics studies what entities exist whereas epistemology studies what knowledge is and

how it is possible. There has been controversy with regard to the priority of epistemology over metaphysics. Descartes, Locke and Kant held that epistemology is prior to metaphysics because investigation of the nature and limits of knowledge is necessary for metaphysical speculations regarding the nature of ultimate reality. Whereas Spinoza and Hegel have first attacked metaphysical problems and thought of knowledge to be in conformity with their metaphysical conclusions. Whatever the controversy, epistemology and metaphysics are logically interdependent.

Secondly, we see scope of epistemology in the field of logic. Logic is the formal science of the principles governing valid reasoning whereas epistemology is a philosophical science of the nature of knowledge. For example, whether a given process of reasoning is valid or not is a logical question, but the inquiry into the nature of validity is an epistemological question.

Bertrand Russell wrote, 'the two great engines in the progress of human society are the desire to *understand* the world and to *improve* it.' These words of Russell seem very appropriate in today's world. We find that epistemology studies whether a belief is true or false, reasonable or unreasonable, justified or unjustified. In epistemology cognitive acts of human beings are evaluated and general principles are laid down for epistemic evaluations. A similar language is used in ethics. Ethics inquires into the nature of rightness and appropriateness of human conduct and lays down general principles for good human behaviour. Hence, it evaluates moral or immoral, right or wrong actions, etc. There are various areas in which one can explore similarities and differences between ethics and epistemology. Epistemology and ethics help us to understand and improve the world by giving us guiding principles in understanding the world and improving it.

When it comes to the relation between epistemology and psychology, a question arises in the mind, 'Where does the first end and the second begin?' However, in modern times psychology is establishing its independence. Psychology is a study of the mind and its processes, and how these work. Hence, psychologists study phenomena such as perception, cognition, emotion, etc. The subject matter of psychology is *how* minds work, whereas epistemology deals with *what* the mind works on. However, the relation between the two is an intimate one because the subject matter of psychology (that is, the cognitive processes of perception, memory, and imagination) are the very processes involved, although in a different context, in the subject matter of epistemology. Psychology is an investigation into all mental states (including the subconscious),

whereas epistemology investigates only cognitive states in relation to their cognitive meaning. In spite of partial differences we find a partial identity of the subject matter, which makes them interdependent sciences.

Similarly, epistemology is related to sociology. In fact, there is a special field in sociology called the 'sociology of knowledge,' in which the social conditions which lead to knowledge claims are studied. However, while sociology deals with these larger conditions of the social origins of knowledge, epistemology is more concerned with the cognitive status (that is, the validity) of the actual claims themselves.

1.6. IMPORTANCE OF EPISTEMOLOGY

We quoted Aristotle at the beginning of this Unit saying, 'All men by their nature desire to know.' This is because people understand the importance and power of knowledge in human life. We know from very ancient times human beings have tried to *know* themselves and even the many natural and supernatural forces which confront them. Very often, the common person takes for granted that what he or she perceives to be true is true. However, closer examination often shows that it is not so. Epistemology makes us aware of the power of the human mind and the limits of the human mind. It challenges the way we think.

Human beings desire to know the world and our place in it. This search for knowledge is not merely for an academic requirement or a drive for formal correctness. Rather this search is carried out of our existential concern to express ourselves. When we ask, 'What can I know?', we simultaneously ask, 'What is real'? Knowing the reality of the world and ourselves helps to achieve different goals of life and to make life beautiful. In epistemology our primary aim is to find truth which frees us from falsehood. Therefore, it exhorts us to pursue truth thoughtfully by giving us principles by which we may accept something as true or reject it as false. It assists us to sift between truth and falsehood. In a word, the 'uncovering of being' takes place. And such true knowledge is necessary for wisdom. Thus, as Vincent G. Potter says, 'To be wise does not require that we know everything about everything, but that we know the place of things relative to each other and to ourselves. It is to know what life as a whole is about.' Accordingly, we can say epistemology assists human beings in realizing the Socratic maxim, 'Know Thyself.'

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Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) What is the scope of epistemology?

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2) Write your reflections on the importance of epistemology.

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1.7. LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we have attempted to give a preliminary idea of epistemology by giving etymological and traditional definitions. By discussing the traditional definition at length we have endeavoured to explain how the process of knowing takes place and made ourselves aware that it is not as easy as it ordinarily seems to us. We have concluded that to arrive at true knowledge we need justified true belief. But the definition alone will not give us an adequate idea of knowledge. That is why we have paid a great deal of attention to the two primary sources of knowledge, reason and the senses. It is the belief that we can gain valid knowledge through these two primary sources which have led human beings to resist an entirely sceptical attitude towards the process of knowledge.

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The field of knowledge is related to various disciplines such as metaphysics, logic, ethics, psychology and sociology. We have seen similarities and differences in approach between epistemology and these allied fields of study. Finally, we examined a few important reasons why the study of epistemology is useful for human life.

1.8. KEY WORDS

Epistemology: from Gk. episteme 'knowledge,' from epistanai, 'to stand upon', understand: epi- upon + histanai, to stand, +logy. Hence, epistemology is the study of the nature, sources and limits of knowledge. 'Logos' is the root of all terms ending in '-ology'– such as psychology, anthropology – and of 'logic,' and has many other related meanings.

Knowledge: knowledge is justified true belief. To know something is to believe it and to justify it or give an adequate account of it to prove that it is true.

Skepticism: The term 'skepticism' is derived from the Greek word '*skeptomai'* meaning 'to look carefully' 'to doubt,' 'to examine'.

A priori: is knowledge gained or justified by reason alone, without the direct or indirect influence of any particular experience. In short, it is a knowledge that does not depend on experience.

A posteriori: knowledge that comes 'posterior to,' or 'after,' sense experience, although the term does not really refer to 'before' or 'after'. Hence, it is knowledge, the attainment or justification of which requires reference to experience.

Innate idea: inborn ideas which are not product of human experience. This theory is proposed by the rationalists.

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1.10. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress I

1. In everyday language we use expressions such as 'know that,' 'know how,' etc. In the English language it is used in the sense of 'being acquainted with' or 'being familiar with'. We commonly speak of 'knowing' a person, place or a thing in this sense. We also use it in the sense of 'being aware' of something. Sometimes it is used as an expression of 'psychological conviction'. There is a difference between 'know that' and 'know how'. 'Know how' is used to refer to a kind of skill or ability, such as knowing how to swim. Here even if one knows what it is he or she may not be able to explain the rules or laws of a skill. Hence, commonly we use the term 'to know' in above mentioned senses. However, the expression, 'know that,' in contrast, seems to denote the possession of specific pieces of information, and the person who has knowledge of this sort generally is able to convey this knowledge to others. Philosophers are concerned with 'knowing that' something is the case and it is in this sense of the word that a claim is held to be either true or false. And this meaning of 'to know' is called propositional knowledge. Epistemologists from ancient Greeks to the present have focused on the validity (or truth function) of propositional knowledge—that is, the 'knowing that' kind of knowledge.

2. Belief is defined as a conviction of the truth of a proposition without its verification. There are two different meanings of belief that must be distinguished. In the first sense it is 'believe in', that is 'to trust'. In the second sense to believe something means to affirm that it is true. That is,

to believe P is to believe that P is the case. Here the cognitive content is held as true. However, merely true belief is not sufficient for knowledge. Many true beliefs obviously do not qualify for knowledge. If one has to have knowledge of something, one has to have true justified belief about it. Hence, mere belief is not sufficient for knowledge because many beliefs are false. Hence, a second condition for knowledge is 'truth', that is, 'We know that P only if P is True.' Truth is a condition of knowledge and if a belief fails to be true then it cannot constitute knowledge. Furthermore (besides belief and truth), knowledge needs a third criterion to be fulfilled, namely, justification. Much of epistemology is concerned with how true beliefs might be properly justified or validated. In a nut shell, what we see in these conditions is that thought passes from belief to knowledge. One first believes and only then can one arrive at knowledge (via truth and justification). Only when a belief is confirmed or justified and found to be true can one say that one knows something for sure. Therefore, for a belief to become knowledge it must correspond to reality (be true) and must be derived from valid evidence (be justified or proved).

Check Your Progress II

1. The Skepticism is a philosophical position which holds that the possibility of knowledge is limited either because of the limitations of the mind, that is every mind has of understanding reality or because the inaccessibility of its objects, like the metaphysical realities. It is related to questioning attitude of human beings. It held this position because of the diversity of contradictory views held in philosophy. And these diverse views raise serious doubt whether humans have ability to reach an objective universal truth. Secondly, that each mind has its way of understanding reality and hence no one is qualified to prove that my view is better or correct than the view of the other. Thirdly, we make mistakes and yet we think that we are right. However, there is a possibility that we are wrong all the time.

2. Rationalism is the theory which maintains that valid knowledge has its origin in reason alone. According to rationalists our sense experiences are always elusive. They deceive us on many occasions because the objects given to the senses are always changing and fleeting. Hence, truth learned from sense perception cannot be relied upon and is open to correction. Consequently, such truths cannot be taken as universal and necessary. Philosophical knowledge cannot be based

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on such propositions and needs propositions which are universal, necessary and absolutely valid. Hence, they believe in *a priori* knowledge. Rationalist held that 'ideas' are innate, that is, inborn. Thus, knowledge according to them is the product of understanding. Empiricism, on the other hand, is the view that all knowledge and all understanding have their roots in experience— particularly in the experience we obtain through our senses. Empiricists reject the *a priori* possibility of knowledge. They hold the view that, 'there is nothing in the intellect that was not first in the senses.' Hence, prior to experience the mind was like a blank slate and whatever ideas we have are obtained from our contact with nature. Thus, obtaining factual knowledge by *a priori* reasoning is impossible. Experience gives us factual knowledge which *a priori* knowledge cannot gives us, because *a priori* knowledge does not refer to anything in reality. This is the conflict between rationalism and empiricism.

Check Your Progress III

1. Speculative philosophy embraces metaphysics and epistemology as its two branches. Metaphysics studies what entities exist whereas epistemology studies what knowledge is and how it is possible. Despite the controversies with regard to their priority, epistemology and metaphysics are logically interdependent. Similarly, logic sees whether reasoning is valid or not (the formal structure of inquiry) and epistemology inquires into the content of its validity (the matter to be inquired into). The scope of epistemology includes ethics too. In epistemology cognitive acts of human beings are evaluated and general principles are laid down for epistemic evaluations. Similarly ethics inquires into the nature of rightness and the appropriateness of human conduct and lays down general principles for good human behaviour. The relation between psychology and epistemology is an intimate one because the subject matter of psychology (cognitive processes of perception, memory, and imagination) are the very processes, although in a different context, which are central to the subject matter of epistemology. Psychology is an investigation into all mental states, whereas epistemology investigates only cognitive states and tries to establish their cognitive truth and meaning. Finally, while the sociology of knowledge is concerned about the social processes which lead us to believe certain claims ('how' we derive this knowledge), epistemology is more concerned with the truth value of these claims (whether 'what' we believe is true or false).

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2. Epistemology makes us aware of the power and the limits of the human mind. It challenges the way we think. Human beings are able to perform verificationary processes in order to distinguish between true and false claims. Epistemology gives us guidelines (like the guidelines of ethics) on how one should acquire true beliefs and avoid false beliefs. Thus, it helps us to uncover truth which frees us from falsehood. It helps us to know the reality of the world, human reality and transcendental truths. Therefore, it exhorts us to pursue truth thoughtfully by giving us principles about when we ought to accept something as true. Accordingly, we can say epistemology assists human beings in realizing the Socratic maxim, 'Know Thyself.'

UNIT 2   **HISTORY OF EPISTEMOLOGY**

Contents

2.0. Objectives

In this unit we study the history of Western Epistemology, divided it into seven periods. Each period is described with its own special contexts and characteristics. Going through these periods, we shall see how Epistemology, this important branch and foundational treatise of philosophy developed from the 5th century BC up to our present day.

Thus we learn:

*   How the theories of knowledge propounded by the great ancient Greek   philosophers, like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle to counteract the skepticism of the time and how it took a turn to empiricism in Epicurus and the Stoics and   ended up in a sort of mysticism in the Neo-Platonists.

*   Growth and development of epistemology in the medieval period, going into the thought of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and William Ockam. We also see how during this period the three important theories of the Universals, viz., Realism, Conceptualism and Nominalism, came into existence

* The progress of epistemology in the 17th century; the opposition between Continental Rationalism and British Empiricism; the great contribution of Emmanuel Kant who made a synthesis of both.

* The Idealist epistemology of Fichte and Hegel, characteristic of the Post-Kantian period.

* Late 19th century Phenomenological epistemology, associated with existentialism - originally a reaction against the idealism of Hegel.

* The 20th century swing from Idealism to Realism in epistemology.

* The recent developments in epistemology, viz., virtue epistemology and post-modernist epistemology that challenges the traditional epistemology.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Epistemology's beginning in the Western philosophy can be traced back to the 5th century BC when a group of people called Sophists appeared in Athens. They were doubtful about the possibility of any knowledge at all. It is in the context of counteracting to the skepticism of the Sophists and skepticism in general, the ancient Greek philosophers, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle asserted the possibility of knowledge with their different theories of knowledge. This was the beginning of this important branch of philosophy. The emergence of science during renaissance and the disputes that it produced led again to certain skepticism about claims to knowledge and to the search for a method, like that of science for epistemology. Thus the Rationalists of the 17th century attempted to show that the primary truths that constituted certainty of knowledge are related to other self-evident truths existing in mind. Empiricists of the time opposed this, saying that all knowledge begins with sensible experience and arises out of it. Emmanuel Kant synthesized these opposing views. Post-Kantian epistemology of Idealism followed, in reaction to which came the phenomenological epistemology in late 19th century leading to the 20th century Realism and Logical Positivism. This survey of the history of epistemology ends with the recent developments of Virtue Epistemology and the Post-Modernist epistemology.

2.2 PERIOD OF ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHY

In ancient times the Greek Sophists raised skeptical consideration about the possibility of knowledge: Gorgias claimed that nothing exists; and even if it existed, we could not know it and communicate it; Protagoras asserted complete subjectivism regarding knowledge.

Socrates (c 470 BC -399 BC**)**

Reacting to the skepticism of the time, Socrates argued that knowledge was attainable by his method, called 'Socratic irony' or '*maieutic* method' helping one to remember what one already knows, the knowledge of Forms or Universals which is already in one's mind.

Plato (429-348)

Arguing negatively that knowledge cannot be mere sensations, Plato follows his master Socrates' theory that knowledge is nothing but a remembering of Forms or Universals, we have contemplated before our birth and bringing it to light what was hidden in the recesses of our minds; birth being accompanied by forgetfulness. Reacting to the complete subjectivism of the sophists, Plato came to hold that reality cannot be changing or imperfect and that it must therefore consist in a world of 'Forms' or 'Ideas' independent of the sensible world. Here knowledge consists in apprehension of Forms or Ideas which never change. Thus Plato also broke with the materialistic theories of knowledge, as developed by some of the Pre-Socratics.

Aristotle (384-322 BC**)**

Like Plato, Aristotle held that knowledge is concerned with the Universals – with Forms – any knowledge which is expressible in judgment must consist of an apprehension of an essential connection between Forms. To know something about a thing is to be able to subsume it under species and genus and thus to know what is essential to it. Insofar as we can be said to know particular things, we know them as instances of a Universal; we know the Universal in the particular. Aristotle thus rejects the Platonic notions of a world of separate Universals or Forms. Knowledge depends ultimately on the soul's or mind's reception of the Forms of things. The soul itself is not a distinct spiritual entity but the set of faculties possessed by the body.

Aristotle's preoccupations with epistemology appear in his theory of science; in his theory of the mind and its faculties. According to him, to know the essence of a thing is to give the cause of it, which involves the demonstration of its essence from first principles, the first principles themselves can be known only by a form of intuition. Principles such as law of contradiction, which are implied in all demonstrations, can be proved by dialectical argument.

Epicurus (341- 270 BC)

He was an empiricist. All knowledge resulted from contact with atoms of which the soul is composed from outside. Mass stimulation of the sense organs results in a presentation or appearance (*phantasma*) to the soul. Sense experience occurs when incoming presentation is

fitted to a general conception. This is the nearest thing to judgment, and this is the most usual source of error.

Stoics (c 300 BC)

Stoics (Zeno - founder of the school, Sextus Empiricus and Chrysippus) were empiricists to a large extent. Like Atomists of the time, Stoics thought things make impression on the soul, although they differed from atomists over which physical process were involved whenever an impression is received in the soul, the soul has to register it by a process of assent, but there cannot be knowledge until there is apprehension, until the soul is gripped by the impression.

Neo-Platonists

In the third century Platonism was revived in its more mystical aspects by **Plotinus** (205-270 AD). The soul, as opposed to the body, is given prominence, so that perception and knowledge are made a function of the soul, the main function being contemplation of the Forms; the body and its impressions are merely instruments for the soul to use.

2.3. MEDIEVAL EPISTEMOLOGY

Medieval thinkers were primarily concerned with issues in metaphysics, logic and natural theology; less with epistemological topics. However, Augustine, Aquinas and Ockham were three thinkers for whom epistemological questions were of interest and important.

Augustine (354-430 A.D).

Augustine provided the classic refutation of skepticism with his famous '*Si fallor, sum*' argument. Even a skeptic is bound to admit that he is certain of some truths – his own existence being one of these. After all, 'even if I am in error, I exist'. If you did not exist, you could not be deceived!

Augustine's epistemology gave prominence to soul by stating that the soul produces impressions when the body is stimulated. Experience involves inference, as the soul subsumes its impressions under concepts. To have concepts is to be aware of Forms. Forms or Universals have real existence in the mind of God, and all knowledge, even sense knowledge involved awareness of God. Augustine then brings in the theory of 'divine illuminationism' to solve the problem of how

our mind, finite, changing and fallible is able to attain necessary and eternal truths, by God illumining our minds.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

Aquinas closely followed Aristotle's account of scientific knowledge. For Thomas, sensation is the act of the total human composite, body and soul and not (as Augustine) an act of the soul using the body. Next, there are no innate ideas to be found in man: all his ideas come to him through the senses, though he may develop and reason about them until he reaches conclusions that go beyond the immediate evidence of his sense.

Sensation gives us knowledge of particulars, not of universals. In and through this particular, material sense impression man apprehends the Universal and the abstract. Obviously the intellect has to actively, in someway, render the sensible species intelligible. The active intellect, which is not a part of the intellect, much less a second intellect in man, does this function. It illumines the phantasm and abstracts the universal element, producing the impressed species on our passive intellect. Thus, Aquinas built a masterly synthesis as regards the Universals by Realism and responded to the age-old objections of Nominalism (Universals were mere names) and Conceptualism (in so far universal concepts are formed by abstraction and through these concepts we conceive what is objectively in the thing, though we do not conceive it as it is in the thing; Universals existed only as concepts in the mind)

William Ockham (c1290/1300-1349) makes an interesting break with Aquinas' conception of knowledge. For him, there is no intermediary such as a phantasma or form, or sensible species of the perceived object in perception of an external physical object. One is knowing the singular rather than the Universal. (Ockam was a Nominalist insofar as Universals were mere 'names' which signify individual things and stand for them in propositions) One intellectually apprehends the individual material existent directly, and not by having to pass by way of the Universal. This is empiricism, but it cannot be put on the same plane as British empiricism.

Check Your Progress I

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

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

1) Explain briefly how the great ancient Greek philosophers counteracted skepticism.

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2) Give a brief analysis of the Medieval Epistemology.

   Which were the theories of the Universals that developed during this period?

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2.4. RATIONALISM, EMPIRICISM AND SYNTHESIS IN KANT

The emergence of science during renaissance and the disputes that it produced led to certain skepticism about claims to knowledge and to the search for a method, like that of science. Rationalists have generally attempted to show that the primary truths that constitute certain knowledge are related to other truths somewhat as the axioms are related to theorems on geometry. Empiricists on the other hand, have taken the view that the truths which constitute ordinary knowledge can be constructed out of the primary truths, as a building is built up from its foundation. Rationalists looked for them among the deliverances of reason, whereas empiricists looked for them on sensible experience.

Rationalism

Rationalism asserts that by employing certain procedure of reason alone we can discover knowledge in the strictest sense. Theories of knowledge, like those of Leibniz and Spinoza were also called rationalistic in this sense. But the chief Representative of rationalism was **Rene Descartes (**1596-1650**).**

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He was seeking an absolutely certain basis for all knowledge. After casting doubts on scientific, mathematical and sense information, Descartes continued his quest for some information which would be indubitable and certain until he found it in: I am, I exist. It has to be true, every time that I utter it or I mentally think about it. 'I think, therefore I am'. Whenever I conceive of any condition under which 'I think, therefore I am' may be false, I am completely assured that I exist. Any attempt to doubt or deny this, is still another thought which confirms me that I must exist in order to think. Thus Descartes built his epistemology on this indubitable and certain truth and other self-evident truths deducted from and related to this self-evident truths existing in mind.

Empiricism

In general, empiricism stands in opposition to rationalism both in its view about the main sources of our ideas and in its views concerning the source of true knowledge.

John Locke (1632-1704) was a complete empiricist insofar as he tried to work out an explanation of our knowledge in terms of sense experience. Our knowledge comes to us through our senses. We have two sources of knowledge, one is sensation and the other is reflection.

David Hume (1771-1776), who introduced the experimental method into philosophy following Newton, was a real empiricist. Everything we are aware of can be classified under two headings, impressions and ideas. The difference between the two is the degree of force, liveliness with which they strike upon the mind. Impressions are more forceful and lively than ideas. Hume denied innate ideas.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

Kant made a synthesis of Rationalism and Empiricism by asserting that although all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience. We have certain ideas, concepts and know certain things, which are not derived directly derived from impressions through our senses, as concepts of space and substance as well as propositions of mathematics, proposition: 'Everything which happens, has its cause', whose source must be the mind itself. Thus Kant concludes that *synthetic a priori* judgments and concepts are possible.

Space and time provide the *forms* of all experience, sensation provides the *content*. What is given in this way must be subsumed under concepts in judgment, if knowledge is to result. It should not be of imagination (Hume). Such judgments have to conform to principles of understanding and that principles are derived from the pure, formal concepts which Kant calls categories of understanding. Only insofar as our judgments conform to these principles can judgments that we make about appearance be true for all men.

2.5. POST-KANTIAN EPISTEMOLOGY

Idealism was the characteristic of Post-Kantian epistemology. It was begun by **Johan Gottlieb Fichte** (1762-1814) who found fault with Kantian view of things-in-themselves that are beyond the reach of knowledge. With rejection of things-in-themselves (*Noumena*), experience and experiencer became only two sides of the same coin. For this reason, the general trend of idealism was toward the coherence theory of truth – the view that experiences and judgments are true to the extent they cohere with one another, forming a coherent system. The sensible world is therefore only appearance, and reality must be something else.

G.W. Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)

Influenced by Platonist and Neo-Platonist conception of an intelligible world of Forms with a structure of its own, through a dialectic, Hegel charts the notions most central to reason, beginning with the opposition between the categories of *Being* and *Nothing* and the synthesis of which he finds in *Becoming*. These are notions which reason finds indispensable for any account of the world and upon which logic must depend.

Hegel begins by pointing out that consciousness appears to be apprehension of what is immediate, of what *is*, which is, it appears, a confrontation of the ego with something else (Fichte supposed).

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 rationalism and empiricism and their synthesis in Kant

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2) Discuss how the Idealism of Hegel was a reaction to Kant's rejection of Noumena

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2.6. PHENOMENOLOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGY OF LATE 19TH CENTURY

Neo-Kantian philosophy came under empiricist influence from Britain and at the end of the century under the influence of Franz Brentano and Alexius Meinong. This finally led to a return to realism, a movement that not only produced phenomenology but also influenced Bertrand Russel and other Realist philosophers.

Brentano (1838-1917)

Brentano was concerned with the psychology of our mental acts. Each mental act had an immanent object. Then the question: how a real act can have an unreal object?

Meinong(1853-1920)

Taking up the question, Meinong postulated non-existent objects to explain the possibility of our thinking, for example, of things that do not or cannot exist. Similarly, false judgments were said to correspond to what he called objectives – non existent state of affairs which would be facts if only the corresponding judgments were true. Objectives could not be said to exist, for they were not things, but they might subsist. From a linguistic point of view, this doctrine implied a realist theory of meaning, according to which the meaning of any expression was given by a

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corresponding entity. The fact these entities were not themselves mental entities (although they gave content to what is mental) implied a return to realism in a more general sense. Objects could be real, according to Meinong, without being actual.

Hussserl (1859-1938**)**

He started from Meinong, maintaining that the proper philosophical task was to investigate the essence of mental acts and their object. Philosophy consisted, in his view, in an enquiry into the essences with which they are concerned. To study this, it was necessary to strip off all presuppositions, metaphysical or otherwise. He adopted the method of bracketing (*epoche*) – the bracketing of presuppositions – in a manner akin to Cartesian method of doubt. This would lead to pure consciousness as the one absolute, the one firm thing, and from this philosophers may turn back to investigate the essence of different phenomena as they appear to consciousness. Thus, in effect the initial realist point of view led back to one which was more like the idealism.

Henri Bergson (1859-1941**)**

He is an anti-intellectualist, who emphasized life against thought. Space and time, of which we are conscious, are continuous; the division of it into things and processes is due to the intellect, which carries out the division according to the biological needs.

Because of this emphasis on biological utility, there is a relativism in Bergson's point of view, which he has in common with American Pragmatism as instituted by William James (1842-1910) and C S Pierce (1839-1914): our concept of anything is determined by our concept of the practical bearing of that thing. In sum, meaningfulness is a question of practical utility. William James turned this theory of meaning into a theory of truth. Test of truth is its fruitfulness. John Dewey (1859-1852): knowledge as successful practice.

2.7. REALISM OF 20th CENTURY

G E Moore (1873-1958**)**

He insisted that concepts or ideas should be regarded as the objects, the meanings, of our thoughts. Things are merely collection of concepts and as such enter into propositions as their constituents. There seems to be no propositions at all. If there were, there would have to exist something corresponding to false beliefs.

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970)

He was first an idealist but was converted to realism by Moore. From Leibniz, Russell took the view that philosophy consists in the analysis of propositions and his interest in logic also brought him to a concern with language.

For Russell, it was important that all knowledge be founded on knowledge by acquaintance, if it was possible at all, for only in knowledge by acquaintance is error absolutely impossible. He gives a list of the knowledge by acquaintance – sense data, memory-data, the self, and universals. Of physical objects we have only knowledge by description, because here error is possible.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951)

Wittgenstein criticized the attempts implicit in much sense-datum philosophy to construct a private language by arguing that the results of such attempts would lack the essential conditions of a language. He also stressed the importance of bringing back terms to the language game that is their original home – ordinary language. This is perfectly in order as it is; the important thing is to examine the uses to which expressions are put, with the recognition that language is a form of life and must be treated accordingly. Among other things this led to the recognition of truths which are necessary but not analytic. These are truths which express non-anlaytic connections between concepts. The emphasis upon such truths and the arguments which lead to them on the part of followers of Wittgenstein was in a sense a partial return to Kant.

Logical Positivists

Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* influenced a group of philosophers –Vienna circle. According to them meaningful proposition must be either analytic or empirically verifiable. So metaphysical propositions which belong neither to mathematic and logic nor to science, are meaningless.

Moritz Schlick (1882-1936**)**

Schlick was the original leader of the group. He felt compelled to interpret scientific laws as rules rather than statements. Regarding the problem of 'empirically verifiable', he held that ultimately there had to be a direct confrontation with experience. His view brought with it the correspondence theory of truth.

Karl Popper (1920-1994**)**

He was influenced by the movement of Vienna circle. Key to understanding of science is not in verifiability but falsifiability. He put this forward not as a theory of meaning but as a criterion for the demarcation science from metaphysics.

2.8. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN EPISTEMOLOGY

Introduction

Ethicists like Alasdair McIntyre (1929-) and John McDowell (1942-), today talk about Virtue epistemology that focuses on the characteristic of knower than the individual beliefs or collections of beliefs. There are also emerging challenges to traditional epistemology from Postmodernism

Virtue Epistemology

Roughly, the claim is that when a true belief is the result of the exercise of intellectual virtues, it is knowledge. Such an approach re-introduces some neglected areas of epistemology, for example connection of knowledge to wisdom and understanding.

Post-Modern Epistemology

The emerging challenges from Postmodernism to certain presuppositions of traditional epistemology are, for example, the arguments that there is no set of rules for belief acquisition that are appropriate for all people and all situations; that many of the proposed conditions of good reasoning, for example, 'objectivity' or 'neutrality' are not invoked in the service of gaining truth, as traditional epistemology would hold, but rather they are employed to prolong entrenched power (at least in some cases) and distorts the objects of knowledge (Feminist Epistemology).

Check Your Progress III

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

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

1) Explain the various stages of the phenomenological epistemology which led to the Realism of 20th century

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2) What was the criticism of Wittgenstein's Language philosophy to Realism

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3) What is logical positivism? Explain briefly its development in history

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4) Which are the recent developments in epistemology?

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2.9. LET US SUM UP

After going through the various periods of the history of epistemology we see there are two main trends started by Plato and Aristotle running through the whole history of epistemology, viz., idealism and Realism. Though there were efforts to combine them by philosophers like Kant, they were met by a return to either idealism or Realism. But one thing we can learn from the history of epistemology is depth of that simple question: "What is it to 'know' philosophically, the problematic of knowledge, truth and certainty in general and to recognize the baffling mystery of the power of our human mind for growing in the never-ending process of arriving at Truth and wisdom.

2.10. KEY WORDS

Skepticism: The theory which says that there is no possibility of knowledge

Maieutic **method:** From the Greek verb, meaning to serve as a midwife because Socrates said that his role was but to help the student to give birth to knowledge.

Empiricism: Theory which explains knowledge in terms of sense experience.

*Noumena***:** In opposition to *phenomena*, which means appearances; *noumena* means things-in-themselves.

Phenomenology: The science of what is given immediately to our intentional consciousness

Pragmatism: is that doctrine or trend of thought according to which the value of an assertion lies solely in its practical bearing upon human interests.

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2.12. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Criticizing the skepticism, **Plato** tried to construct a theory of knowledge – what knowledge is possible, how we could attain it, and why it was true. He agreed with Socrates that knowledge is nothing but a remembering of what we have contemplated before our birth and bringing to light what was already in our minds; birth being accompanied by forgetfulness. He came to hold that reality cannot be changing and that it must therefore consist in a world of 'Forms' or 'Ideas' separate from the sensible world. Knowledge consists in the apprehension of these forms or ideas which never change. Like Plato, **Aristotle** held that knowledge is always knowledge of the Forms or the Universals. But he rejects the Platonic notions of a world of separate Universals or Forms. Knowledge depends ultimately on the soul's reception of the Forms of things. Sense perception is the receiving by the sense organ, the faculty of which is the respective sense, of the sensible form of a thing without its matter. There is then a

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reception of Form in this case not sensible Form but intelligible Form by the intellect, which is a faculty that depends on the prior exercise of perception.

2. Knowledge of a thing involves knowledge of its general characteristics; therefore, its subsumption under a universal. The main dispute during this time was over theories of Universals. Realists thought that universals had an objective existence. Conceptualists held that universals existed only as concepts in the mind. Nominalists held that the only universal things were words.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. Subscribers to Continental rationalism in the modern period was philosophers like Descartes, who was seeking an absolutely certain basis for all knowledge in some truth which was indubitable and certain, which he found in: *Cogito, ergo sum* 'I think, therefore I am'. On this fundamental truth he builds his epistemology. Empiricism stands in opposition to rationalism both in its view about the main sources of our ideas and the source of true knowledge, which is sensation and reflection. Kant joins the two views by his *Synthetic a priori* knowledge which means that not all knowledge about things can be derived from sensible experience alone. Spatio-temporal forms, which are not derived from sense experience, are necessary, *a priori* characteristic of experience, whose content is provided by sensation. Knowledge results when the forms and content are subsumed under concepts in judgment and such judgments have to conform to principles of understanding, which are derived from the pure, formal concepts (categories). Only insofar as our judgments about appearance conform to these principles they are true for all men.

2. Idealism came as a result of Kantian rejection of things-in-themselves (Noumena) that are beyond the reach of knowledge. Sense knowledge proper must involve a subsumption of the immediate consciousness under Universals or concepts, and, moreover, there is no way of grasping the particular which is thus subsumed under concepts except by reference to other concepts. Sense knowledge thus turns out to be a mediated knowledge which is possible only through the medium of Universals and which is not a direct knowledge of reality. The intellect provides with a higher universal which constitutes the

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basis or condition for applying the lower–order universals in sense perception. The unity of the objects of perception is due to the law-like connections which exist between Universals under which they are subsumed. The opposition between consciousness and self-consciousness requires a synthesis by reason.

Answers to Check Your Progress III

1. Phenomenological epistemology started with Meinong and Brentano who were influenced by British empiricism. Husserl starting from Meinong, maintained that the proper philosophical task was to investigate the essence of mental acts and their object. Philosophy consisted, in his view, in an enquiry into the essences with which they are concerned. To study this, it was necessary to strip off all presuppositions, metaphysical or otherwise. He adopted the method of bracketing (*epoche*) – the bracketing of presuppositions – in a manner akin to Cartesian method of doubt. This would lead to pure consciousness as the one absolute, the one firm thing, and from this philosophers may turn back to investigate the essence of different phenomena as they appear to consciousness. Thus, in effect the initial realist point of view led back to one which was more like the idealism.

2. Wittgenstein appeals to usage and functions of language for knowledge. Language is a form of life and must be treated accordingly. This leads to the recognition of truths which are necessary. The emphasis upon such truths and the arguments which lead to them was in a sense a partial return to Kant.

3. Logical positivism: Meaningful proposition must be either analytic or empirically verifiable. Basic proposition must be about immediate experience. It started with Vienna circle, a group of philosophers who were influenced by Wittgenstein. M.Schlick, the leader of the group interpreted scientific laws as rules rather than statements. He held that ultimately there had to be a direction confrontation with experience for solving the problem of empirically verifiable. This led Karl Popper to state that the Key to understanding is not in verifiability but falsifiability.

4. Virtue epistemology: justification and knowledge arises from the proper functioning of our intellectual virtues or faculties in an appropriate environment. Post-modernist epistemology typically opposes the presuppositions shared by foundationalism,

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essentialism, and realism. For R. Richard Rorty, Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Lyotard oppose transcendental arguments and transcendental standpoints; reject the picture of knowledge as accurate representation; reject principles, distinctions and categories that are thought to be unconditionally binding for all times, persons and places; reject any complete and closed explanatory system and grand narratives.

UNIT 3 THE BASIC CONCEPTS AND THE FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTION OF EPISTEMOLOGY

Contents

3.0. OBJECTIVES

Epistemology means knowledge or science of knowledge and is more commonly called theory of knowledge. It raises questions like, "What is knowledge?" or "What is it to know?" "Can we have knowledge?" or "Can we be certain that we know?" Under what conditions can we said to know? How is it different from mere belief? Epistemology also raises questions such as, what are the sources of knowledge: Only perception and experience or also intellection and thinking? or what role does memory have in it? And so on. On the other hand, asking such fundamental questions "Can we have knowledge?" does not mean that we do not know anything. There are plenty of things we know or at least claim to know and the task of epistemology is to critically reflect upon the truth of such knowledge-claims. This takes us to think about the various concepts involved in epistemology. Some of the basic concepts of epistemology are knowledge, justification, certainty and truth.

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Anything that we come to know becomes knowledge and Epistemology is that branch of philosophy which studies knowledge. Many thinkers, both past and present, have concentrated on and spent all their time and energy reflecting on knowledge, many even tend to identify philosophy with epistemology.

We could get an initial understanding of what knowledge is by analyzing the verb 'to know'. When we analyze it we see that it could mean different things: sometimes it means "to recognize" or "to identify", sometimes it would mean 'to be acquainted with'. But there is also something common to them. To be clear to know is "to be aware that such and such is or is not the case". Let us look at it in more detail.

To be aware: means 'to be conscious of', 'to be alert to'. We don't need to go into any detailed analysis of awareness to see that awareness is ordinarily a bipolar concept. By this we mean that ordinarily awareness has a subject-object structure. It implies a duality of subject and object, of the knower and the known. Ordinarily, we always take an awareness to be an awareness of something. But it may also be noted that there are some who hold that there can also be pure consciousness. Many Indian schools of philosophy maintain this and they call 'cit' or 'Caitanya'. It would be an interesting topic to discuss whether there can be such a state of "pure", object-less awareness. But for our purpose, we shall take awareness here in its ordinary sense as involving an object, having a subject-object structure. And when so taken, it is to the subject pole of this structure that the term awareness applies.

Such and such is (or is not) the case: Since we have taken awareness as a bipolar concept, this phrase indicates the objective pole of awareness. It denotes a fact of state of affairs, anything that one claims to know. We may also say that it is the content of awareness. When we say "Today is Monday", our awareness that today is Monday is the subjective pole whereas the content of that awareness is "today is Monday". This is the objective pole. In the formula "S knows that…" the description that follows after "that" is the state of affairs that forms the object pole of awareness.

Is or is not: This indicates a judgment, an affirmation or a negation. We see an object moving in the sky and we judge it as something: bird, an aeroplane, a kite etc. Such judgment is an essential element of what we mean by knowledge. Suppose I am given something in my hand, I

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can smell it and feel it, I can see its shape and colour, and yet I may not know what it is. It is only when I am able to say, "It's a mango", can I be said to *know* what it is. Of course, in the meantime I have come to know many things: e.g., that I am holding an object in my hand, that it is round in shape, that it is yellowish in colour, etc. But notice that all these involve judgments: it *is* the case that I am holding an object in my hand, that it is round etc. Thus we can say that knowledge always involves a judgment. On the other hand, the judgment involved in knowledge need not always be explicit. The fact that knowledge implicitly or explicitly involves a judgment (an assertion or denial) leads us to some further considerations about the nature of a judgment. We may make a judgment 'internally', to ourselves. This simply means that in the heart of hearts we are convinced that such and such is the case, irrespective of whether we say it to someone or not. When it is not expressed we have an unexpressed judgment. It remains our conviction; others are not likely to know anything about it. But we may choose to express our judgment. In that case our judgment is no longer an inward affair; it is available to others for their scrutiny. And the means by which it becomes available is language. An expressed judgment takes the form of a sentence (either oral or written) in language. This also means that in as much knowledge involves judgments theory of knowledge becomes intimately linked with problems of language and meaning.

3.2. SKEPTICISM

We know our lives are based on knowledge; another factor which adds to the importance of epistemology is the skepticism. The things which we claim could be countered with a question: Is it really so? Do we really know that such is the case? And this brings us to the point that no matter what is it that we claim to know it can always be countered with the question: "how do you know?" or "is it really so?" Take some examples: first from the area of perception: ordinarily our sense knowledge is reliable. But we also know of cases where our senses have deceived us and we have misjudged and claimed a piece of rope to be a snake; or other times when we judge against what we perceive, as in the case of a stick in water which I see as bent, but say that it is not really bent, only looks bent and so on…

In a sense, it is skepticism regarding knowledge that gives rise to epistemology. Skepticism, in the ordinary sense, is the refusal to grant that there is any knowledge. It may say either that we lack knowledge or that even if we know we cannot be sure that we know. This fundamental

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doubt (sometimes, an explicit assertion) raised by skeptics regarding the possibility of knowledge forces us to raise such questions as: Is knowledge possible? And what makes knowledge possible? What reasons can be given for claiming that we know? In raising and trying to answer such questions we are already doing epistemology.

Throughout the history of philosophy we find some or other form of skepticism raising its head and these can be traced to conflicting views of reality. The pre-Socratic philosophers generally did not pay much attention to problems of knowledge. They took the possibility of knowledge for granted and speculated more on cosmological problems. But they came up with conflicting theories: The Eleatics (PARMENIDES and ZENO) considered reality to be one and immutable whereas the Ionians (HERACLITUS) held the opposite view: that reality is change. The earlier Ionians held reality to be made up of earth or water or fire, whereas the Pythagorians held the essence of things to be numbers and numerical relations. These conflicting theories gave rise to the earliest form of philosophical skepticism propounded by the sophists (Protagoras and Gorgias). In modern philosophy we see Descartes concentrating exclusively on the problem of certain knowledge. He was not a skeptic but his whole philosophy is an attempt to overcome skepticism. We know from the history of philosophy that he begins with the problem: "Can I know anything for sure?" And this is a tradition that has remained with us till today. Descartes is rightly considered the father of modern philosophy.

Skepticism in an explicit form may be self-contradictory, but the difficulty is that skepticism need not always be so explicit. It is more an attitude and the fact is that there is a skeptic in all of us. All of us know that we know a lot of things, much of it that we have learned from others, mainly from our parents, teachers and elders. But there are moments when we begin to ask how much of what I have learned is true. It arises from ordinary facts of life. Sometimes we discover that things we thought we knew but found out that we were mistaken. Is it also the case with what we presently think we know? Therefore, just to assume that we know does not seem sufficient. What about the view that in our age, the age of science, we don't need to bother about epistemology because science tells us the truth? This again is quite a naïve view of science. If we are ardent admirers of modern science we may not want to question the truth of its findings but the fact is that the same sort of problems we find in our ordinary everyday knowledge is also found in science. At one time every one thought that the earth is flat and that the sun goes around

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it. Now we hear the same science tells us that such is not the case. In our own century we live with the revolution brought about the theories of Einstein's theory of relativity. Much of what we held to be true till now are put into question. Can we be sure that what we hold to be true today will not proved wrong tomorrow? Therefore, a blind reliance on the science of the day is no solution to the problem of knowledge either.

Faced with this problem of divergent claims to truth we may take one of the three attitudes of dogmatism, skepticism, or critical acceptance. We may not want to take these divergent claims seriously and dogmatically believe that this and that (my religious view or the present scientific view for example, is the truth). The other extreme is to take these divergent claims very seriously and become skeptics ourselves. If we do not want to take either of these extreme positions, there is a third possibility. These divergent views concerning what is true and what is not true may lead us to take a critical look at knowledge. If we do take a critical attitude to knowledge we are already in the realm of epistemology, we are already doing epistemology.

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 mean by knowledge?

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2) How do you explain the concept skepticism?

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3.3. JUSTIFICATION

Whatever we know has to be justified. Knowledge needs to be reasonable or justifiable. Epistemic justification is the process of giving reasons or of gathering evidence for a knowledge-claim. To begin with, if we look at epistemic justification as it is traditionally done we can see two of its features. Let us take the case of Descartes, the father of modern epistemology. His demand for justification arose in the context of skepticism. He asked, can I justify or be sure- of this claim? The importance of this way of raising the question lies in the fact that it ties up justification with certainty. Indeed, justification becomes the process or activity of attaining certainty: of assuring oneself that one can be sure of one's knowledge. And this is done by giving reasons or adducing evidence for our knowledge claim.

The second feature relates to the structure of justification and this can also be seen by looking at the Cartesian practice. He begins by doubting all that we ordinarily take to be knowledge and keeps up with his methodic doubt until he comes across something that is indubitable, that which cannot be doubted. Upon those indubitable truths he sought to build up all knowledge. In other words, in order to attain certainty for the body of knowledge we have, first get hold of those truths that are absolutely certain and then taking these as the firm foundations secure certainty for the rest. For this reason this manner of justification has come to be called foundationalism. Both these features of Cartesian epistemology have been maintained even to the present day; indeed, it has become that standard practice in epistemic justification to look at it in terms of attaining certainty and see the structure of justification in a foundational manner. This makes foundationalism and certainty important issues.

3.4. FOUNDATIONALISM

We saw how Descartes went about the task of justification: find out truths that are indubitable and deduce other truths from these. This is the rationalist procedure of justification. Besides Descartes, there are others like Spinoza and Leibnitz who are clear examples of such rational justification. Rationalists hold that the only source of sure knowledge is reason. We all know that senses sometimes deceive us and we make perceptual errors. In contrast $2+2 = 4$ can never be false. Therefore, they contend that all true and certain knowledge comes from our reason. They take mathematics as the model of knowledge and hold that certain knowledge is *a priori*. *A priori* means knowledge which is justified or known to be true independent of experience. On the other extreme we have the Empiricists who hold that all genuine knowledge comes from

(genetic empiricism of Locke and Hume) or is justified by (justificatory empiricism of the logical positivists) sense experience. Of course, the difference between rationalists and empiricists consists in whether reason or sense experience is considered as the primary and most reliable source of knowledge.

In spite of this difference there is one thing that is common to the empeiricists and rationalists: both see knowledge in the manner of a house build upon foundations that are certain. Hence this view of justification is called Foundationalism. And this is the strategy that is traditionally followed in epistemology for the justification of knowledge-claims. The very term 'foundationalism' gives the idea of what is involved in this. It considers all our knowledge like a house. Just as a house needs a foundation that is firm and strong so too our knowledge is to be built on some basic truths which function as the foundation for the rest of our justified beliefs. According to foundationalism there are two types of beliefs: the ones that can be classified as certain knowledge and the ones that are less certain. The less certain are justified by the more certain ones. The foundationalist view of justification can be described more formally as follows: (1) There are two types of beliefs or truth: basic and non-basic; and (2) there is a asymmetrical or one - way relationship between them such that it is always the basic beliefs that justify the non-basic ones and not the other way. For Descartes these foundations were indubitable, self –evident truths like "I exist", "whatever is distinctly and clearly perceived is true", "nothing can be without a cause" etc. It is from these that he sought to justify our knowledge concerning the existence of God and the world. Descartes was a rationalist who took mathematics as the model for his philosophy and deduces his whole system from some basic principles. Similarly empiricists like Hume are as much foundationalists as Descartes. For them the foundations are our sense experience and not reason. Both the empiricism and rationalism are foundationalist in this sense. They differ only in what they consider to be the foundations: empiricists hold the data of experience to be foundational whereas the rationalist gives that role to innate ideas.

The argument for foundationalism is very simple. If knowledge is to be reasonable and our beliefs justified, then those justified beliefs must be based on some other beliefs which are reasonable and they on further beliefs and so on. But ultimately this process of justification must end up in some beliefs that require no justification or are self – justified or self-evident. Or else,

our knowledge would be like a house built on sand, beliefs that are themselves built on unjustified beliefs. Hence the view that a foundational structure is indispensable for epistemic justification.

3.5. CERTAINTY

We saw that the very manner in which the question of justification is traditionally raised in epistemology, i.e., in terms of foundations that are certain, ties up justification to the certainty accorded to beliefs. Certainty or certitude is defined in scholastic philosophy as 'the firm assent of the mind to the truth, based on evidence'. Assent here is not to be taken to mean as an act performed consciously here and now; it is rather a psychological state. The property of being certain is obviously a psychological property of persons in the sense that a person can be said to be certain with regard to a belief if s/he has no doubt at all about the truth of that proposition. Hence certitude can be defined as 'the conviction that such and such is the case'. If knowledge is the awareness that such and such is the case, certitude adds to the strength of this awareness. But there is a problem here. Certainty as psychological state is subjective whereas normally we take truth to be objective. A person can be absolutely certain that such and such is the case, but in reality it may just be the opposite. That is to say that we can also be mistaken in our convictions. If so, can it really lead us to truth the objective state of affairs, irrespective of what I think is the case? This has made philosophers – hard headed as they are – feel uneasy with the psychological approach to certainty. Therefore, they have sought to distinguish the psychological sense of certainty from the epistemological sense. In the epistemological sense, certainty is the property of a proposition and not of a person. Such certainty is based on evidence. However, it is not easy to keep the two apart since certainty seems to be primarily a psychological concept. Hence the two are sought to be combined by saying that person has the right to be certain about a proposition just in case that proposition is warranted or is based on evidence. It is same idea that lies at the heart of the scholastic definition where they qualify their definition of certitude with the clause 'based on evidence'.

3.6. TRUTH

Truth to be the correspondence of what is asserted (or denied) with what is the case. For example, if I say, "It is raining outside", the sentence would be true if it corresponds to facts, i.e., if it is indeed raining outside. Or if it is said "There are 100 students in the class", it would be true if there are indeed 100 students in the class.

Truth is a characteristic of knowledge. This can be analysed by taking a concrete example. Suppose I believe that there are 100 students in the class and accordingly I make a judgment to that effect; but after counting I find that there are only 99. I make enquiries to see if there are any absentees and find none. Consider now the judgment I made. Will it be appropriate for me to say that I *knew* that there are hundred students in the class? Rather will it not be more appropriate to say that I thought there were 100 students in the class, but as a matter of fact I was mistaken and therefore, I did not really know? Strictly speaking, therefore, knowledge is knowledge only if it is true. In other words, truth is ordinarily taken to be a necessary characteristic of knowledge, and we shall take knowledge to be such.

But in Indian Philosophy there is a distinction made between *j na* and *pram* . *j na* may be translated as cognition. We might be true, false or doubtful and may apply even to mere conceptual thinking (*kalpan*). *Pram* , in contrast, applies only to true cognition. Since we have taken truth to be essential characteristic of knowledge it is only *pram* that can be knowledge in the strict sense.

Truth, we saw, is an essential characteristic of knowledge. But what is it for something to be true? The notion of 'truth' seems so obvious as not to require any further analysis. In fact Aristotle who dwells at length on various philosophical problems had been content to deal with it in one sentence: "To say of what is that it is, or of what it is not, is true…" It is this same idea we find in the provisional definition that truth as correspondence with what is the case.

3.7. THE FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTION: THE UNIVERSALITY OF TRUTH

If epistemology defines itself in the context of skepticism, there is a fundamental assumption that epistemology takes for granted. This assumption is the Universality of Truth. This can be seen by asking ourselves a very simple question: Yes, there are divergent claims to truth, but why bother? Should we not remain content with such divergent truth-claims even if they are contradictory? Can we adopt such an attitude? The answer would seem to be clearly in the negative. And the reason for it lies in the universality assumption regarding truth and knowledge. They are assumed to be universal, not in the impossible sense that everyone possesses or should know all that is true, but in the sense that anyone can come to know it with sufficient effort. In other words, truth is not relative to any person or place though the knowledge of truth may be so relative. My ignorance of the relativity theory, for example does not make it less true or lead me to conclude that it is true only for the physicists and not for others. Similarly, truth is not relative to place or time either. Though this statement needs further qualification for statements about historically dated information, as a general principle this remains valid. (E.g. The Statement "No one has set his foot on moon" for example was true before 1969, but no longer. But here the problem lies in the inaccurate formulation of the statement. "No human has set his foot on moon till today" uttered at time *t*, would be universally true when *t* is replaced by the appropriate variable.) It is this universality assumption that demands epistemology. If we were to assume that truth is relative to such factors as persons, place and time there would be no need for epistemology.

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Since it is the task of epistemology to resolve cognitive dispute let us consider what a cognitive dispute is and when such a dispute can be said to be resolved. A cognitive dispute is disagreement that concerns knowledge. It is a situation where there are competing descriptions of what the case is or what exists as a matter of fact. Two descriptions would be competing with each other if both are claimed as descriptions of one and the same subject matter from the same perspective and are mutually incompatible. If someone describes a person as intelligent and another disagrees with the judgment and chooses to describe the same person as an idiot, the two descriptions are in conflict. In such a case, there is a cognitive dispute involved. Put differently, in order to have a cognitive dispute, there must be a cognitive difference, i.e., a difference between two descriptions. The general problem of epistemology then is how to choose rationally between competing descriptions.

Such a dispute can be said to be settled when both parties to the dispute come to an agreement in either of the three ways: one, that the subject matter is not the same (the descriptions are not of the same person); two, the perspective is not the same (as when both descriptions are about the same person, but one describes the person as an excellent academician and the other as a poor financial manager or a poor family man; Gandhiji would seem to be an excellent example of a great leader and a poor father to his children). In both these cases there is no real incompatibility between descriptions, and the conflict is only apparent. It would be resolved by demonstrating to the satisfaction of both sides that there is no real conflict between them. The third situation under which the dispute can be said to be settled is when there is a real conflict and at the end of the epistemic process it is recognized by both that one of them has been wrong. The most important factor in all the three cases is that both the contending parties agree either that there was really no conflict between their descriptions and that the conflict was only an apparent one, or that one of them was mistaken. If neither is able to convince the other in either of these ways the dispute remains unsettled.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) What is truth?

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2) Explain the fundamental assumption of epistemology.

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3.8. LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to explain the basic concepts and the fundamental assumption of epistemology. While explaining the subject we have clarified some of the terms like knowledge, skepticism, justification, certainty, truth and universal truth. While going through the entire issue we have come to know that epistemology can be understood clearly only when we know the basic concepts and its fundamental goal. Therefore, primarily we should know what is to know; are we certain about what we know; how can we justify our claim; we need to give reasons and that will take us to the final goal of the epistemology that the truth is universal which can be arrived at with sufficient effort.

3.9. KEY WORDS

Dogmatic: Dogmatic is one who holds that his/her knowledge claim beyond doubt

Cognitive: Cognitive is relating to the knowledge acquired through perception and intuition.

Epistemic: Epistemic is the process of coming to know or knowing the truth.

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3.11. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1) Knowledge is to be aware that such and such is or is not the case. Knowledge involves subject–object awareness and a judgement or affirmation or negation of something. It is a conviction that such and such is a case irrespective of whether one says

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or not. It is the judgement one makes about the case and which can be expressed in language.

2)   Skepticism, in the ordinary sense, is the refusal to grant that there is any knowledge. It may say either that we lack knowledge or that even if we know we cannot be sure that we know. A sceptic stance is this fundamental questioning or doubting or having a critical attitude towards knowledge claims. In doubting and trying to answer the questions with regard to knowledge is like doing epistemology. Throughout the history of philosophy we find philosophers raising questions and find an answer to the conflicting views of reality.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1)   Epistemic justification is the process of giving reasons or of gathering evidence for a knowledge-claim. Justification is a process or an activity of attaining certainty of assuring oneself that one can be sure of one's knowledge. And this is done by giving reasons or adducing evidence for our knowledge claim. The second feature relates to the structure of justification can also be seen by looking at the Cartesian practice. He begins by doubting all that we ordinarily take to be knowledge and keeps up with his methodic doubt until he comes across something that is indubitable, that which cannot be doubted. Upon those indubitable truths he sought to build up all knowledge.

Foundationalism is a system where one takes up something to be basis or reason for the justification of knowledge. There are rationalists who hold that the only source of sure knowledge is reason. We all know that senses sometimes deceive us and we make perceptual errors. In contrast $2+2 = 4$ can never be false. Therefore, they contend that all true and certain knowledge comes from our reason. They take mathematics as the model of knowledge and hold that certain knowledge is *a priori*. *A priori* means knowledge which is justified or known to be true independent of experience. On the other extreme we have the Empiricists who hold that all genuine knowledge comes from (genetic empiricism of Locke and Hume) or is justified by (justificatory empiricism of the logical positivists) sense experience. Of course, the difference between rationalists and empiricists consists in whether reason or sense experience is considered as the primary

and most reliable source of knowledge. In spite of this difference there is one thing that is common to the empiricists and rationalists: both see knowledge in the manner of a house built upon foundations that are certain. Hence this view of justification is called foundationalism. And this is the strategy that is traditionally followed in epistemology for the justification of knowledge-claims.

2)   Certainty or certitude is defined in scholastic philosophy as 'the firm assent of the mind to the truth, based on evidence'. Assent here is not to be taken to mean as an act performed consciously here and now; it is rather a psychological state. The property of being certain is obviously a psychological property of persons in the sense that a person can be said to be certain with regard to a belief if s/he has no doubt at all about the truth of that proposition. In the epistemological sense, certainty is the property of a proposition and not of a person. Such certainty is based on evidence. However, it is not easy to keep the two apart since certainty seems to be primarily a psychological concept. Hence the two are sought to be combined by saying that person has the right to be certain about a proposition just in case that proposition is warranted or is based on evidence.

Answers to Check Your Progress III

1)   Truth to be the correspondence of what is asserted (or denied) with what is the case. Truth is a characteristic of knowledge. Strictly speaking, therefore, knowledge is knowledge only if it is true. In other words, truth is ordinarily taken to be a necessary characteristic of knowledge, and we shall take knowledge to be such. But in Indian Philosophy there is a distinction made between *j na* and *pram* . *J na* may be translated as cognition. *Pram* , in contrast, applies only to true cognition. Since we have taken truth to be essential characteristic of knowledge it is only *pram* that can be knowledge in the strict sense.

2)   The fundamental assumption. This assumption is the Universality of Truth. This can be seen when there are divergent claims to truth, should we remain content with such divergent truth-claims even if they are contradictory. And the reason for it lies in the universality assumption regarding truth and knowledge. They are assumed to be

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universal, not in the impossible sense that everyone possesses or should know all that is true, but in the sense that anyone can come to know it with sufficient effort. In other words, truth is not relative to any person or place though the knowledge of truth may be so relative. When there is disagreement that concerns knowledge such dispute can be said to be settled when both parties to the dispute come to an agreement in either of the three ways: one, that the subject matter is not the same (the descriptions are not of the same person); two, the perspective is not the same (as when both descriptions are about the same person) and third situation under which the dispute can be said to be settled is when there is a real conflict and at the end of the epistemic process it is recognized by both that one of them has been wrong. The most important factor in all the three cases is that both the contending parties agree either that there was really no conflict between their descriptions and that the conflict was only an apparent one or that one of them was mistaken. If neither is able to convince the other in either of these ways the dispute remains unsettled.

3) Certainty or certitude is defined in scholastic philosophy as 'the firm assent of the mind to the truth, based on evidence'. Assent here is not to be taken to mean as an act performed consciously here and now; it is rather a psychological state. The property of being certain is obviously a psychological property of persons in the sense that a person can be said to be certain with regard to a belief if s/he has no doubt at all about the truth of that proposition. In the epistemological sense, certainty is the property of a proposition and not of a person. Such certainty is based on evidence. However, it is not easy to keep the two apart since certainty seems to be primarily a psychological concept. Hence the two are sought to be combined by saying that person has the right to be certain about a proposition just in case that proposition is warranted or is based on evidence.

Answers to Check Your Progress IV

1) Truth to be the correspondence of what is asserted (or denied) with what is the case. Truth is a characteristic of knowledge. Strictly speaking, therefore, knowledge is knowledge only if it is true. In other words, truth is ordinarily taken to be a necessary

characteristic of knowledge, and we shall take knowledge to be such. But in Indian Philosophy there is a distinction made between jana and pramna may be translated as cognition. Pramana, in contrast, applies only to true cognition. Since we have taken truth to be essential characteristic of knowledge it is only pramana that can be knowledge in the strict sense.

2)   The fundamental assumption. This assumption is the Universality of Truth. This can be seen when there are divergent claims to truth, should we remain content with such divergent truth-claims even if they are contradictory. And the reason for it lies in the universality assumption regarding truth and knowledge. They are assumed to be universal, not in the impossible sense that everyone possesses or should know all that is true, but in the sense that anyone can come to know it with sufficient effort. In other words, truth is not relative to any person or place though the knowledge of truth may be so relative. When there is disagreement that concerns knowledge such dispute can be said to be settled when both parties to the dispute come to an agreement in either of the three ways: one, that the subject matter is not the same (the descriptions are not of the same person); two, the perspective is not the same (as when both descriptions are about the same person) and third situation under which the dispute can be said to be settled is when there is a real conflict and at the end of the epistemic process it is recognized by both that one of them has been wrong. The most important factor in all the three cases is that both the contending parties agree either that there was really no conflict between their descriptions and that the conflict was only an apparent one or that one of them was mistaken. If neither is able to convince the other in either of these ways the dispute remains unsettled.

UNIT 4   **THEORIES OF TRUTH**

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit is to introduce the theories of truth, the core concept in the theory of knowledge. The words 'truth' and 'true' are much used, misused and misunderstood word. Though the concept appears to be simple, when we go deep into it we will feel its mysterious nature. The questions, "What is truth?" and "How to know the truth?" are as ancient as man himself. In this unit we will try to make a survey of the theories of truth that the philosophers have put forward and to examine their merits and demerits. It is the duty of every human being to continue the quest to understand the importance of the concept of truth and to approach it with owe and respect.

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

 * to have a glimpse of the complexity of the concept "truth";
 * to understand the importance of truth.
 * to have a better understanding of the nature and criteria of truth;

- to get a general view of the different theories of truth; and

- to evaluate the theories you come across in contemporary reading.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In court, witnesses swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. They are expected to know what truth means and in some sense they do. At the same time the concept 'truth' is abstract, ambiguous and mysterious. The meaning of the word "truth" that concerns philosophers is something akin to what a witness assumes in the court room to report what he/she believes to be true in statements or propositions. This is the sense of the word that matters most in our everyday lives.

Voltaire says that we may define truth humanly speaking but we should always wait for a better definition because there is no final definition or one which is definitive for all times. It is a difficult task to define truth for the following reasons: first, truth is an extremely basic concept. It is difficult to engage in any theoretical inquiry without employing it. You cannot even argue over a theory of truth without using the concept, because to question a theory is to question its truth, and to endorse a theory is to endorse it as true. We cannot get behind the concept of truth as we can with other concepts. Secondly, truth is deeply connected to belief. When witnesses assert or endorse what they believe, it implies that they are reporting what they believe to be true. Thirdly, truth is also connected to knowledge: one doesn't know that a particular person committed the crime unless he actually committed it. Truth is the central concept of logic. Fourthly, it is also related to another mysterious concept, reality. To speak the truth is to speak of reality as it is. Truth is interconnected with many concepts and it is very important to understand this interconnection if we want to know what truth is.

Knowledge is the recognition of truth. To recognize falsity for truth is a false knowledge. A belief in the truth of a false statement is a mistaken belief. If knowledge excludes all falsity, then certainty becomes essential for knowledge. And if certainty is unattainable it follows that truth and knowledge are also unattainable. Philosophers have been driven to a conception of knowledge so rigorous that there is very little that we can claim to know. But to say that there is

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no truth is to neglect everything valuable, for what is the use of the good and the beautiful if there were no truths about them? We should admit that absolute certainty or truth is unattainable. Even scientists do not entitle their findings as final or definitive. However, we should continue our search and be ready to abandon the prevailing beliefs when they are proved to be false. We must learn to doubt and then to believe all over again; or, to believe without believing absolutely.

How much can we doubt? Skepticism may be defined as the claim that none of our beliefs is objectively justified as more probably true than its negation. According to the skeptics the search for truth is hopeless and hence every opinion is as good as the others. Skepticism expresses the concern that our beliefs may not accurately correspond to the world in itself. It poses a problem for every theory of truth. A certain degree of doubt is natural and motivates us to search for the truth. But in our daily life we are more believers than doubters. For instance, we believe that our doctor knows how to cure us, we believe that the pilot of our plane knows how to fly it.

4.2 NATURE AND CRITERIA OF TRUTH

Theories of truth attempt to give satisfactory answers to the following questions: "What is truth?" and "How to know the truth?" We want to know whether propositions or beliefs are true or false. To deal with propositional truth we can take either the definitional route and define "is true" as qualifying the proposition, or the criterial route and justify the application of "is true" to the proposition.

What is the nature of truth? This is similar to the question, what is the underlying nature of the property of being gold or the substantive facts about gold? Or, what does the word "gold" mean in ordinary English? The result of the inquiry is that gold is an element with atomic number 79. My concept of gold picks out many important and substantive facts about gold, that it is a malleable yellow metal, for instance. When philosophers ask what truth is, they are interested sometimes in the concept, sometimes in the underlying nature of its property, and sometimes in both. Unlike the case of gold, we have no independent, empirical access to the property of truth except via that concept. Thus disputes over the property of truth are frequently fought on conceptual ground, over how we might best define the concept of truth. According to this latter

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method, we learn about the property of truth by learning about the concept. On the other hand, we might hold that as in the case of gold, learning about the concept can tell us much about the property without necessarily telling us everything about that property.

We may know something about the nature of truth and may be able to define truth, but it is not of much value if we are not able to prove that something is true. The nature and criteria of truth are obviously different. The definition of gold as a yellow metal having atomic number 79 does not help us to determine whether an ornament is really gold. The assayer's test of solubility in *aqua regia* provides criteria to verify gold, but does not define it. Such a distinction is applicable to truth. To know the meaning of the word "true" is only half the matter; we should also be able to apply it. If we adopt the criterial route critics will say, "You are not really tackling the core issue of what is true, but only the marginal issue of what is taken as true." On the contrary if we take the definitional route he/she will say, "Your definition is only formal; it does not help us determine whether a proposition is actually true or false."

4.3 PERSPECTIVES ON TRUTH

Our perspectives on truth differ depending on whether we take a detached point of view or agent point of view or a combination of the two. The ontic perspective is a view from nowhere or a totally detached view of facts regardless of its being believed to be true. The descriptively epistemic perspective is an agent point of view of facts as actually believed to be true. The normatively epistemic perspective is a fusion of the agent and detached points of view that truth is what would be rationally accepted regardless of anyone's actually doing so. Its epistemic component consists in its reference to thought, and its ontic component in its reference to what is rationally warranted. Those who take the ontic perspective claim that the truth-value of a belief does not vary over different epistemic situations. A belief does not alter its truth-value contextually. Hence we cannot simply identify truth with justification.

As there are three perspectives on truth we can divide the theories of truth into three groups: Realist, Anti-realist and Quasi-realist theories. All these theories are motivated by questions like: Is there such a thing as absolute truth? Is truth in some way or other subjective or relative? What

sort of relationship do true propositions have to the world? Are all truths verifiable or justifiable? These questions concern the subjectivity and objectivity of truth.

The root intuition behind Realism is that truth hinges not on us but on the world. A proposition is true when things in the world are as that proposition says they are. It implies that truth has a nature and that its nature is objective: whether a proposition is true does not depend on what anyone believes. Realism is a doctrine about truth which holds that for a belief or proposition to be true, a certain states of affairs must obtain independent of any mind. For example, the belief that snow is white is true only if snow is white in the extra-mental world. Classical realist theory of truth is the correspondence theory.

Anti-realists or non-realist theories about truth have in common the view that extra-mental reality or facts have nothing to do with truth or falsity. It is not a necessary or a sufficient condition for the truth of the belief that "snow is white," that snow be actually white in the extra-mental world. So it is theoretically possible for it to be true even if it is not an extra-mental fact that snow is white. Classical non-realist theories of truth are coherence and pragmatic theories. Deflationists go a step farther and ask whether truth even has a nature to explain. They suspect that the so-called problem of truth was really a pseudo-problem. They believe that there is no single property shared by all the propositions we consider as true. Consequently our concept of truth should not be understood as expressing such a property but as fulfilling some other function. Deflationists believe that the problem of truth should not be explained but be explained away.

There is a growing consensus among philosophers that neither traditional realist theories nor the anti-realist theories are adequate. Some philosophers have tried to clear new paths to think about this old concept. Whereas a few philosophers name their theories of truth others claim that they provide only some elucidation of the concept of truth.

Check Your Progress I
Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) What do you understand by the nature and criteria of truth?

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2. Classify the different perspectives and theories of truth?

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4.4 CLASSICAL THEORIES OF TRUTH

The Correspondence Theory of Truth

According to the correspondence theory of truth a proposition is true just when it agrees with reality. It demands a unique conformity between judgments and states of affairs. It is a systematic development of the commonsense account of truth expressed in dictionary definitions like "conformity with fact." "Delhi is the capital of India" is true because it corresponds to the fact. Aristotle writes: "To say that that which is, is not, or that which is not is, is false; and to say that that which is, is, and that which is not, is not, is true." For St Thomas Aquinas, truth is the agreement or conformity of thing and intellect. Michael Devitt claims that "truth is neither to be identified with, nor to be eliminated in favour of any epistemic notion. Truth is one thing, evidence for it quite another." According to him a sentence correctly represents reality if and only if its component parts bear an appropriate causal relation to certain objects in the world.

Correspondence as congruence says that every truth bearer is correlated to a state of affairs. If the state of affairs to which a given truth bearer is correlated actually obtains, the truth bearer is

true; otherwise it is false. For Bertrand Russell it is beliefs that are true or false and facts make beliefs true. He agrees that beliefs depend on minds for their existence, but claims that they do not depend on minds for their truth. According to him "assertions correspond to states of affairs; they are true if the corresponding states of affairs obtains, and false if it does not."

Correspondence as correlation claims that there is a structural isomorphism between the truth bearers and the facts to which they correspond when the truth bearer is true. Like the two halves of a torn piece of paper, the parts of the truth bearer fit with the parts of the fact. It is because of this isomorphism that the fact and the truth bearer can be said to correspond with each other. J.L. Austin takes correspondence to be a matter of correlation between whole statements and whole facts or states of affairs. For him this correspondence is not natural but the result of linguistic conventions.

The Coherence Theory of Truth

Immanuel Kant challenged the validity of the classical correspondence theory. Consequently, the post-Kantian philosophical tradition was bound to seek its theory of truth elsewhere. A significant alternative to correspondence theory is the coherence theory, according to which the truthfulness of a proposition is implicit in its "coherence" with other propositions.

The coherence theory has its roots in the idea of a system. According to F.H. Bradley, "Truth is an ideal expression of the Universe, at once coherent and comprehensive. It must not conflict with itself, and there must be no suggestion which fails to fall inside it. Perfect truth, in short, must realize the idea of a systematic whole." A statement is true if it coheres with a system of other statements, and false if it fails to cohere. But the coherence at issue is not coherence with reality or with facts. The coherence theory proposes the criteria to classify empirical propositions as true or false; it does not specify the constitutive essence of truth. Coherence is the test by which truth-candidates are validated as genuinely true or rejected as false. It resembles the solving of a jigsaw puzzle by rejecting superfluous pieces that cannot possibly be fitted into the orderly picture.

Idealists or anti-realists reject the traditional distinction between subject and object. For them, to think of a thing is to get that thing to a certain degree within the mind. A thought and its object do not differ in kind but in degree of realization. Thought should develop and become more and more coherent until it is literally identical to, or one with reality. Hence reality is the realization of a fully articulated and maximally coherent system of judgments. A particular judgment is true if it belongs to such a system.

For Blanshard "Coherence is the sole criterion of truth." Having accepted the coherence theory of justification, Blanshard felt compelled to accept the coherence theory of truth. He believed that if reality is something completely external to human minds then no theory of justification would ever work. We would never have knowledge except by luck and therefore be forced to accept general scepticism. "If thought and things are conceived as related only externally then knowledge is luck." The way to avoid this, he suggested, is to postulate that the thoughts in our minds are really not completely distinct from the things in the world we think about. For him, "To think of a thing is to get that thing itself in some degree within the mind." With the assumption that the world is coherent, it seems to follow that our beliefs are probably true to the extent they cohere. Hence he endorses the claim that the coherence of beliefs is evidence of their truth.

The Pragmatic Theory

Pragmatism envisages a conception of truth that recognizes a close link between truth and human experience. The pragmatic theory of truth bases itself on the intuition that one cannot profit from error either by rejecting a true proposition or by accepting a false proposition. Being right is the most advantageous policy, and so maximal utility is a safe indicator of truth. The prominent advocates of classical pragmatism are Charles Peirce, William James and John Dewey.

For Peirce, a true proposition is a final and compulsory belief, a belief unassailable by doubt. The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real. Even though the possible hypotheses are infinite, investigation in the long run will eliminate all of them except the true

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one. A judgment is true if and only if it is justified at the end of scientific inquiry. He renamed his theory as pragmaticism when pragmatism was appropriated by Dewey, Schiller and James to label their view. He claims that "human opinion universally tends in the long run to the truth." For him the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by truth. Peirce's theory of truth is plausible only because it is parasitic on truth as correspondence with reality.

James' pragmatism could be characterized as a kind of instrumentalism. According to James an empirical judgment is true if it is verifiable. The truth of an idea is the process of its verification and validation. A true idea guides us in our dealings with reality, and hence, a true judgment is what is expedient to believe. Our knowledge of the world, according to James, results from the interaction between our minds and the world. But our minds do not, like mirrors, passively copy facts, but actively manipulate them according to our needs and ends. James insists that truth should be useful, having cash value in experiential terms. Something is useful because it is true and it is true because it is useful. An empirical judgment is true just when it is verifiable. The truth of a judgment consists in its continuous practical use in our lives. Instrumentalism holds that a belief can be useful if it leads to accurate predictions and hence true. I see your knitted brow, see you rub your temples, hear you utter "Owwoo". The hypothesis that you have a headache would explain these three events. For James the facts of the matter are irrelevant. What counts is the usefulness of the belief. For James usefulness means useful over the long term and when all things are considered.

According to John Dewey an idea is a plan of action or a possible solution and not a copy of the environment. Their validity and value are tested by their practical success. If they succeed in dealing with the problem they are true; if they fail they are false. The idea that guides us well or the hypothesis that works is true. For example, a human being lost in the woods can use his idea as a working hypothesis. If he finds his way home, then his idea is true because it agrees with reality. According to Dewey truth is a mutable concept; it works within the process of inquiry. Truth happens to an idea when it becomes a verified or warranted assertion. Thus he claims that all received truths should be critically tested by new experiences.

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Critical Evaluation of Classical Theories of Truth

The oldest criticism against correspondence theory is that it cannot withstand sceptical challenge. If truth is independent of our epistemic values, we have no reason to believe that our best theories are approximately true. Since we cannot step outside our beliefs, we cannot ever check to see if they correspond to the world or not. Therefore we can never know whether our beliefs are true. Another general problem concerns their scope. Traditional correspondence theories take correspondence to be the nature of truth for every proposition. But propositions vary. What would be the correspondence for abstract objects like numbers, fictional characters, justice etc? There are objections to coherence theory of truth. It allows any proposition to be true, since any proposition can be a member of some coherent set or other. There is no independent way, outside coherence, of determining which beliefs are true. The main charge against pragmatic theory of truth is that it leads to relativism. Relativism is incoherent and self-refuting. It is self-refuting to hold a point of view and then say that all points of view are equally right. If all points of view are equally good, then the point of view that relativism is false could be as good as relativism is true. Another problem is that there could be judgments that are true but that are never discovered to be so by any investigation.

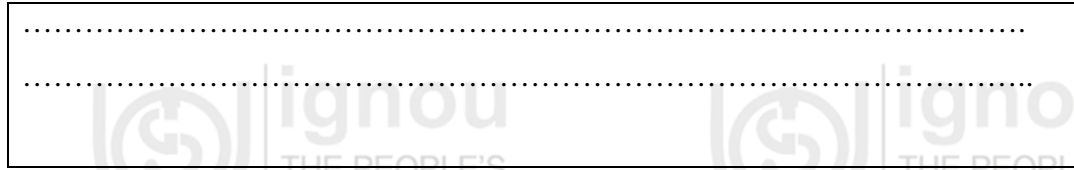**Check Your Progress II**

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

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1) What do you understand by the Correspondence theory of truth?

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2. How do you distinguish between coherence and pragmatic theories of truth?

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4.5 OTHER THEORIES OF TRUTH

Semantic Theory

Alfred Tarski claims that his semantic conception of truth is the essence of the correspondence theory of truth. He calls truth a semantic concept because it is defined in terms of other semantic concepts, especially the concept of 'satisfaction'. Tarski's strategy is to define all semantic concepts, save satisfaction, in terms of truth, truth in terms of satisfaction, and satisfaction in terms of physical and logico-mathematical concepts. According to him, an adequate definition of truth is one from which all equivalencies of the form "X is true if and only if p" follow, where X is the name of the sentence and p is the sentence. He limits his definition of truth to artificial or formal languages of logic and mathematics because the natural languages are semantically closed and hopelessly paradoxical. Such formal languages are semantically open and contain none of the ambiguity and vagueness of ordinary language. Secondly, it is crucial to Tarski's definition that it is not a general definition of true in any language L, but a definition of 'true-in-L1' 'true-in-L2' etc. We must always climb up to a meta-language to define truth for the language below.

Quine regards "true" as a philosophically neutral notion. It is a mere device for raising assertions from the object language to the meta-language without any epistemological or metaphysical commitment. Quine claims that his view is in accordance with the correspondence theory of truth. His truth predicate functions as an intermediary between the words and the world. What is true is the sentence, but its truth consists in the correspondence between the sentence and the world.

Deflationary Theories

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Deflationism is the name for a family of views which aim to deflate the lofty pretensions of traditional theories of truth. They believe that truth has no nature. It is not so important a concept. Deflationary theories call attention to the transparency of truth. When we say that "it is true that roses are red", we can look right through the truth that roses are red. We automatically infer that roses are red. There is no reason to try to explain why something is true by appealing to correspondence or coherence.

According to Frank Ramsey's Redundancy theory 'is true' is a superfluous addition; in reality we ascribe no property to the proposition. All ascriptions of truth are gratuitous or redundant. But the question arises as to why we would have the word 'true' in our language if it is redundant. According to P.F.Strawson's Performative theory ascriptions of truth to propositions are actually nonassertoric performative utterances like command. If I tell you to close the door, I am not making an assertion or stating a fact; I am telling you to do something. Strawson argues that we should regard utterances of the form "It is true that p" in a similar way. It calls our attention to an often neglected feature of our concept of truth: its normative and performative role in our language. According to Quine's Disquotation theory "ascription of truth just cancels the quotation marks. Truth is disquotation." According to Minimalism there is no more to understanding truth than understanding the equivalence of saying something is true and to asserting it. For instance, we know what it is for people to assert propositions and we normally know what kinds of considerations confirm or disconfirm the propositions.

Neo-pragmatic Theory

Richard Rorty follows Dewey and tells us to leave behind our realist intuitions. According to Rorty anything we believe as true we also believe as justified, and anything we believe as justified we also believe as true. There is no practical difference between truth and justification. He identifies truth with rational acceptability to one's own cultural peers or ethnos. According to his "ethnocentrism" truth depends on the conventions of particular communities. He claims that justification as criteria of truth will always be relative to audiences. For him truth is a compliment paid to justified beliefs. Rorty dismisses the problem of truth as unreal because when we are able to justify something the problem about truth vanishes.

For Michael Foucault truth is by nature political. For him there are no objectively true statements in the usual sense; there are only statements that 'pass for true' in a particular community at a particular time. And what passes for true is determined by the hegemonic systems of power. He reduces truth to power. He advocates a view of truth that takes power relations to be more or less constitutive of truth depending on the statement and context in question.

Hilary Putnam derives inspiration from James and wants to reconcile pragmatist insights with realism. According to Putnam totality of objects is not fixed because objects themselves exist only relative to conceptual schemes. For him a proposition is true just when that proposition would be rationally acceptable in ideal epistemic conditions. Putnam's picture of truth is not a kind of verificationism though verification is an important aspect of it. For him truth is idealized verification under sufficiently good epistemic conditions. He is not reducing truth to epistemic notions. Instead, he just claims that truth and rational acceptability depend upon on each other. His concept of truth involves a defence of objectivity. Truth is not subjective; it goes beyond justification. There is no conclusive justification even for empirical sentences. Truth depends on the meaning of the assertions as well as on their reference. For him objects are theory-dependent, and hence two theories, in spite of their incompatible ontologies, can both be right. His picture of truth refutes both metaphysical realism as well as relativism. He seeks objectivity neither in correspondence nor in consensus. Instead, he proposes an alternative to both realist and idealist concepts of truth.

Postmodern theories

According to Martin Heidegger's Phenomenological theory propositional truth presupposes a more primordial relation of accordance between humanity and beings in the world which he calls "openness" or "unconcealedness". Truth is "disclosure of being through which an openness essentially unfolds." To speak truly is to uncover beings as they are. According to Heidegger there is an absolute world structure that grounds the possibility of objective truth. Our thoughts are true when they conform to that structure. It is our way of being in the world that makes truth and falsity possible. Heidegger's view challenges the idea that truth is a static, binary relation

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between a subject's representation of an object and that object itself. Truth is neither correspondence nor coherence but the product of an activity that presents the world directly. Truth depends on humanity in some sense. "There is truth only when and as long as *Dasein* exists." Without human thinkers there would be no true thoughts. It is only against the background of human interests and needs that parts of the world become possible objects of knowledge.

A common thread running through Primitivism and Pluralism is the claim that the failure of substantive definitions of truth needn't lead to a thoroughgoing deflationism. Primitivism takes truth as a basic indefinable concept. For Moore truth "is a simple unanalyzable property which is possessed by some propositions and not by others." Donald Davidson and Earnest Sosa are advocates of this theory today. Traditional theories have failed because truth cannot be defined. The concept of truth is already so basic to our thought that without it we might not have any concepts at all. What we can say about truth is how that concept relates to other concepts, our attitudes and our behaviour. Pluralism takes truth to have different natures in different discourses. Putnam argues against the usual alternatives: deflationism and metaphysical realism. There is a plurality of ways for propositions to relate to reality. The word "true" has different uses, depending on whether we are talking about morality, mathematics, physics etc. Pluralist theories of truth have significant advantages. They account for the fact that every traditional theory of truth seems plausible in some domains but not in others.

Critical Evaluation

Though the semantic theory of truth adequately defines the nature of truth, it is unable to provide any criteria to decide what is and what is not to be counted as true. A logician is not concerned with the intuitive notion of truth. On the contrary, a philosopher is concerned with discovering the intuitive notion of truth. Tarski tries to substitute the intuitive notion with a logical notion useful for scientific purposes. His theory fails to define the ordinary concept of truth and merely provide a general definition of "true". The deflationary theorists fail to substantiate that truth has no property. The Neo-Pragmatist Rorty's ethnocentrism has strong relativist overtones. We cannot agree with Foucault that truth changes with the change of systems. For example, racism

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and slavery were wrong and are wrong now. It also leads to a radical scepticism making any social criticism impossible. Postmodern theories of truth also are inadequate to provide a satisfactory picture of "truth".

4.6 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY OF TRUTH

What is the importance of the study of truth for our lives? The theory of truth we choose to accept will affect our perspective, our attitude and also our way of life. Those who accept correspondence theory of truth are normally absolutists and traditionalists. Those who opt for coherence theory of truth are idealists who give more importance to their subjective ideas and convictions. Those who accept pragmatic theory of truth give importance to useful and practical aspects of life. All the other theories are only modifications or combinations of the classical theories.

It is important for us to examine our temperament. Do we give so much importance to objectivity so as to neglect subjectivity? Do our thoughts, words and actions have a human face? Are we fundamentalists who believe that only one theory or point of view can be true; or relativists who hold that anything goes or that all theories are equally true; or pluralists who consider that there may be a plurality of true or right versions of reality? Do we try to compartmentalize life and then create walls between peoples or accept unity in plurality? Are we ready to accept the role of the community in asserting that something is true or false? Truth is essentially dynamic. It emerges in the interaction between subject and object. The criteria of practical success is not enough. We have to combine successful understanding and successful practice. Do we give equal importance to means and ends? The glimpse of truth will become brighter if we approach it with an open mind. Lack of interest and involvement conceals truth to a great extent. Never be satisfied with what we know. Truth reveals itself to those who continue the search and is ready to do the same until death.

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

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1) What do you understand by deflationary theory of truth?

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2. Describe the post-modern theories of truth?

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4.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have introduced the problem of truth and examined the nature and criteria of truth. Truth is closely intertwined with many other concepts like world, reason, justification, thought, language etc. There have been a lot of attempts or theories to explain truth because it is such an important concept which we use in our everyday life knowingly or unknowingly. There are mainly three families of truth – Realist, Anti-realist and Quasi-realist. Realist theories of truth consider truth as objective. Anti-realist theories hold that truth is primarily subjective. The quasi-realists try to combine the realist and anti-realist theories. All the modern theories of truth are modifications of the classical theories of truth viz., correspondence, coherence and pragmatic theories.

4.8 KEY WORDS

Idealism: The ontological view that ultimately every existing thing can be shown to be spiritual, mental or incorporeal.

Realism: The philosophical doctrine that a real material world exists and is accessible by
              means of the senses.

Relativism: The view that there are no absolute truths; all truths are relative to time, place, and
              culture.

Verification: Any procedure carried out to determine whether a statement is true or false.

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4.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check your Progress I

1) To determine the truth of a proposition we can either define "is true" as qualifying the proposition or justify the application of "is true" in the proposition. The first way illustrates the nature of truth and the second way its criteria. To know the meaning of the word "true" is only half the matter; we should also be able to apply it. For example, to know that gold is a malleable yellow metal with the atomic number 79 does not help us to know whether an ornament is gold or not. There should be some way of testing to prove that it is really gold. Similarly, it is not enough to know what truth is; we should also know how to justify the claim that something is true.

2) There are three perspectives on truth. The ontic perspective is a detached point of view of facts regardless of its being believed to be true. The descriptively epistemic perspective is an agent point of view of facts as actually believed to be true. The normatively epistemic perspective is a fusion of the agent and detached points of view. We can divide the theories of truth into Realist, Anti-realist and Quasi-realist. According to realism a belief or proposition is true if a certain states of affairs obtain independent of any mind. According to non-realist theories extra-mental reality or facts have nothing to do with truth or falsity. For quasi-realists truth depends not only on values but also on facts; both subject and object play equal roles.

Answers to Check your Progress II

1) According to the correspondence theory of truth a proposition is true when it agrees with reality. It demands a unique conformity between judgments and states of affairs. It is obvious that my statement, "Delhi is the capital of India" is true because it corresponds to the fact. There are two types of correspondence: correspondence as congruence and correspondence as correlation. Correspondence as congruence says that every truth bearer is correlated to a state of affairs. If the state of affairs to which a given truth bearer is correlated actually obtains, the truth bearer is true; otherwise it is false. Correspondence as correlation claims that there is a structural isomorphism between the truth bearers and the facts to which they correspond when the truth bearer

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is true. Like the two halves of a torn piece of paper, the parts of the truth bearer fit with the parts of the fact. However, this correspondence is not natural but conventional.

2) According to the coherence theory of truth a statement is true if it coheres with a system of other statements, and false if it does not. But this coherence is not agreement with reality or with facts. The coherence theory provides the criteria or test by which truth-candidates are proved as true or rejected as false. It resembles the solving of a jigsaw puzzle by rejecting superfluous pieces that cannot possibly be fitted into the orderly picture. The pragmatic theory of truth also provides the criteria to justify a belief or proposition as true or false. Unlike in coherence theory which gives importance to mutual agreement pragmatic theory lays stress on practical usefulness or success as the proof. Beliefs or propositions are like hypotheses to be tested by empirical investigation or verification to prove their truth or falsity. A belief can be useful if it leads to accurate predictions and hence true.

Answers to Check your Progress III

1) Deflationary theories of truth aim to deflate the lofty pretensions of traditional theories of truth. According to them truth has no nature. The concept of truth is unimportant; it is transparent and evident. When we say "It is true that roses are red", we can look right through the *truth* that roses are red. We can automatically infer that roses are red. Hence truth needs no special explanation or justification. For Frank Ramsey 'is true' is a superfluous addition; in reality we ascribe no property to the proposition. All ascriptions of truth are gratuitous or redundant.

2) According to Martin Heidegger propositional truth presupposes a more primordial relation of accordance or "openness" between man and other beings in the world. There is an absolute world structure that grounds the possibility of objective truth. Our thoughts are true when they conform to that structure. It is our way of being in the world that makes truth and falsity possible. Primitivism takes truth as a basic indefinable concept. The concept of truth is so basic to our thought that without it we would have no concepts

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at all. We can only say how concept of truth relates to other concepts. Pluralism allows truth to have different natures in different discourses. There is a plurality of ways for propositions to relate to reality. The word "true" has different uses in different discourses about morality, mathematics, physics etc.

BLOCK 2

One's claims to knowledge presuppose belief; for if one claims to know that some statement is true one has to believe that it is true. Knowledge is confined to demonstrative systems. It is a goal at which belief may aim which, although it may come closer and closer, it (belief) can never quite attain. Belief is bound by the ties of contingency and probability; whereas knowledge is firmly enclosed within the circle of certainty. One can be sure and be wrong, but one cannot know and be wrong. For instance, from the fact that one is sure that it is raining it does not follow that it is raining, but from the fact that one knows that it is raining it does follow that it is raining. Being sure is necessary to knowledge. Knowing involves two things: a) that which is known is true; b) that which the person knowing is sure that it is true. To know, then, one must have evidence; one must be right about the evidence; and be right about the relation of the evidence to the conclusion. Believing consists in a combination of the following points: a) being prepared to say Yes to something with varying degrees of conviction; b) having some evidence for believing. Where an increase in conviction is produced by an increase in the evidence, the belief is rational. Belief may wander throughout the whole range of rationality and irrationality, according to the extent, nature, and value of evidence. Increase in rational belief may become knowledge when the evidence increases to the point of becoming conclusive. We do have conclusive evidence for a vast number of empirical propositions, singular, particular, and general, and when we have conclusive evidence for a proposition we know it to be true.

We have four units in this block which will be studying some of the sources of knowledge like Perception, inference, and testimony.

Unit 1 probes into the first and very basic source of our belief that is Perception. Though, all knowledge does not arise from perception, yet it is the ultimate ground of all knowledge. In other words, all other sources of knowledge presuppose perception. If a doubt is raised over the validity of cognition obtained from other sources, viz. inference, analogy, testimony or language etc., it can only be resolved on the basis of possibility of perceptual verification. So, perception is a principle of verification too.

Unit 2 deals with the Hermeneutic or constructivist view of perception. Any discussion on the cognitive nature of perception would have to consider the two contrasting approaches to perception: the constructive and the ecological. This unit shows how these two approaches

together can contribute to a better understanding of the cognitive phenomenon of perception, and also highlights how an interdisciplinary approach can give better insights into the complexity of the perceptive phenomenon.

Unit 3 is on "Inference." Inference, in general, is the subject-matter of both Epistemology and Logic. Epistemology is "the science of sure knowledge." On the contrary, Logic is interested in the *correct* form of argument. Truth and falsity belong to the field of epistemology. In this unit, we shall try to understand inference from the epistemological point of view rather than that of logic.

Unit 4 highlights the significance of *Sabda* (Testimony) in acquiring valid knowledge mainly from Indian perspectives. The unit ventures into understanding the nature of testimony and then proceeds to the meaning of *Sabda* and its various types*,* the concept of *Sabda* in the Classical Indian Systems and the concept of *Sphota* taught by Bhartrhari.

This block discusses in detail and discloses gradually the essential means and conditions of acquiring knowledge.

UNIT 1   **PERCEPTION (INDIAN)**

Contents

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the present unit is to acquaint students with the Indian approach to perception as a common-sense and fundamental mode of knowing, upon which all other modes of knowing have to rely for their verification. Imparting clarity to the Indian approach is necessary as other concepts and realities accepted in different systems of *Indian Philosophy* (hereafter IP) are determined by the basic epistemological standpoints. The unit will focus upon the following objectives in this context:

- To orient students to Indian approach of dealing with human cognition, esp. perception.

- To acquaint them briefly about historical development of the idea of perception within various systems

- To introduce different categories (realities) based on the idea of perception

- Also to introduce the distinction of perception from other sources of human cognition and from erroneous perception too.

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Perception (*pratyaksa*) is regarded in Indian philosophy as a *means of right knowledge* - the generating process of cognition (*pramana*), and also as a type of *right knowledge* - the resultant cognition (*prama*). As a *pramana*, being primary and fundamental to all sources of knowledge, it is enumerated first in order in all systems of IP and taken as an independent means of knowledge as the knowledge produced by it is about the objects directly presented to senses and thereby require no inference or testimony for further verification of it. Its meaning is rather wider than sense-perception alone. Those systems of IP which recognize other means of right knowledge besides perception subscribe that perception underlies all other means of knowledge. Depending on the nature of the object of knowledge, some of them can be known through any of the means of knowledge whilst some are to be known through a particular means only. Systems of IP have divergent opinion on this issue. Belief in knowing a particular object through a particular means and thereby producing a particular cognition, i.e., *prama* is called *pramana-vyavastha*. And, advocacy of the view that an object can be known through any means depending upon the nature of object or the way of applying the means is called *pramana-samplava*.

Though, all knowledge does not arise from perception, yet it is the ultimate ground of all knowledge. In other words, all other sources of knowledge presuppose perception. If a doubt is raised over the validity of cognition obtained from other sources, viz. inference, analogy, testimony or language etc., it can only be resolved on the basis of possibility of perceptual verification. So, perception is a principle of verification too.

1.2 DEFINITIONS OF PERCEPTION

Nyaya View

Perception in Gautama's Nyaya Sutra (hereafter NS) (1.1.4) is defined as the knowledge which arises from the contact (*sannikarsa*) of a sense with its object, being determinate, unnamable,

and non-erratic. It is an awareness which is (i) produced from the connection between the sense organ and object; (ii) not produced by words; (iii) not deviating from its object, i.e., it is always true; and (iv) is of the nature of certainty. These four marks define perceptual awareness. Thus when I perceive a table, first of all there is a connection between my eyes and the table. The resulting awareness is not produced by words. This awareness is true. It is of the nature of certainty. When I see a table I am sure of my awareness being true.

Senses include mind as it gets conjoined with senses or sense-organs. Perception (as *prama*) must be distinguished from indeterminate knowledge, viz. a doubtful perception cannot be a *prama*. Further, the knowledge obtained from perception is something to which a name is assigned. Thus a name is an external element to perceptual knowledge, it is a linguistic aid. Non-erratic means being without any scope of error in perception which is determined by the adequacy of internal as well as external conditions of perception like awareness, health of sense-organs, presence of sufficient light etc.

The conjunctions of soul with mind and of mind with senses and of senses with sense object produce knowledge, i.e., sensory perception. That is why; Nyaya philosophy holds that knowledge is a mark of soul. There are definite causes of perception enumerated in Nyaya philosophy which are: direction (*dik*), space (*desha*), time (*kala*) and ether (*akasha*). The contact of sense with its object is a special cause of perception. The objects of five senses are also fixed and produce five kinds of special knowledge: 1. Visual Perception (colour); 2 Auditory Perception (sound); 3 Olfactory Perception (smell); 4 Gustatory Perception (taste) and 5 Tactual Perception (touch).

There are some debates pertaining to the above view of perception like, about the impossibility of such perception which is based on contact as contact is not possible in all three times. It is not possible to perceive an object in past or future and also in present simultaneously with the object of sense, e.g. in case of perception of colour, it is difficult to decide if colour precedes perception or, perception precedes colour. If perception occurred anteriorly it could not have arisen from the contact of a sense with its object. If perception occurred anteriorly or preceded the object, one must give up one's definition of perception, viz. perception arises from the contact of a sense

with its object. If perception is supposed to occur posteriorly, then one cannot say that the objects of sense are established by perception. Simultaneity of perceiving two sensory qualities cannot be offered as solution to this problem as two acts of perception cannot take place at a time, viz. there is an order of succession in our cognition. If we offer that a means of knowledge is also established by another means of knowledge, it would tend to infinite regress.

The Nyaya response to the above debate is rather logical and indirect. If a means of knowledge is impossible then denial of it would also be impossible. If denial is based on a means of knowledge, the validity of the means have to be acknowledged. When we deny a thing on the ground of its not being perceived, we acknowledge by implication that perception is a means of right knowledge. The further debate is on the very epistemological status of perception as in an act of perception we perceive only a part of an object and the object is inferred on the basis of it. This implies that perception is a type of inference or it is reducible to inference. The Nyaya response is that perception is not inference for even the objectors admit that at least a part of the object is actually perceived. Hence perception as a means of knowledge is not altogether denied; on the contrary it is accepted as different from inference.

The Nyaya view on perception becomes clearer when Naiyayikas engage themselves in debate with Buddhist view on the same. Buddhist like Dignaga defines perception as the unerring cognition of a given sensum or sense-data in complete isolation from all ideata or conceptual manipulations. In his view, perceptual knowledge should be free from reflection or any intellectual modulation including name or genus. Such a perception cannot be expressed in language and is cognized by itself. Uddyotakara (a 7th century Naiyayika, author of sub-commentary on NS – *Nyaya-vartika*) argues against the above mentioned view that the very purpose of perception is defeated if it is not expressed by a name and warrants meaninglessness of the cognition. The Nyaya view is based on their epistemological conviction that if there is a piece of cognition (be it of any type), it must be verbalized (excepting for *nirvikalpaka* or indeterminate perception). And, our cognition of an object assumes a generic form, and that is why, it is capable of being grasped by our mind.

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Responding to the reproaches against the possibility of contact (*sannikarsa*) in case of cognition of inner feelings like pleasure, pain etc., Uddyotakara emphasizes *manas* (mind) as an organ of cognition. *Manas has* equal reach to all kinds of objects of perception, internal and external as well, unlike other senses which have specific objects in terms of perceptibility. However, *manas* is mentioned in NS (1.1.15) as an organ of cognition.

In Nyaya view, it is quite possible that an object of perception to a particular sense be perceived by another sense due to its different qualities, e.g. earth can be touched and be seen as well. While enumerating such qualities of the object of perception, Uddyotakara criticizes Buddhist view that admits only the aggregates of qualities as object of perception and a particular quality can be perceived by a particular sense competent of perceiving it. Uddyotakara argues that if colour or other qualities appear in the shape of a jar then they produce perception of the jar. This perception is not merely the aggregates of qualities, but such qualities require a substance as their locus or, substratum.

The term *avyapadeshya*, i.e., non-erroneous (or non-erratic) is used in the definition of perception to exclude doubt and error from the range of true sense perception. Indeterminate or determinate perception which makes wrong reference is erroneous. As a piece of determinate perception is not associated with the words denoting objects, so error and doubt owe their existence to the function of our sense organ but are not word-interpenetrated. Replying to Buddhist objections to Nyaya view on perception, Jayanta Bhatta (a 9th century Naiyayika, author of *Nyaya-manjari*) mentions that expressivity in words of a perceptible object does not warrant the invalidity of a determinate perception. Or, a determinate perception cannot be invalid simply because it grasps an object which has been sensed by its antecedent indeterminate perception. The object of determinate perception is qualified by an action, an attribute, a substance, a designation and a universal. Naiyayikas also refute the definition of perception presented by Samkhya School. Ishvara Krishna (author of *Samkhya karika*) defines perception as a clear and distinct image of its corresponding object. In view of Naiyàyikas, this definition is too wide as it is equally applicable to inference too.

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Vachaspati, a 10th century scholar who wrote on Nyaya besides writing on other systems of IP and the author of *Nyaya-vartika-tatparya-tika*, talks about complete causal chain of the perceptual process. In the chain first takes place the perception of the object, then the determinate perception as a particular object, then awakening of the memory impression of the properties of the object of same class experienced before, then consideration that this object belong to the same class. Buddhist theory of perception goes against such interpretation as cause and effect cannot be simultaneous and the object perceived cannot cause the perception of itself. The ground for Buddhist theory is their principle of momentary-ness which is not acceptable to Naiyayikas. They maintain realism and argue that common sense perception goes against the Buddhist theory. Vachaspati also adds that addition of names or words does not affect the nature of determinate perception; it is rather an accidental factor which may follow a determinate perception.

Elaborating the NS definition of perception Gangesha (1200 AD, author of *Tattva-chintamani*) chooses a different way of defining it as 'cognition that does not have a cognition as its chief instrumental cause', viz. perceptual awareness is the result of perception as the causal complex in which not a cognition but a sensory connection with the object cognized is the trigger of 'chief instrumental cause' (*karana*). He focuses more upon the necessary conditions of perception like memory-impressions. Acknowledging the variable nature of sensory connection, viz. how senses relates themselves to the objects perceived as well as the varying nature of the objects in terms of the ways they are perceptible, he takes ontological turn and includes in his discourse on perception the qualities such as odours and sounds and universals such as colour-ness and sound-ness as objects with which senses can establish contact. This view is known as Theory of Connection (*sannikarsa-vada*).

Gangesha also discusses the role of *nirvikalpaka pratyaksa* - indeterminate perception in generating determinate perception. Determinate perception is cognition of an object or entity which is always qualified by qualifiers appearing to consciousness. Here, he contests the Buddhist theory of *sakaravada* – cognition 'having form of itself', as all information, i.e., qualifications of object is coming from the object of perception, and so, cognition itself cannot have any form of its own. This theory is known as *nirakaravada* – cognition 'having no form of

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itself'. But interestingly, he acknowledges that there is no direct, apperceptive evidence for *nirvikalpaka pratyaksa*. Rather, since a perceptual cognition appears as qualified by some qualifier, i.e., *savikalpaka,* we have to posit by force a state of unqualified, i.e., indeterminate perception antecedent to the qualified one. We have to adhere to a natural law that cognition of an object qualified by certain qualities presupposes the preceding cognition of the qualifier. Presaging the possible objection of infinite regression in this context, viz. the cognition of the qualifier would also require a preceding cognition; Gangesha has replied that indeterminate perception blokes such possibility as the qualifier cannot, in principle, be known through another qualifier. It is grasped directly.

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 determinate perception according to Naiyayikas?

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2) How mental perception is different from other sensory perceptions?

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Jain View

Umasvati (1-85 AD Jain writer), in his magnum opus *Tattvartha-adhigama-sutra*, adapts a different approach to treatment of *pramana* as he takes the term in two different senses – meaning of valid knowledge and means of valid knowledge. In the former sense, it is of two

kinds namely, *paroksa* (indirect knowledge, e.g. recollection, recognition, scripture, argumentation and inference) and *pratyaksa* (direct knowledge). *Pratyaksa* is acquired by soul without the intervention of external agencies. Knowledge attained by *yoga* (in transcendental state of consciousness) is a species of direct knowledge as it is acquired by soul directly and not through any medium (esp. of senses). Siddhasena Divakara (a 4th-5th century Jain writer, author of *Nyayavatara*) classifies perception into practical perception (*vyavahariika* – acquired by soul through five senses and mind) and transcendental perception (*paramarthika* – infinite knowledge attained in the state of enlightenment of the soul).

According to Jain philosophers, there is a process of practical perception and is described by stages as (i) *avagraha*, distinguishing the type whether it be, e.g., horse or man, but not discerning the characteristics; (ii) *iha*, inquiring, e.g., whence came the man and from what country came the horse; (iii) *avaya*, arriving at a correct identification of the above; and (iv) *dharana*, recollecting the thing particularized and keeping it in mind.

Manikya Nandi (about 800 AD, author of *Pariksa-mukha-sutra*) also maintains the time-honoured Jain distinction of perception between direct and indirect. Direct perception arises through sense-organs which is called *indriya-nibandhana*. Deva Suri (11th-12th century Jain writer, author of *Pramana-naya-tattvaloka-alamkara*) elaborates the process and stages of direct perception (practical), while the transcendental perception is described as a necessary aid to emancipation. The possessor of perfect transcendental knowledge is called *arhata*, one freed from all obstructions.

Buddhist View

Buddhist approach to perception is rather radical as their principle of momentary-ness designs the nature of it. Amongst the Buddhists, Dignaga (450-520 AD, author of *Pramana-samuchchaya*) as a leading figure of medieval Indian logic and author of *Nyàyabindu*, takes the object of cognition as a unique individual (*svalaksana*) which is apprehended in perception totally naked, i.e., divide of any charging of idea (*kalpana*) upon it. Dignaga's point of argument for perception being nameless is that we can perceive a thing without knowing its name. In the

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same way, it is not connected with genus. It is the knowledge of individual characteristics – some qualities, or part of a thing; it is a complex knowledge – *samvriti-jnana*, of the combination of such qualities. Perception is just the immediate knowledge of a given datum, totally free from subjective determinations.

Buddhists are more inclined to show the impossibility of expressing a perceptual cognition. If one sees a cow and wants to convey it to some other person, it will not be possible to convey or transfer the exact cognition; it cannot be embodied in judgment. In place, the idea or, colour or, name of the cow can be conveyed. Moreover, the same cow cannot be perceived again as the sameness is based on the memory and the cow which is subject to repeated perception would be a cow of a different moment. However, in case of inference the cognition can be very well expressed and communicated in language. Reviewing the doctrine of perception of Naiyayikas, Dignaga also rejects their belief that mind is a sense-organ. And therefore, pain, pleasure etc. cannot be objects of knowledge in the same fashion.

There have been many reactionary critiques from modern Indian philosophers against Buddhist view of perception which are based on the opinion that perception is not merely a sum of sensum and images but also contains large element of meaning as well. It has a definite meaning and refers to a determinate object as that is revealed through sensations. It is only because the Buddhists arbitrarily deny the meaning element in perception that they are forced to exclude the complex cognition of a jar, tree, etc. (*samvriti-jnana*), from the range of perception. Such critiques are not tenable as they lack proper insight into the crux of Buddhist definition of perception. The meaning element is always a part of intellectual construct or of ideata, and while conceiving perception one must rescue it from intrusion of such constructs. Buddhists are rather perspicacious in defining perception and filtering out other elements accidentally associated with it.

Interestingly, perception in Buddhism (or in IP in general) has a wider connotation than mere sense-perception. It is direct knowledge or intuition, of which sense-perception is a species. There is another intuition; an intelligible one. Ordinary humanity does not possess such intuition;

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it is enjoyed by *arhata*, the enlightened one. A moment of this intelligible intuition underlies every perception. It is a reflective faculty which illuminates all the sensations or sense-faculty.

Mimamsa and Vedanta

Like Jain view, Mãmàmsà and Vedanta (esp. Advaita School is in consideration here) define perception in a way different from the customary one of presenting it as dependent on or originated from sense-organs. According to the Prabhakaras (one of the two schools of Mimamsa named after Prabhakara), perception is the direct cognition of an object. It is the intuitive or immediate knowledge that we may have of the subject and object of knowledge and of knowledge itself.

In Vedanta, perception as a *pramana* is treated as a unique cause (*karana*) of perceptual cognition as a form of valid knowledge, i.e., *prama*. The sense organs constitute the *karana*. The perceptual cognition is immediate and timeless – *chaitanya* or *cidrupa*, i.e., which is of the nature of consciousness. Such knowledge can be the *self* itself as only there can be the immediacy of knowledge and will be of the nature of consciousness. Senses are instruments or unique cause of perception. Due to function of sense-organs mental modification (*antah-karana-vritti*) takes place. Unlike Naiyayikas, Vedantins do not admit mind as a type of sense, so, for them, there are only five type of perception. Interestingly, Vedantins hold that the mind or *antah-karana* goes out through the senses and establishes contact with a perceptible object and get modified into the form of the object itself. The mental modification is not different from the object. Immediacy of such a perception lies in its being modification of mind itself. It is not immediate in the sense that it is produced by sense-stimulation. If it were so, then it would have over-ranged inference or other types of right cognitions too. And further, it would be difficult to establish the knowledge of God as direct knowledge as it is not produced by senses, whereas, it is not plausible to admit inference as direct cognition and the knowledge of God as indirect one.

The above approach to definition of perception is in advantageous position in the sense that it leaves no scope for raising the question how mental image corresponds to the object, of which it

is taken to be the image. Because, the object is not cognized through sensation, rather the mind itself reached the object through senses and fetches all possible data belonging to it.

Though, *chaitanya* is one, it appears different due to its varying qualifications. In the case of perceptual cognition - 'this is a pot', perception is on the part of 'pot'. The *chaitanya*, i.e., consciousness gets concealed by the form or modification of mind due to its occupying the form of pot. It is further clarified that both, *pot* and the *knowledge of the pot* are *pratyaksa*, i.e., perceptual, which are called object-perception (*visayagata-pratyaksa*) and knowledge-perception (*jnanagata-pratyaksa*), respectively. The intentional cause of object-perception is its non-difference from the knower or *pramata*. This view is clearly opposed to the Naiyàyikas view of object-perception through senses or *indriya*.

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) Why do Buddhists not admit the involvement of intellectual elements in perception?

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 2)   How, according to Vedantins, is absence cognized?

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1.3 REALITIES AND PERCEPTIBILITY: ORDINARY AND EXTRAORDINARY PERCEPTION

Naiyayikas have classified perception primarily between *laukika* and *alaukika*, i.e., ordinary and extraordinary. Basis of this distinction lies in the way the senses establish their contact with the objects. Ordinary perception takes place when the objects are present to senses. It is of two types – external, which are of five types; and internal, i.e., mental. In case of extraordinary perception, the objects are not present to senses but get apprehended by senses through some unusual media.

According to the kinds of perception we find in IP the perceptibility of different categories of reality by corresponding modes of perception. Naiyayikas bring all reality under seven categories, viz. substance (*dravya*), quality (*guna*), action (*karma*), universal (*samanya*), particularity (*vishesa*), relation of inherence (*samavaya*), and non-existence (*abhàva*). There are nine substances; viz. earth, water, fire, air, a*kasha*, time, space, soul and mind. Substances like earth, water, fire, air are perceptible. However, their atoms, *akasha,* time and space etc. are not perceptible. Soul is the object of internal perception. It is, thus, clear that a substance must have a limited dimension to be perceptible; it should neither be infinite like space, soul etc., nor be infinitesimal like atom (*paramanu* and the combination of two *paramanu*, i.e., *dvayanuka*) etc. Similarly, certain qualities can be perceived by certain senses only, e.g. visual sight and touch can grasp extension, but other senses cannot grasp things as extended in space. Further, perceptible objects, which have extension in space, are objects with parts (*savayava*), viz. being objects with parts, they are perceptible. As a corollary, it is quite possible for an object to be perceived partially as in case of perception of a house or a tree.

Substances have their attributes too. Attributes (*guna,* like colour, taste, number, magnitude, remoteness, nearness etc.) exist in them. Attribute is a static property of substance, viz. there is no possibility of attribute of attribute. Not all attributes are perceptible, e.g. velocity (*vega*),

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disposition (*bhavana*). Merits and demerits (*dharma* and *adharma*) are also supersensible attributes. These are supersensible attributes of soul. Some of the attributes can be perceived by only a certain sense, whilst some may be perceived by more than one sense, e.g. colour can be perceived by eyes only and number, magnitude etc. can be perceived by both sight and touch.

Differentia (*prithaktva*), according to Naiyayikas, is a positive character of things, due to which a thing is cognized different from other, e.g. a horse is different from a cow. These are different from each other not because they mutually exclude each other, but due to their respective distinctive characters. So far Naiyayikas are concerned, differentia is perceived in perceptible things. But, for Vedantins, differentia is a case of mutual non-existence, and therefore, is cognized by non-perception (*anupalabdhi*). However, modern Naiyayikas also do not treat difference as a separate quality, but reduce it to mutual non-existence.

Unlike attributes, action is a dynamic character of things. It is transitive property which affects the position of things. Motion of a perceptible thing can be perceived by sight and touch. In case of perception of motion, the conjoined-inherence (*samyukta-samavaya*) type of contact between sense and object is operative, viz. the sense first come in contact with the thing in which the motion inheres and then the motion is cognized. In case of universals (*samanya*), for Naiyayikas, perceptibility depends on the nature of object, viz. all universals associated with perceptible objects are also perceptible by senses and universals subsisting in supersensible (*atindriya*) objects are imperceptible. For Vedantins, as the universals are constituted by the common attributes of individuals, they can be perceived along with the perception of individuals. The perception of the different kinds of universals is mediated by different kinds of sense-contact. Opposite to universals; particularity (*vishesa*) is the ultimate ground of individuality of a thing or its difference from other. It subsists in eternal substances. It is innumerable. Being supersensible, they cannot be perceived. Inherence (*samavaya*) is an eternal relation between two facts. In such case, one inheres in the other. For Naiyayikas, it is an object of perception. It is perceived by senses of sight and touch. For perception of it, the contact is established by way of *vishesyata*, e.g., in case of perception 'the cloth inheres in the threads.' However, according to Vaishesikas, inherence cannot be perceived, it is cognized through inference.

Non-existence or *abhava* is also a category of reality in IP. It refers to non-existent facts, which are as real as any other fact. On the matter of its way of apprehension, there are different opinions in IP. For Bhatta Mimamsakas (one of the two schools of Mimamsa named after Kumarila Bhatta) and Vedantins, it is known by non-perception, as sense-contact is necessary for perception. Vaishesikas and Prabhakaras believe that non-existence is equivalent to the existence of locus, e.g. ground etc. In case of perception of a negative fact its locus is perceived where the hypothetical object is absent. Besides the above mentioned kinds of perception, Naiyayikas also talk about internal or mental perception, of which pain, pleasure etc. are objects.

In IP, a great deal of discussion has taken place about the modes of ordinary perception. Or, it is another way of classifying perception, according to which perception is of three types: indeterminate (*nirvikalpaka*), determinate (*savikalpaka*) and recognition (*pratyabhijna*). However, the third one is also treated as a verity of determinate perception. Determinate perception is what can be identified with and assigned to name, genus etc. The case is not so with indeterminate perception. Indeterminate perception is greatly celebrated in Advaita Vedanta School in which it is deemed to be the knowledge of pure being. Recognition or *pratyabhijna* is perception of an object which has been seen before. According to Naiyayikas, *pratyabhijna* is the conscious reference to a past and a present cognition to the same object. Howsoever; Buddhists interpret recognition as a compound of perception and memory.

The extraordinary perception is also classified further into three types: *samanya-laksana*, *jnana-laksana* and *yogaja*. The first one is the perception of the class-property or of the whole class of some object at the occasion of perceiving any particular object of the class. As in case of perception of a jar, we also perceive the class-property of the jar, viz. jar-ness in it. The extraordinary element in it is that the jar-ness is not directly in contact with the sense, yet it is not inferred but perceived. From the point of view of logic, it is also taken as an inductive element. The second type of extraordinary perception, i.e., *jnana-laksana* is a perception of some property or attribute of an object perceived previously and now present before us as a subject matter of perception of some other property by some other sense. As on seeing a rose flower there takes place the knowledge of its fragrance too. There is a great debate in IP on issues whether such kind of knowledge is an inferential knowledge.

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Yogaja perception is rather intuitive and encompasses the possibility of knowing any object in any fragment of space and time lying even beyond senses. It is enjoyed by those who attain spiritual perfection. Such a perception is explained on the basis of the nature of consciousness, i.e., the unlimited span of it. The limitations of our consciousness are due, not to anything in the nature of consciousness itself, but to the psychological conditions under which it has to work in us. Such considerations suggest that it is possible for human consciousness to have an instantaneous knowledge of all things; provided it can get over its organic limitations and natural distractions. The important thing is that IP in general has been able to agree upon the immediacy of it and thereby admitting it as a perception and not a species if inference.

1.4 EXPLAINING ILLUSORY OR ERRONEOUS PERCEPTION

There has been great debate over interpretation of illusory or erroneous perception. The question is not simply about the problem of interpretation of it, but is about the very authenticity of perceptual cognition itself. If an illusion is also cognized through perception then how can perception at all be relied upon? The responses to the problem have been divergent in different schools of IP, which helped evolve theories called *khyati-vada* for interpretation of the same.

Some of Indian thinkers interpret illusion as non-apprehension of the object as in case of illusion of snake in a rope, the difference is not apprehended. Since all knowledge is valid knowledge, it would be self-contradiction to designate a piece on knowledge as invalid knowledge. This theory of Prabhakara Mimamsa is called *a-khyati-vada*. For Naiyayikas, in such a case of illusion the snake is cognized through a mode of extra-ordinary perception. Maintaining their realism, perhaps they cannot deny the apparent cognition; in place, they would call it cognizing otherwise – *anyatha-khyati*. For some of Buddhist idealists, illusory perception is a case of mental projection – *atma-khyati*. Vedantins treat such cognition as inexplicable – *anirvacaniya*, as the object of it is neither real, nor unreal. Since it is perceived, it cannot be unreal and as is subverted by a following cognition, it cannot be real too.

In this context, we find a tendency of defending all cognition as real amongst realists, whilst for idealist; such a perception is taken as an argument refuting realism or substantiating the

illusoriness of the world. The effort of Indian thinkers has been directed towards defining of perception in such a way that it may well range the cases of illusory perception distinguishing them from right cognition at the same time.

1. 5 LET US SUM UP

Perception is a source of cognition as well a type to true cognition. The essential character of perception is the contact between senses and the object of perception. Internal contents of human cognition like pain, pleasure etc. are cognized through mind and is called mental perception. Due to non-establishment of contact between sense and object, some of Indian thinkers posit a new faculty of cognition for apprehension of absence.

Fundamentally, perception is of two types, indeterminate and determinate. The former is a precognition to the latter one. The latter is assigned name etc. or can be expressed through language. Some of Indian thinkers hold that perception is pure sense-data and is devoid of

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intellectual constructs. Perception is also classified between ordinary and extraordinary type. The extraordinary one is a super-sensing of qualities on the basis of foreknowledge of the objects or that of universals. The capability of *yogaja* perception is available to the enlightened people only.

Our knowledge about categories of reality is very much compatible with the nature of perception or other cognitions. However, on the issues of perceptibility of certain categories, there are ongoing debates too.

1.6. KEY WORDS

Prama: A true cognition

Pramana: Source of a true cognition

Sannikarsa: Contact between senses and their object, which is of six kinds: 1. Conjunction, e.g. contact between eyes and a jar; 2. Conjoined-inherence, e.g. in perception of colour of jar contact takes place between eyes and jar in which colour is inherent; 3. Conjoined-inherent-inherence, e.g. in perceiving the colour-ness, the generic nature of colour; 4. Inherence, e.g. the relation between sound and ear-cavity in perception of sound; 5. Inherent-inherence, e.g. in perception of the generic nature of sound, viz. soundness; 6. Qualification or Particularity, e.g. in case of perception of non-existence of an object we grasp the same on the basis of particularization of the part of space where the intended object hypothetically exists. However, those systems of Indian Philosophy which prescribe an independent source of cognition or means of knowledge, viz. non-apprehension (*anupalabdhi*) for apprehension of non-existence, do not admit this kind of contact or *sannikarsa*.

Karana: Instrument or, instrumental cause of cognition

Nirvikalpaka Pratyaksa: Indeterminate perception

Savikalpaka Pratyaksa: Determinate perception

Pratyabhijna: Recognition

Sakaravada: Cognition 'having form of itself'

Nirakaravada: Cognition 'having no form of itself

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Anupalabdhi: Absence (of an object with which sense-contact is not possible)

1.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1) Determinate perception is such a perception which is cognized with the name, form and genus of an object and can be expressed through language. It involves meaning element too.

2) In mental perception, the object of perception is not available in external world, therefore having no possibility of establishing sense contact. The objects of mental perception like pain, pleasure etc. are internally apprehended by mind.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1) Buddhists approach to perception is purely psychological and segregates the intellectual elements from perceptual element of human cognition. Keeping in view the approach, perception has to be confined to the sense-data alone. Meaning element, for them, is an intellectual construct.

2) Since, there is no possibility of having sense-contact with an absent object; Vedantins posit a new faculty of knowing called *anupalabdhi* or non-apprehension. It has to be identified as an independent source of cognition because absence cannot be known through any other sources of cognition like inference etc.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1) The extraordinary one is a super-sensing of qualities on the basis of foreknowledge of the objects or that of universals. The ordinary type of sense-contact with objects does not take place in this perception. It is of three types: *samanya-laksana, jnana-laksana* and *yogaja.*

2) Recognition is perception of an object which has been seen before. According to Naiyayikas, it is a conscious reference to a past and a present cognition to the same object. Howsoever; Buddhists do not treat it as an independent cognition and interpret it as a compound of perception and memory.

UNIT 2- CONSTRUCTIVIST/ HEREMENEUTICIST VIEW OF PERCEPTION

Contents

2.0 OBJECTIVES

Any discussion on the cognitive nature of perception would have to consider the two contrasting approaches to perception: the constructive and the ecological. Although they seem to be contradictory, attempts are made today to highlight that they in fact deal with different aspects of visual perceptions and that they can indeed co-exist. It is opined that the parallel visual systems, the dorsal and the ventral systems, with their distinctive parallelism to the constructive and ecological approaches, deal with different aspects of perception and together contribute to our pickup of visual information and our perception of reality. This presentation shows not only how these two approaches together can contribute to a better understanding of the cognitive phenomenon of perception, but also highlights how an interdisciplinary approach can give better insights into the complexity of the perceptive phenomenon.

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In comprehending the cognitive process involved in the perceptual phenomenon, a variety of views and approaches have been offered down the centuries. There are two basic types of perceptual question. One type pertains to the object of perception: How do I perceive physical objects in the world outside? Do we perceive things as they are? The second type concerns the perceiver. Human being finds itself in the midst of a world, capable of perceiving and interacting with them. But through our senses are we provided enough data required for our perception? What is the role of the perceiver in the process of perception? Is the perceptive process limited to working with the immediately available sense stimuli or does the perceiver contribute something in addition to them? These questions have evoked equal interest among psychologists and philosophers, giving rise to various psychological and epistemological theories of perception. Dominant among them are the constructivist and ecological theories of perception. "Constructivists" claim that incoming visual data are insufficient and that the brain must supplement these data from its own memory bank to complete the perceptive process. The ecological theory, on the contrary, holds that the sensory information available suffices and thus no "mental processes" are needed to enable the pick-up of the relevant information. According to this theory perception is always in view of some animate action. In response to these contrasting positions, a third position is emerging that although the constructivist and ecological theories of perception do differ, there is certain continuity rather than dichotomy between these two approaches. It is argued that both of them are equally valid descriptions of perception, dealing with different and yet complementary aspects of perception. This paper is a brief account of these three positions.

2.2. THE CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO PERCEPTION

At the basis of constructivist approach to perception is the clear distinction made by some epistemologists and psychologists between sensation and perception, a distinction between merely having sensations and the cognitive phenomenon of perception. The important point here is that sensations are not yet perceptions. Sensation is the subjective experience, the change in the state of mind, produced by the stimulation of an organ of sense, which does not yet imply the knowledge of an external object. Perception stands for the knowledge of an object or its qualities that we obtain by means of our sensations. Included in this perceptual cognitive process is,

besides the sensation, an additional cognitive act of the mind. It is this claim that is central to the constructivist approach to perception.

That we add or contribute something to our perceptual input from our own previous knowledge and experience was first proposed by the Gestalt group. For them, the perception of a whole object is more than the sensory input put together. Then there was the schema theory proposed by Bartlett, that all new perceptual input is analyzed by comparing it with items which are already in our memory store. This becomes clear when we consider how we come to recognize a pen, a former friend, etc. According to this theory, we have an "internal schema" or "template" which is compared with the incoming sensory input. Under the influence of this schema theory, Neisser further differentiated two types of input processing: top down processing and bottom-up processing. It explains two basic ways in which the external world is perceived. The top down processing involves the generation of schemas by the higher cortical structures and these schemas are sent down to the nervous system for comparing them with the incoming stimulus. Top-down processing is thus a schema-driven or conceptually-driven processing, where the perceptual process depends upon the past knowledge and experience. In the context of new experiences the pre-existing schema get modified which again facilitates further experiences. Bottom up processing, on the other hand, starts with the stimulation from the nervous system, progressing towards the higher cortical areas. This is a stimulus-driven or data-driven processing, where the perceptual process depends solely on the sensory input. Top down processing is where higher-level knowledge based information predominates and bottom up is where the information that senses gather about the world by detecting various forms of energy such as sound, light, heat and physical pressure are deemed as sufficient to enable us to perceive.

Constructivists have predominantly favored the top down processes, an affiliation that began over 100 years ago, instigated by Herman Helmholtz (1821-1894). Helmholtz argued that human perception is the product of experience. Let us explain this with an example. How do we see a dog? In perceiving a dog, our previous experience of what a dog looks like, i.e. four legs, tail, specific shape of the body, head, etc. aids our perception. Helmholtz named this process of perceiving a dog in terms of our previous experience an "unconscious interpretation." Thus, for him the basic perceptual processes is a fundamentally unconscious process. Helmholtz was also the first theorist to introduce the concept of 'size constancy'. Size constancy is the ability to

perceive the true size of an object despite variations in the size of its retinal image. Helmholtz claims several elements of knowledge facilitate this ability, including prior experience. Taking this argument further, Irvin Rock and Richard Gregory propose that perception is a kind of hypothesis testing. Signals are received by the sensory receptors like eyes, ears, etc. These then trigger neural events where appropriate knowledge, such as previous experience interacts with the sensory input to create mental data. Thus, for example, even when we see only the tip of a branch of a tree showing itself through a window, we can and do interpret these data as part of a tree. Thus we supplement the information presented to the senses.

The assumption here is that humans are unable to understand new information, without the inherent help of their previous knowledge. When objects are viewed without understanding, the mind will try to reach for something that it already recognizes, in order to process what it is viewing. That which most closely relates to the unfamiliar from our past experiences, makes up what we see when we look at things that we don't comprehend. Thus the perceptive process involves the construction of the object of perception. The data received is interpreted in terms of a subjective framework, consisting of past experiences, subjective make-up, etc.

We can identify three significant features of the constructivist approach to perception. Firstly, this approach assumes that there is a poverty of stimulus. The data reaching our senses are as inherently insufficient, that, by themselves, they are unable to provide a true description of the world. Two reasons as to why our sensory input is limited: 1) our cognitive resources can cope only with a certain amount of incoming information, so that part of it filtered out. 2) the senses may not provide a complete picture. Much of the visual information coming in, especially when the distance is more, or due to other adverse circumstances, could actually be of poor quality. Here we need prior knowledge for interpreting the available sensory input. Sensations thus require 'enriching' in terms of an active and intelligent perceptual system. Such a system takes recourse to interpretative, inferential, and constructive types of mechanisms to overcome this inherent insufficiency of stimulation. The essentially inadequate information available to the senses is used as the basis for making inferences or forming hypotheses in order to make sense of the information presented to the senses. Thus, according to the constructivist approach, sensory stimulation by itself is inadequate to produce perception. Brain's interpretative activity is a critical component. The brain is not just processing what is received, but falls back on the stored

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knowledge from the previous perceptual activity. This naturally implies the formation of incorrect hypotheses as well resulting in perceptual illusion. But, if the stored knowledge does impact negatively what we perceive, why do we make so much use of it. The theory would say that we have no other option since our sensory input is highly impoverished. We need to fall back to such a perceptual system in order to recognize things and people we already know. We need to construct our perception with the help of the stored knowledge.

Secondly, the constructivists see perception as a multistage indirect process. The perceived object is not directly presented by the sensation. There are a number of dimensions mediating the passage from stimulation to the formation of the percept. The constructivist position emphasizes the cognitional dimension inherent in every perceptual process. A stimuli or sensory input, as we have mentioned earlier, does not in itself amount to cognition. It really becomes informative only after the central nervous system has added its own input and interpreted the sensory input. For example, what is actually involved in "seeing" a cat in the corner of the room. The retina of the eye can only receive the visual stimuli, but it does not know anything about cats. The sensory input has to be categorized into a cat. Thus the cat is not perceived directly, but the perception of a cat is a construction of the brain with the help of the received stimuli, an indirect perception.

Thirdly, in constructing such a percept, memory, stored schemata, and past experience play an important role. What we know affects what we perceive, could even overrule the apparent sensory information. It is said that we see things not as they are but as we are. Thus there is a strong interaction between sensory information moving 'bottom-up' and knowledge moving 'top-down'. This interaction determines what is perceived. In recent time, Boring explains this process through a distinction between "core" and "context" of perception. The basic sensory data that connects us most directly to the object is called "core" data of perception. The "context" data of perception, on the other hand, consists of all the other sensory data that modify or correct the data of the core as it forms the perception. This includes everything from the past experience, certain acquired properties of the brain, various expectations triggered by the core data, etc. It is in terms of the context data, the core data is interpreted into a specific percept.

To sum up: the constructivist approach to perception holds the view that perception is an active and constructive process. This position presupposes that perception is not directly given by the

stimulus input. It is rather an end-product of an interactive process between the available, but essentially inadequate sensory stimulus and internal hypotheses, expectations, and stored knowledge. This obviously implies that since perception is influenced by subjective schemas, hypotheses and expectations, the constructed percept will sometimes be incorrect, that perception is essentially prone to error. In short, perceptions are constructions out of fragmentary and inadequate sensory data in terms of mental schemas, previous experiences and present expectations.

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 are the types of Perceptual questions?

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2. What is the main contention of the Constructivist approach?

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2.3. ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO PERCEPTION

Diametrically opposed to the constructivist approach to perception is the perceptual ecology approach of James J. Gibson. In his book, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception,* Gibson presented an exciting new approach to the study of visual perception that included many new concepts and new ways of looking at perception. Gibson rejected the constructivist claim of a poverty of stimulus and the consequent need to fall back on existing schemas in constructing the percepts. He does this by rejecting the basic assumption that perception is based in sensations. Gibson finds the classical approach of describing the stimuli for perception in terms of stimulus energies impinging upon the receptors completely unsatisfactory. Instead, he investigated what information is actually presented to the perceptual systems. He and the psychologists who work within this paradigm detailed how the world could be specified to a mobile, exploring organism via the lawful projection of information about the world into energy arrays. He points to the differences between these energies and the optical information available in the ambient optic array. That information is *picked up* by a stationary or moving observer. Gibson calls attention to the fact that perception consists of perceiving events; i.e., perceiving changes over time and space in the optic array. no enrichment is required and perception is direct perception. For him, the perception of the environment is direct in the sense that it is not mediated by retinal, neural or mental pictures. This direct perception consists in the activity of getting information from the ambient array of light, i.e. a process of "information pickup" though the exploratory activities of looking at things by looking around and moving around.

In answering the question as to what sort of information is picked up in direct perception, Gibson speaks of some higher-order invariants in the optic array that serve to supply the observer with unequivocal information. To illustrate this, he presents a study of size perception he performed during World War II. Aviation cadets were given the task of matching the height of stakes planted at various distances in a very large plowed field with a set of stakes of varying size nearby. The finding of the experiment was that size perception remained invariant no matter how far away the stake was planted. Gibson is suggesting that size constancy results from the direct pickup of invariant ratios in the ambient array. It is also noteworthy that he claims that these invariant ratios are picked up "unawares" . For him, both size and distance are perceived directly.

Gibson's conception is one of an active perceiver exploring his environment. Eye-, head-, and body-movements are part and parcel of the perceptual process. Perception transpires continuously over both time and space. "Space" here refers not to an empty space but to the many surfaces that make up the environment, the most important being the terrain that at times reaches the horizon.

Thus the ecological approach understands perception as a single-stage process. No mediating process is implied. Perception is direct and immediate. Further, this approach foresees no role for memory, past experience, and related phenomena like expectation in perception. While the constructivist approach is concerned with analyzing the processes and mechanisms underlying perception, the ecological approach deals with the analysis of the stimulation reaching the observer. Another important feature of ecological approach is the manner in which perception is associated with action. According to it, perception is a prerequisite for animate action in the sense that without perception action would not be guided and without action perception would be pointless. Perception and movement are the two sides of the same coin, action

2.4. CONVERGENCE: THE DUAL-PROCESS APPROACH

There is an emerging trend today, advocated mainly by Joel Norman, that the two above mentioned approaches to perception, the ecological and the constructivist, are valid descriptions of perception, but the difference is that they treat different aspects of perception. He, in turn, advocates what is known as "the dual-process approach." It is based on the assertion that perception consists of two visual systems functioning more or less in parallel. The two visual systems or rather streams, known as the dorsal and the ventral, deal with different aspects of perception and hence can be seen as co-dimensions of a broader theory of perception. The dorsal system deals mainly with the utilization of visual information for the guidance of behavior in one's environment. The ventral system deals mainly with the utilization of visual information for "knowing" one's environment, i.e., identifying and recognizing items previously encountered and storing new visual information for later encounters. But it should be stressed that both systems overlap in the functions they perform. Understood in this manner, it is easy to see how the ecological approach broadly parallels the functions of the dorsal system, and the constructivist approach broadly parallels that of the ventral system. Thus, properly understood,

the two approaches to perception are just accounts of two pathways of the cognitive process of perception. Let us consider this aspect a little deeper.

This idea of two visual systems or streams itself has a history of its own. Initial distinction was between a cortical (around the brain) system answering the question 'What is it?', and a sub-cortical system answering the question 'Where is it?'. The former came to be known later as the "focal" and the latter as the "ambient" systems. A radical change in this understanding was brought about in 1982 by Ungerleider and Mishkin, who identified rather two separate pathways and called them the "ventral stream" and the "dorsal stream." According to them, the ventral pathway dealt with object identification, and the dorsal pathway dealt with object location. Somewhat similar to the earlier understanding, they called the ventral pathway a "what" system and the dorsal pathway a "where" system, but unlike the earlier understanding, both of these pathways were cortical.

Further advancement to this understanding was provided more recently by Goodale and Milner with a rather different interpretation of the dichotomy between the two streams. They traced the way how the ventral stream transforms visual information into an exocentric (also called "allocentric") framework that facilitates the perception of an object as it relates to the visual world. The dorsal system, on the other hand, transforms visual information into an egocentric framework which facilitates someone either to grasp or physically manipulate an object. As far as the functions of the ventral stream are concerned, their interpretation was similar in the sense that it is mainly involved in the processes of recognition and identification. But in highlighting the functions of the dorsal stream, they provided new insights. The main function of dorsal stream was not just mapping the location of objects, but rather to exercise visual control and guidance of motor behavior. The focus of their study was to highlight how the dorsal stream is capable of utilizing visual information for the control of movement, and how it is dissociated from the ventral stream. Thus, as mentioned above, the major difference between the two streams consists not in the visual information they process, but in the transformations they perform on the available visual information. While the ventral stream transforms visual information into an exocentric or allocentric framework allowing the perception of the object as it relates to the visual world, the dorsal stream transforms visual information into an egocentric framework that facilitates the grasping of an object and its further physical manipulation.

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Let us thus compare the two visual streams and highlight their differences. First difference is, while both systems analyze the visual input, this analysis is carried out for different purposes. The primary function of the ventral stream is the recognition and identification of the visual input. And this recognition and identification takes place through a process of comparison with some stored representation. But, the primary function of the dorsal system is analysis of the visual input in order to facilitate visually guided behavior towards the environment and the objects in it (e.g., pointing, reaching, grasping, walking towards, climbing, manipulating, etc.). These are only the primary functions and no absolute exclusivity need to be attached to it as each of the system may also participate in those functions carried out normally by the other stream. Second difference concerns sensitivity. The two visual systems differ with respect to their sensitivities in the spatial and the temporal domains. The ventral system is more sensitive to high spatial frequencies while the dorsal system is sensitive to high temporal frequencies. In other words, the ventral system is superior at seeing fine details, while the dorsal system is better at seeing motion. The third difference concerns memory. The ventral system is the memory-based system, utilizing stored representations to recognize and identify objects and events. In contrast, the dorsal system appears not to have a long-term storage of information, but only very short-term storage allowing the execution of the motor behavior in question. Forth difference pertains to consciousness. In their normal everyday functioning, we are much more conscious of ventral system functioning and hardly conscious of dorsal system functioning. The final difference consists in the difference of purposes for which both systems process information about objects in our environment. The information processing of the ventral system aims at recognizing and identifying the object and for this purpose all that is needed is object-centered information. In other words, the ventral system utilizes an allocentric frame of reference. In contrast, the dorsal system must perform some action on, or in relation to, the object, such as grasping it. For this purpose it needs to know the dimensions of the object in body-centered terms. For example, it needs to specify, how large should the gap between the thumb and forefinger be in order to pick up that block. Thus, the dorsal system must utilize egocentric frame of reference.

The points above have all pointed to differences between the two systems but it should also be mentioned that the two systems appear to perform many similar functions, may be for quite

different purposes and using quite different mechanisms. Thus, for example, both systems deal with object shapes, sizes, and distances. While the two systems have different functions it should be emphasized that there is a great deal of complementarity between them and they normally function in synergy. Thus, when one picks up a hammer, the control and monitoring of the actual movements is by the dorsal system but there also occurs intervention of the ventral system that recognizes the hammer as such and directs the movement towards picking up the hammer by the handle and not by the head. At times dorsal system processing can enter consciousness via the ventral system after the event. Further, the ventral system often is involved in what appear to be dorsal functions. Let two examples be listed to illustrate this point: 1) when the dorsal system is faced with difficulties in picking up the necessary information, due to, say, insufficient information or conflicting information, the ventral system can be turned to for help. 2) When there is some time delay between the visual input and the required motor output, the ventral system is called upon to temporarily store the visual information as the dorsal system is incapable of bridging that delay.

It is now easy to see the parallelism between the two visual systems and the two approaches we have described above. The dorsal system is similar in function to the ecological approach, which speaks of direct perception. The indirect perception of constructivism parallels the ventral system. The dorsal system, as we saw, picks up visual information mainly to facilitate our life in our environment. It does this more quickly than the ventral system. It does this as a rule without much involvement of conscious awareness and does not involve the cognitive system with the task of "interpreting" the sensual input. Practically all the task of picking up information for enabling the performance of actions or behaviors are carried out by the dorsal system. In contrast, the ventral system primarily serves in the recognition and identification of objects and events in one's environment. It compares visual inputs to stored information in a quest for a meaningful interpretation of those inputs. When needed the ventral system also participates in other perceptual activities, such as different aspects of space perception like the perception of size and distance. As it is the system of which we are normally conscious it has "the last word" as to our judgmental interpretation of stimulation reaching our senses.

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. According to Gibson, what sort of information is picked up in direct perception?

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2. What are the similarities in the two approaches to perception?

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2.5 LET US SUM UP

Thus we can easily see how these apparently contradictory theories do in fact complement each other as they are only looking at two different yet interrelated aspects in the perceptive process. Thus, this interdisciplinary approach to understand and integrate the process of perception can form the basis for a broader theory of perception resulting in a single theory, which is being labeled the "dual-process approach" to visual perception. According to this approach much of our day-to-day pickup of visual information is carried out by the dorsal-ecological system without involving much conscious awareness. To a great extent, the information picked up is that which allows us to function within our environment. The ventral-constructivist system, on the other hand, is a "higher" system that deals with the interface between the visual input and cognition, and we are normally conscious of its output. Only it possesses a long-term memory

and therefore any type of identification or recognition must transpire within it. As the dorsal system is mainly concerned with directing our actions and behaviors in our environment it must rely on body-centered information about the environment and the objects in it. In contrast, the ventral system in its attempt to recognize objects can suffice with relative, object-centered, information.

2.6 KEY WORDS

Perception: The process of using the senses to acquire information about the surrounding environment or situation

Cognitive: Relating to the process of acquiring knowledge by the use of reasoning, intuition, or perception

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2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check your progress I

1. There are two basic types of perceptual question. One type pertains to the object of perception: How do I perceive physical objects in the world outside? Do we perceive things as they are? The second type concerns the perceiver. Human being finds itself in the midst of a world, capable of perceiving and interacting with them. But through our senses are we provided enough data required for our perception? What is the role of the perceiver in the process of perception? Is the perceptive process limited to working with the immediately available sense stimuli or does the perceiver contribute something in addition to them? These questions have evoked equal interest among psychologists and philosophers, giving rise to various psychological and epistemological theories of perception.
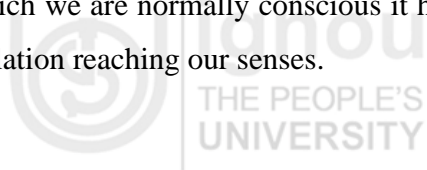
2. At the basis of constructivist approach to perception is the clear distinction made by some epistemologists and psychologists between sensation and perception, a distinction between merely having sensations and the cognitive phenomenon of perception. The important point here is that sensations are not yet perceptions. Sensation is the subjective experience, the change in the state of mind, produced by the stimulation of an organ of sense, which does not yet imply the knowledge of an external object. Perception stands for the knowledge of an object or its qualities that we obtain by means of our sensations. Included in this perceptual cognitive process is, besides the sensation, an additional cognitive act of the mind. It is this claim that is central to the constructivist approach to perception.

Answers to Check your progress II

1. Gibson speaks of some higher-order invariants in the optic array that serve to supply the observer with unequivocal information. To illustrate this, he presents a study of size perception he performed during World War II. Aviation cadets were given the task of matching the height of stakes planted at various distances in a very large plowed field with a set of stakes of varying size nearby. The finding of the experiment was that size perception remained invariant no matter how far away the stake was planted. Gibson is suggesting that size constancy results from the direct pickup of invariant ratios in the ambient array. It is also noteworthy that he claims that these invariant ratios are picked up "unawares" . For him, both size and distance are perceived directly.

2. The dorsal system is similar in function to the ecological approach, which speaks of direct perception. The indirect perception of constructivism parallels the ventral system. The dorsal system, as we saw, picks up visual information mainly to facilitate our life in our environment. It does this more quickly than the ventral system. It does this as a rule without much involvement of conscious awareness and does not involve the cognitive system with the task of "interpreting" the sensual input. Practically all the task of picking up information for enabling the performance of actions or behaviors are carried out by the dorsal system. In contrast, the ventral system primarily serves in the recognition and identification of objects and events in one's environment. It compares visual inputs to stored information in a quest for a meaningful interpretation of those inputs. When needed the ventral system also participates in other perceptual activities, such as

different aspects of space perception like the perception of size and distance. As it is the system of which we are normally conscious it has "the last word" as to our judgmental interpretation of stimulation reaching our senses.

Contents

3.0. OBJECTIVES

The goal of this Unit is to give an insight about one of the important sources of knowledge through which we come to cognise some new knowledge. Although the details of the logical inference are not considered in this unit, it is a very important Unit as it explains one of the sources of knowledge which is important for the course on theory of knowledge, which provides an important discussion on truth and validity of our knowledge. In this unit, we shall attempt to give a definition of inference and how they are classified and the importance of its role in the acquisition of new knowledge. We shall advance this concept both from the western as well as the Indian approaches and how they are both differently and similarly conceived by them. We shall also point out some important objections against inference and discuss whether inference can offer us new knowledge.

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

• to have a basic understanding of Inference;

• to understand the different kinds of inference;

• to have an overview of Indian inference;

• to have an idea about the objections against inference

- to realize the need of inference in obtaining new knowledge

3.1 INTRODUCTION

'Inference' is, in general, a subject matter of epistemology and Logic. To have a better understanding of the concept of inference, it is essential that we comprehend the association between the two major subjects of philosophy. Epistemology is "the science of sure knowledge." It deals with the nature and validity of knowledge: that is about the *truthfulness* of our knowledge. On the contrary, Logic is interested in the *correct* form of the argument. "Logic teaches us how to use one's mind; how to draw a conclusion from the given premises;" but it does not teach us whether what we thought or arrived at is true or false. It is outside the scope of logic to guarantee us whether the conclusion arrived at is true or false. Truth and falsity belong to the field of epistemology. Although both are concerned about knowledge, their scope is different. In this unit, we shall try to understand inference from the epistemological point of view rather than that of logic; however, it is inevitable to avoid certain logical arguments, mostly propositional logic, to have a better understanding of inference.

The Place of Inference

One of the essential discussions of epistemology is on the valid sources of knowledge: *how* or through which, one comes to the process of cognition. The principal sources of knowledge are classified into two: sensible and intellectual. The first does not belong to this unit and therefore not the scope of this unit. The second principal source is 'intellectual'.

For most part of it, we acquire new knowledge of the reality through the intellect. The Intellect gives us two types of knowledge: immediate and mediate. By Immediate, we mean that knowledge that we gain intuitively, by looking at an object. We identify a person that he/ she is somebody and he / she is not somebody else. For example, you identify that somebody is Praveen and Praveen is the son of Prakash – this is known as the principle of identity. So also there are other principles which are given to us by the intellect immediately. Mediate or reflective knowledge is acquired with "different operations of our intellect and through the

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secondary sources." By secondary source, we mean that the knowledge already obtained through perception, or other previous knowledge. This intellectual process is called reasoning or inference. Therefore, inference will have its place right here in the mediate / reflective knowledge in which we move from the perceptual knowledge to the new knowledge.

3.2 DEFINITION OF INFERENCE

Aristotle (384 – 322 B.C.), one of the prominent philosophers of the ancient Greece, introduced the process of inference in the western philosophical world through syllogism – a three statement propositions in which the conclusion is drawn from the previous two propositions.

Dictionary of philosophy defines inference as the process that refers to "the drawing of a conclusion." It is also called *reasoning*. Thomas Aquinas says, "to reason is to advance from one thing understood to another." That is, we pass from what is known to the unknown. We shall give an example: We are sitting in a room and the door is closed. All of us hear a 'triple knock' on the door. All that your senses tell you is that there was a sound produced on the door. It is the intellect, which does not see the person(s) knocking at the door conceives of different possibilities. It may be a single person who knocked at the door thrice: or it may be two persons, one knocked twice and the other once: or still, there were three persons who knocked at the door at regular intervals. Although it is insignificant to know how many knocked at the door, it is important to know that from what is given to us through the senses, the intellect goes through a process to have knowledge of what happened. This process of drawing conclusion is known as inference. This process can be related to the past, present or future events and occurrences.

We apprehend an event through perception and the intellect makes a judgment and "on the basis of judgment previously made" we infer or draw a conclusion. This process of coming to a new knowledge is called inference. We shall attempt to explain this from propositional logic. In logic, "the propositions which lead up to the new truth are called the *antecedent*. They give the reasons *why* we can assert the new truth. The proposition which expresses the new truth is called the *consequent*. The consequent flows from the antecedent as necessarily caused by it." Because of

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the antecedents we are able to know the consequent for certain. The certainty of knowledge can be attained through this form inference.

While attempting to understand inference, it is necessary that we introduce another notion, which is apparently similar to it, but very much different from it. That notion is 'argument.' We should not misunderstand that inference is an argument. There are lot of differences between an argument and inference. "An inference can be defined as the psychological process of moving from one thought to another. An argument can be constructed that corresponds to an inference. But an inference is not equivalent to an argument. Furthermore, the premises of a good argument imply, they do not infer, its conclusion, since only persons can make inferences." For inference itself is not an argument. Arguments are constructed to correspond to the inference. Therefore "it is only correct to say that the persons make inferences and the premises of a good argument imply the conclusion." So we could say that reasoning or inference is the process of the intellect which infers a new cognition from an already known cognition.

3.3. KINDS OF INFERENCE

While there are disputes among scholars with regard to the classification of inference, we shall classify it in the most known way. Inference or reasoning is of two kinds: one is deductive and the other is inductive: the former is subdivided further into two as immediate and mediate, while the latter is divided into many kinds of which we shall discuss the important kinds in a while in this unit.

Deduction

Aristotle had held high deductive inference over induction, so much so Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) wrote, and rightly so, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that Aristotle's theory of logic completely accounted for the core of deductive inference. For him certainty or being closer to the truth is attained only through deductive inference. We shall first define deduction. A deduction is defined as "a valid inference from *necessary* premises." By necessary, we mean premises that are self-evident truths or well established truths. The statement with which we begin a proposition is

called major premise. In deductive inference, the major premise is true. For example: "all humans are mortal." This is a necessary premise. From this truth, you may arrive at new knowledge. You find then that Raja is a human being. Therefore you infer that Raja is mortal. The knowledge you have about the particular is true. Therefore according to him this form of inference is the best way to have new and true knowledge. Since we move from a general truth to the particular, deduction is understood as "a valid inference from more *general* premises to a less general, i.e. more specific, conclusion" (*Dictionary of Philosophy*). In deduction it is very vital to note the very essential and basic point that if the premise is true then the conclusion must be *true*, which is not the case in induction.

Deductive inference could be divided into two: Namely, immediate inference and mediate inference, of which we shall discuss in the next subdivision.

Immediate inference

Strictly, immediate inference belongs to the field of logic; nevertheless we include it here that we have an overall understanding of inference. In the above said example, we notice that there were three statements, of which the first two are called as antecedent and the last as consequent. Immediate inference is a different kind of deductive inference which does not need two premises (antecedent) to arrive at a conclusion but a single premise is sufficient. "Immediate inference is a kind of deductive inference, in which, the conclusion follows from *one premise*." Because we have classified it under deduction, it is important to note that the conclusion cannot be *more general* than the premise. To put it differently, it is a process in which you infer one proposition from the *given* proposition. Immediate inferences are of many kinds of which we shall see only the four.

Conversion

The first type of immediate inference is known as 'conversion.' "Conversion is a kind of immediate inference, in which there is a legitimate transposition of the subject and the predicate of a proposition." for example, from the given example of "No dogs are felines" you infer that "No felines are dogs." We shall give another example: the converse of "Some snakes are poisonous animals" is "Some poisonous animals are snakes."

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Obversion

"obversion is a kind of immediate inference in which there is a change in the quality of the given proposition, while its meaning remains unchanged." For example, the obverse of "All ants are insects" is "No ants are non-insects"; the obverse of "Some musicians are males" is "Some musicians are not non-males."

Contraposition

"Contraposition is a kind of immediate inference in which from a given proposition we infer another proposition, having its subject the contrary of the given predicate." For example, the contrapositive of "All crows are birds" is "All non-birds are non-crows."

Inversion

"Inversion is a kind of immediate inference in which from a given proposition we infer another proposition, having its subject the contradictory of the given subject."
For example the inversion of "all men are mortal" is some not-men are not-mortal."

These four of them are called 'eductions.' Eductions may be defined as those forms of immediate inference in which from a given proposition, accepted as true, we derive others implied in it, though differing from it in subject or predicate or both." Apart from the above mentioned immediate inferences, there are also other kinds, like oppositions, modal consequence, change of relation, inference by Added Determinants and inference by complex conception.

What occurs in the immediate inference is that we infer another proposition which is already implied in it. Therefore there is a discussion among scholars about 'immediate inference' whether it is an inference at all, because there is no new knowledge is arrived at through this inference; what happens is only an explication of what is implicit. We are not offering any justification to state that immediate inference is a genuine form of inference but it is good to

know that when we discover what is hidden in a proposition or an object it offers us a new of knowledge.

Mediate deductive inference

Contrast to immediate inference, the consequent or the new knowledge is deduced from more than one proposition: that is "the conclusion follows from more than one proposition. Where there are only two premises, and the conclusion follows from them taken jointly." This form of mediate inference is called "syllogism." "The nature of syllogistic reasoning was first disengaged, as said already, by Aristotle in the *Prior Analytics* in which he undertook to lay bare the essential structure of scientific knowing." He defines syllogism as "an argument in which, certain truths having been assumed, something other than these follows of necessity from their truths, without needing any term outside" (I .1 24b 18). We could say that syllogism is "the outward expression of deductive sequence." We are probably familiar with the famous syllogism.

i)   All men are mortal

ii)   Socrates is a man

iii)   Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

The conclusion of the syllogism rests upon the preceding two propositions (i and ii). We arrive at a specific and a particular knowledge from a more general knowledge. In this way of reasoning, one can be sure that what he knows is true. But in our ordinary life we won't be using formal syllogism to deduce certain knowledge. Aristotle is aware of this and suggests the use of what he calls as *Enthymeme*. It is a kind of syllogism in which the any of the premise will be missing. For example to try to prove the certainty of truth we say: Socrates was mortal for he was only a man. What is missing here is the Major premise that all men are mortal: but it is so obvious that it is not needed in persuasion. Mostly it is used in debates, in court rooms for the benefit of persuasion. We know that we cognise through deduction, complete or incomplete, to know and to prove that something is true.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

Induction

In the history of western philosophy from the period of Aristotle majority of them accepted deductive inference to be a valid form of inference. But From the modern period philosophers, particularly Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626) "lamented the powerlessness of deduction" because they insisted it is not a useful form of inference to advance to new knowledge. Because what happens in deduction is simply the *explication* of what is implied in the major premise and the conclusion cannot be more general than the major premise. Therefore, they propose inductive inference to be the sole inference which can offer us to have *new* knowledge.

Compared to deduction, induction moves from specific instances to have a general conclusion. The traditional definition of Induction is that it is an "inference in which the intellect moves to cognise from a finite number of particular cases to a further case or to a general conclusion." We shall give a familiar example: we observe that swan A is white, then swan B is white, and therefore we conclude that all swans are white. We make a movement from the particular to make a larger conclusion which is *not* implied in the antecedent. Bacon and J. S. Mill (1806 – 1873) did not see any problem with this conception of inductive inference. But others pose different problems with this kind of understanding of inference: namely "to categorically accept

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another statement on the basis of premises that are categorically accepted." The problems arise out of the uncertainty involved in this inference. That has given rise to understanding inductive inference differently by different people. We shall therefore first explain how mill and others understood induction and the other kinds of induction in the following section.

Inductive generalization / Enumerative induction

It is a kind of an inference, where lot of particulars are observed from which we try to generalise the conclusion. In fact the definition we gave in the last passage directly applies to the enumerative induction. The standard example of this kind of inference is the following: from all the observed ravens being black, we infer that all ravens are black. Mill argued that "inductive generalization is the only legitimate kind of induction." That is why this is called *ampliative*. But the problem with this kind of induction is, (with any kind of induction for that matter) how could we move from the observed objects to the unobserved objects. For example, all the swans observed in the 18th century Europe were white. And therefore we make a conclusion that all swans are white. But that is not true. Swans in Australia were observed to be black. Therefore the conclusion is false. This uncertainty of the conclusion in induction is a hindrance to have a true knowledge.

Statistical inductive generalisation

Some scholars propose therefore that induction has to be conceived differently. In their view, the conclusion has to be inferred based on the *percentage* of the observed particulars. Suppose we know by induction that 90 percentages of women in Japan are less than 5 feet; then we could infer the conclusion that the next woman from Japan will have a 90percentage chance of being less than 5 feet and make a conclusion that 90 percentage of women in Japan are less than five feet.

Probability theory

Rudolf Carnap (1891 – 1970), Richard C. Jeffrey (1926 – 2002) and others hold that "induction should be conceived not as a process by which we pass from some accepted statements to others, but rather as a process by which we assign probabilities to various hypothesis in the light of our evidence." This type of induction involves a two-step process: the first is in identifying a broad

class of possible confirmation functions and the second in identifying either a unique function in that class or a parametric family of specific confirmation functions. In Fact, the modern probability theory is influenced by Thomas Bayes (c. 1702 – 1761). There are also some problems in this view. We shall explain it with a thought experiment 'the Lottery Paradox' proposed by Henry E. Kyburg (1928 – 2007) in which we will be forced rationally to accept the contradictory propositions that one ticket wins and no ticket wins: because it is probable that any ticket can win but at the same time every ticket has more probability of losing than winning.

Predictive inference

It is a form of inference that emphasises the prediction of future occurrences based on the past observation. It could be based on cause and effect relationship or analogy. That there is fire because there is smoke or that it will rain because there are dark clouds. The Indian scholars in fact have different names for this kind of inference.

The principle of induction

From what we have seen so far, we could realize that everyone proposes different understanding of inductive inference to eliminate the possibility of having *false* knowledge. We could also understand that there is a principle that is operative in this form of inductive inference which is known as the principle of induction. This principle is formulated as "the assertion that events in the future will resemble events in the past, or that unobserved cases will resemble observed cases." Some even argue that this principle may be used "to reduce all inductive arguments to deductive arguments." But the question how one could really justify the principle of induction has given rise to what is known as the problem of induction, which will be discussed in final section.

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 classical definition of inductive inference?

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2) What is the principle of induction?

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3.4. INDIAN THEORY OF INFERENCE

Introduction

Indian philosophy which is older than the western tradition had a deep philosophical outlook on the theory of knowing. They discuss in detail the sources of knowledge, particularly inference. In Sanskrit the term *Pramana* conveys the meaning of the *source* of knowledge. The chief *Pramanas* which are discussed by majority of them are two: namely perception (*Pratyaksa*) and inference which is indicated by the term *Anumana*. Of course there are also other valid sources which are accepted like Verbal testimony (*sabda*), comparison (*Upamana*) etc. In Indian philosophy, logic and epistemology were joined together and were not separated as in the western thought. "What was meant by syllogistic reasoning corresponds in India to what is known as *anumana* – inference. Inference in Indian understanding includes both 'deduction' and 'induction.'

Meaning of the Term *Amumana:*

The Sanskrit word *Anumana* is the combination of two words. *Anu* means after and *mana* means measurement. "The whole word literally means the measuring after something." According to them it is a knowledge that is obtained after proof. We know by now that knowledge derived through *anumana* is not direct "since it makes use of previous knowledge obtained" from other

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sources of knowledge like perception, testimony etc., and "enables one to explore further knowledge." Not all the major Indian philosophical systems accept all the *pramanas*. For example, the Carvakas – the Indian materialists who hold the theory that matter is the only reality – do not accept *anumana* as a valid source of knowledge.

Structure of Anumana

Although all the major schools accept *anumana* as a valid source of knowledge, the understanding and the explanation of each school will have certain variation according to their understanding of knowledge. In Indian philosophy inference is used for oneself and inference for others. When inference is used for oneself the propositions are not well structured since its primary aim is the acquisition of personal knowledge without error, whereas inference for others has to be well structured because it is used to convince the other of the truth. We shall in this unit concentrate mainly the understanding on Nyaya because it is well known for its logic.

Inference is defined by them as "a process of reasoning in which we pass from the apprehension of some mark (*linga*) to that of something else by virtue of an invariable relation (*vyapti*) that exists between them." *Vyapti* is essential in Indian philosophy for making a valid inference: however, it is good to know that different schools had different names for *vyapti*; For example, Vaisesikas called it *Prasiddhi* and Samkhya called it *pratibandha.*

Nyaya proposes a longer syllogism; it has five propositions. An argument according to them has five parts: Namely, *Paksa or Pratinjna, hetu, drastanta, upanaya and nigamana.* We shall give a standard example to understand this.

1. Paksa – The Thesis / Pratijna – Proposition= The hill has fire
2. Hetu – Reason or the ground = Because it has smoke
3. Drstanta – The corroboration = wherever there is smoke

there is fire, as in the kitchen

4. Upanaya – The application = the hill is so
5. Nigamana – the conclusion = Therefore the hill has fire.

In this process, we begin asserting something, then we provide the reason / the ground for the assertion and make a universal proposition which shows the concomitant relationship between

the two with an example then we apply the universal proposition to the present case and make a conclusion from the preceding propositions. This type of syllogism is said to have *anvaya vyapti* – since it denotes a positive concomitance – if there is smoke then there is fire. We shall give a specimen from the western example: 1) Ram is mortal 2) Because he is a man 3) All men are mortal like my grandfather 4) Ram is also a man 5) Therefore Ram is mortal. The purpose of giving this example is also to show how Indian philosophy combined both induction and deduction together in the same syllogism. The first 3 propositions (1 – 3) form inductive syllogism, while the last three (3 – 5) form as a deduction. The proposition 3 is the conclusion for the induction and the major premise for the deduction.

When it denotes negative concomitance it is said to have *vyatireka Vyapti*. An example of this is the opposite of what we have stated above. The hill has no smoke; because there is no fire; wherever there is no fire there is no smoke as in the lake (because water and fire are opposed substances); there is no fire in the hill; therefore the hill has no smoke.

Classification of Inference

Inference here is classified based on the nature of *vyapti* between *hetu* (smoke) *sadhya (*fire). *Vyapti* denotes a correlation between two facts of which one is pervaded and the other which pervades. E.g. Smoke is pervaded by fire and fire pervades smoke. *Vyapti* is established based on its presence of both in all such events (wherever there is smoke there is fire) and the absence of both (wherever there is no fire there is no smoke). The classification is based on the relationship (causal uniformity or non-causal uniformity) between the reason and what is inferred. There are three types of inference.

1. *Purvavat* inference

   "It is that in which we infer the unperceived effect from a perceived cause." E.g. we infer of future rain from the appearance of dark heavy clouds.

2. *Sesavat* inference

   "It is that in which we infer the unperceived cause from a perceived effect." E.g. we infer of the past rain from swift muddy current of water in the river.

3. *Samanyatodrasta* inference

"It is that which we infer not based on causal relation but on experience of uniformity." E.g. on seeing the different positions of the moon at long intervals, we infer that it moves although the motion might not have been perceived by us.

3.5 CRITIQUE OF INFERENCE

Having seen both Indian and western understanding of inference, it is good to evaluate them. There are quite a few objections raised by some philosophers who are suspicious about the inferential knowledge we acquire. Since this needs an elaborate study by itself we shall restrict ourselves to some important objections alone.

The first one is with regard to deduction. If one has to obtain a true cognition through inference, it is essential and necessary that the major premise as well as the minor premise be true. We can easily recognize the truthfulness of the minor premise "since it is an object of direct perception. But the problem is, "how can the major premise be recognized to be true since it is not such an object of direct perception?" we shall enumerate the following example to make it clear. Suppose we say that 'all that begin to exist must someday cease to exist' (major): you have begun to exist. Therefore you must someday cease to exist. The question regarding the major premise is this. How does one know that 'all that begin to exist must someday cease to exist' is unconditionally or necessarily true? Has anyone sense experienced all things – not only the present but also of the past and future. Therefore such a statement is a generalization which cannot be proved to correspond to facts. Scholars reply that the truth of deduction depends on self evident principles or self evident truth. Take for example the principle of non-contradiction which is a self evident principle – A being cannot be and not be at the same time under the same respect." It does not need any proof.

Another objection with regard to deduction is that it does not offer any new knowledge. As to whether inference can yield new knowledge even granting that the conclusion is implied in the major premise – the answer seems to be that to come to an *explicit awareness* of what is only

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logically implied in a already known truth is surely a process of every act of *understanding*. Whether is not one prepared to call this newly explicated awareness 'knowledge' depends on one's understanding of the term.

The next objection is with regard to induction. We have explained about the principle of induction. But the problem is how to justify that principle? The problem was first raised by David Hume. Hume does not use the word induction; nevertheless it has come to be known as the *problem of induction*, wherein he is stating that this form of inference cannot be justified. There are two things involved in induction. First, What we do in inference is to generalise the properties of a class from a certain number of observed instances of that class: for example that swan A, B, C, … X are white therefore all swans are white. We apply whiteness to all swans. The next we do is to infer certain laws based on our observation in the past. How to justify these steps is the philosophical question known as the problem of induction. Some scholars try to answer that "in the past, similar things behaved similarly under similar circumstances. Therefore, all similar things behave similarly under similar circumstances." What has happened here is that an inductive argument has been used to justify the principle of induction and therefore ending up in circularity; but some claim that this circularity is legitimate which is not universally accepted. Hume raises the question that the past cannot be foundation for the future events which we infer based on their causal connections. Hume says:

> For all inferences from experience suppose, as their foundation, that the future will resemble the past, and that similar powers will be conjoined with similar sensible qualities. If there be any suspicion that the course of nature may change, and that the past may be no rule for the future, all experience becomes useless, and can give rise to no inference or conclusion." (Section IV 32 in the *Enquiry*)

Let us explain the problem from the same example. I can perceive *some* things which begin to exist and then cease to exist. For example I plant a tree and I see it dying. I have seen my friend being born and dying. But the question is: how could one say that they cease to exist because they began to exist? In other words, even if decomposition was an essential characteristic of things which I sense perceived to have ceased to exist, how can I say that all things are, in this respect, similar to them? How can I form a 'class' of things characterized by the same

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characteristics? What I sense perceive is in this particular thing and in that particular thing, but not any 'universal.' How could I make a jump from the particular to the class of things? It cannot be merely based on the regularity of nature because there is no certainty that nature will behave the same way tomorrow. It leaves lots of uncertainty about the fact that we assert. So, many claim that inductive inference cannot give us a sure knowledge. Karl Popper (1902 – 1994) maintained that "what is called induction is a myth in as much as what passes under the title 'is always invalid and therefore clearly not justifiable." He says that only deduction has the power to prove a scientific theory. Therefore Popper proposes what is called Hypothetico-deductive method.

Hypothetico-deductive method

Since there is a problem about making a generalisation from the observed to the unobserved, this method is suggested. This has three steps: "1) the formulation of a "hypothetical" generalisation; 2) the deduction of particular observation statements from this generalisation; and 3) the testing of the observation statements whether they confirm or falsify the generalisation." We shall explain it with the example given by Robert Baum. 1) All sea otters use rocks to crack open the sea shells. It is simply a working hypothesis. 2) Next sea otter will use rock to crack open the sea shells. We deduce the observation statements. We may deduce any number of propositions like the 23rd sea otter will crack open the sea shells. 3) The third step involves in justifying the proposition which involves the process of falsification. The more we observe the greater certainty we can have about the generalisation.

It is good to note at this juncture that there was a different response to the problem from India. While Popper suggests hypothetico method, the Indian schools propose hypothesis itself as an independent source of knowledge apart from inference. For examples, Mimamsa accepts *arthapathi* (postulation or hypothesis) as an independent response. From the western point of view, it may said to be a kind of inference. But *Mimamsikas* explain that it is not; because there are cases in which there may not be any (*vyapti)* invariable *concomitance* between *hetu* and *sadhya*. For example; a man is seen fasting during the day. Yet he is growing fat. Therefore we say that he should be eating at night – this is a hypothesis / postulation. Here there is no

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invariable concomitance between fatness and eating at night. Therefore *arthapathi* is an independent source of knowledge. Hypothesis as an independent source was an answer to the jump we make from the observed to the unobserved facts.

To conclude let us say that unless and until one is prepared to posit some kind of insight into the whole process – obtaining any new knowledge – including perceptually knowable – one cannot start even meaningfully about anything at all. For the critique against inference themselves fall into using categorical statements and concepts which are cognized through inference. Hence it is difficult to do away with inference. We shall conclude that as Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* says that "Our knowledge springs from two fundamental sources of the mind; the first is the capacity of receiving representations (receptivity for impressions), the second is the power of knowing an object through these representations (spontaneity [in the production] of concepts)." Inference then is necessary, although there are lot of problems connected with this, to obtain true and valid knowledge.

Check Your Progress III
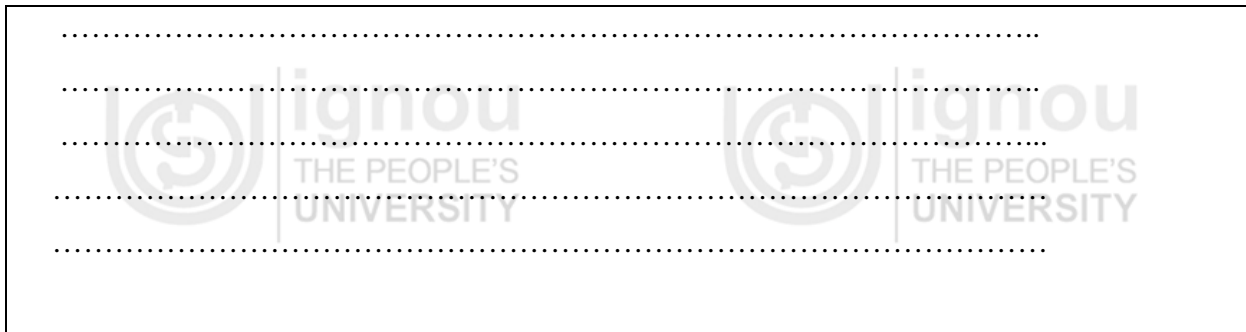
Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) What is *anumana?*
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2)   What is the problem of induction?
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3.6 LET US SUM UP

We began this unit in situating inference as one of the important sources of knowledge. We gave a definition of inference which is a psychological process in which we move from the previous knowledge to have a new knowledge. We differentiated it from argument saying that only persons can *infer* while an argument could only *imply*. We classified inference into two: deduction and induction. Deduction is a kind of reasoning in which we arrive at a new knowledge from the given propositions or self evident principles. Deduction is divided into two as immediate inference and mediate inference. The difference between them lie in the number of propositions; while the former infers the new proposition from one proposition the latter needs at least two or more premises.

We discussed then about inductive inference which was important particularly in the field of science to arrive at new knowledge. We examined the different understanding of induction because of the problem involved in the principle of induction which is at the bottom of making any inductive inference. We then gave an overview of Indian theory of inference which unites both deduction and induction in the same syllogism. We also brought to our notice the different kinds of inference which is classified based on *vyapti*. We then discussed the problems related to inference and how we could respond to those problems. Hence at the end of the unit we know by now that inference is part and parcel of the process of cognition because it is only reasoning that helps to acquire new knowledge without which our knowledge would be always stand still. That is why with Kant we could say that "though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it *all arises out of experience*."

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3.7 KEY WORDS

Syllogism: "it is a form of mediate deductive inference, in which the conclusion is drawn from two premises, taken jointly." Syllogism consists of three propositions.

Enthymeme: "an enthymeme is a syllogism with some of its constituent propositions suppressed." Suppose I say that Socrates is mortal for he is a man, what is suppressed is the major premise "all men are mortal." It can then said to be an incomplete syllogism.

*Vyapti***:** It denotes a correlation between two facts of which one is pervaded and the other which pervades. E.g. Smoke is pervaded by fire and fire pervades smoke. *Vyapti* is established based on its presence of both in all such events (wherever there is smoke there is fire) and the absence of both (wherever there is no fire there is no smoke).

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3.9. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check your progress I

1. Inference is the process that refers to "the drawing of a conclusion." It could be also called *reasoning*. Reasoning or inference is the process of the intellect which moves to a new cognition from an already known cognition.

2. A deduction is defined as a valid inference from *necessary* premises. Deduction is in general understood as a valid inference from more *general* premises to a less general, i.e. more specific, conclusion.

Answers to Check your progress II

1. The classical definition of Induction defines induction as an inference in which the intellect moves to cognise from a finite number of particular cases to a further case or to a general conclusion.

2. The principle of induction is formulated as "the assertion that events in the future will resemble events in the past, or that unobserved cases will resemble observed cases."

Answers to Check your progress III

1. The Sanskrit word *Anumana* is the combination of two words. *Anu* means after and *mana*, which is the same as in the end of *pramana*, literally means measurement. "The whole word literally means the measuring after something."

2. The problem of induction is the philosophical question of inductive inference whether it leads to truth. It raises the need for justification for the two important functions that are part of the inductive inference: generalization and the belief in the causal link of events which rests on the regularity of nature.

UNIT 4   **TESTIMONY (*SABDA*)**

Contents

4.0 Objectives

4.1 Introduction

4.2 The Meaning of *Sabda* and various Types of *Sabda.*

4.3 The Concept of *Sabda* in the Indian Classical Systems

4.4 The Concept *Sphota*

4.5 Let us Sum up

4.6 Key Words

4.7 Further Readings and References

4.8 Answers to check your Progress

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this unit are:

- to make clear the importance and significance of *Sabda* (Testimony) in acquiring valid knowledge

- to show the nature of verbal testimony

- to demonstrate the understanding of testimony in various Indian Classical systems like, Sāmkya, Nyāya, Vaisesika, Mimamsa, Advaita etc.

- To introduce the *Sphota* Theory.

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Indian logic, true knowledge is *prama* and the means for valid knowledge are known as *pramānas*. The most distinguishing feature of Indian thinking on *pramāna* is the theory of *sabda* (testimony). The western epistemologies recognize one or more of the following sorts of cognition-perception, reasoning, introspection and memory. But of late, many more philosophies

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have come to emphasize on the decisive role that language plays in shaping our knowledge. But no one recognizes language or verbal utterance itself as a means of acquiring knowledge about the world. A lot of knowledge that we all have is linguistic as many contemporary philosophers say which is different thing from saying that language itself is a means of knowing something about the world. The Indian epistemologies consequently not only recognize *sabda* that is hearing the utterance of a competent speaker as a *pramāna* but as the decisive source of our cognitions about all those matters that transcend the limits of possible sensory experience.

Testimony (*sabda-pramāna*) is an important source of knowledge. Our experience shows that the major part of a person's stock of knowledge about the world is acquired from the oral or written testimony of other persons. The importance of testimony becomes obvious when we imagine a person deprived of all contact with other persons and books in which case he would simply be reduced to the level of a brute. Testimony has been recognized as an independent source of knowledge by all Indian philosophers except the Carvaka, the Buddhists and the Vaisesika. The Carvaka rejects testimony in general because according to him, it does not give valid knowledge and scriptural testimony in particular because vedic knowledge in his opinion is all fraud, a device of the cunning priests to earn their living by cheating the ignorant masses. The Buddhist and the Vaisesikas recognize testimony but not as an independent means of knowledge. They reduce testimony to inference.

4.2 THE MEANING OF *SABDA* AND VARIOUS TYPES OF *SABDA*

Gautama defines *Sabda* as *āptopadēsa*, instruction from an apt or fit person and later on as *āpta-vākya*. The fit person is defined as *yathārtha vakta*, speaker of truth. definition of *sabda: āpatasya vacanam sabdah*. The reliability of a person making a statement is a condition ensuring the validity of the knowledge derived in this way.

There are two ways of classifying testimony. According to one classification testimony can be of two kinds that relating to perceptible object and that relating to imperceptible objects. The trustworthy assertions of ordinary, the saints and the scriptures about the perceptible objects of the world such as the statements of a reliable farmer about plants, the scriptural injunctions to perform certain rites to bring about rainfall etc. and the assertions of trustworthy persons, saints,

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prophets and the scriptures about super-sensible realities such as a scientists' assertions about atoms, ether etc., the prophet's instructions regarding virtue and vice, the scriptural texts regarding God, freedom, immortality etc. come under first classification.

According to another classification, there are two kinds of testimony, the scriptural (*vaidika*) and the secular (*laukika*). The Vedas are not impersonal but personal compositions of God, the omniscient person and are therefore perfect and valid. The secular testimony of trustworthy persons is valid while that of unworthy persons is invalid. The first classification is based on the nature of the objects of knowledge and the second on the source of knowledge. But the two classifications agree in implying that testimony must always be personal, that is, based on the words of some trustworthy person, human or divine.

In short, testimony may be verbal or non-verbal. Non-verbal testimony consists of gestures. But it is not important because it lacks precision. Gautama defines verbal testimony as the statement of a reliable person. Verbal testimony consists of verbal statements of people intended to express certain facts.

4.3 THE CONCEPT OF *SABDA* IN INDIAN CLASSICAL SYSTEMS

The different systems in India give different explanations for *Sabda* and demonstrate its implications differently. We shall discuss briefly the understanding of the concept of *Sabda* in those systems.

Sabda in Sāmkya System

Sāmkya does not recognize secular testimony as an independent source of valid knowledge since it depends on perception and inference. Valid testimony is true revelation. The Vedas are revelations of super-sensible realities, which are beyond the range of perception and inference to inspired seers (*r'sis*). The Vedas are *apaurusēya* (impersonal) because they are not composed by any human person, and not even by God. The Vedas embody the intuitions of enlightened seers.

Sabda in Nyaya System

According to Nayyāyikas the 4th means of valid knowledge is *sabda* (word). Knowledge of words is the instrumental cause, is the perception of words by the sense of hearing of verbal knowledge or the knowledge of words, which arises from seeing the script. The operation of the instrumental cause is the recollection of the meaning of words.

Gotama defines testimony as the instruction of a trustworthy person who has immediate knowledge of the Moral Law (*Dharma*) and who is competent to guide others in the performance of their duties and the abstention from sins for the attainment of good and avoidance of evil. Trustworthy persons are those who perceive objects as they exist in their real nature and communicate their right knowledge to others for their benefit out of compassion for them. They are free from attachment. The assertions of those who know truth but speak falsehood are not valid. The assertions of trustworthy persons which are not fit for guiding persons in the performance of right actions and non-commission of sins are not testimony. Untrustworthy persons are tainted with delusion. Testimony is an instruction which is expressed in a sentence or proposition. While the validity of verbal knowledge depends on its being based on the statement of a trustworthy person, its possibility depends on the understanding of the meaning of the statement. Therefore *sabda* as a source of valid knowledge consists in understanding the meaning of the statement of a trustworthy person.

The Nyāya definition presupposes that all verbal statements are made by persons. But the Mimamsakas have reason to disagree with it. At least in one case namely, the case of vedic statements, he holds that there are statements which are not made by any person. According to the Nyāya, vedic statements of God who is a supernatural person. We acquire knowledge of facts from verbal testimony more frequently than by the sense organs and inference. We acquire from verbal testimony not only a knowledge of facts but also of its validity. I perceive something and if I have any doubt about it I judge the validity of my perception by the statements of other perceivers. But this does not reduce perception to verbal testimony. Hence verbal testimony is an independent source of knowledge.

Knowledge based on testimony is of two kinds, one arising from the words of a person and the other arising from the words of impersonal origin as the testimony is secular and

scriptural accordingly. Secular testimony is the statement of a trustworthy person and scriptural testimony is the statement of the Vedas. Scriptural sentences are eternal having no human or divine origin or authorship. A sentence uttered by a trustworthy person issues from a faultless source. There being no defect in the source, both the kinds of sentences are valid. Words are not created by any agency. A *pramāna* is invalidated by the defects of its source. The Veda, as it has no author, has no cause or source. Therefore there is no possibility of its being invalidated by defects of the source.

A sentence is of two kinds, one which expresses some existing thing and the other which expresses something to be done. The former is the statement of a fact and the latter is that of a command. The former refers to such facts as 'this is a man' and the latter to commands such as 'do this' etc. We divide factual statements into affirmative, negative, hypothetical, disjunctive etc. An affirmative statement refers to the existence of something. But this something is not the universal directly denoted by the subject-word. It is rather the individual qualified by the universal. Regarding negative factual sentences, Kumarilla Bhatta says that they refer to non-existence, which is a fact like existence. Regarding a disjunctive statement Kumarilla says that it refers to a subjective attitude of doubt towards some fact. Reality is not disjunctive. When our knowledge of reality is not definite, we make disjunctive statements like 'this is a man or a post'.

The Logical Structure of a Sentence

Testimony is expressed in a sentence, which is a combination of words conveying a meaning. Its comprehensibility depends on certain conditions. A sentence consists of words, which imply one another. A word cannot by itself convey a full meaning. It must be related to other words in order to convey a complete meaning. For example, the word 'bring' does not make full sense. It produces an expectancy in the mind for some other word or words. The words imply one another and convey a complete meaning. A sentence consists of words, which have fitness for one another. Mutual fitness of words is another condition of the intelligibility of a sentence. A sentence consists of words, which have close proximity to one another. It means that the words constituting a sentence should be uttered in close succession without a long interval between one word and another. The comprehension of the meaning of a sentence depends upon the

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knowledge of the intention of the speaker. Hence a sentence in order to be intelligible, must consist of words which are interdependent on, compatible with, and juxtaposed to, one another and convey a meaning in conformity with the speaker's intention.

The distinctive cause of *sabdaprama* is *sabdapramāna*. The knowledge arising from verbal cognition is above contradictions. The *Vaisesikas* and Buddhas refuse to accept verbal testimony as a separate *pramāna* on the ground that it can be brought under inference. A sentence generates the cognition called *sabdi-pramāna* by four causes namely, expectancy, competency, proximity and cognition of purport. In other words, four conditions should be fulfilled for a sentence to have real meaning:

Expectancy (*Ākāmsha*) is defined as the capacity of the word-senses which are mutually the contents of the desire to know. For example, the sentence "Fetch the pot" generates a cognition in the servant who is so ordered. The word 'fetch alone or 'pot alone' will not generate this cognition. Both of them must be there. When the word 'fetch is 'uttered' the 'that' which is to be fetched is left as a question. When the 'pot alone' is mentioned, 'what to do with the pot' remains unsaid. Thus in a sentence there should be mutual affinity between the words. One cannot convey the full sense of the one without the other. The capacity of the words to serve the requirements mutually is very important. Any two random words will not have this expectancy.

 Competency (*Yogyata*)consists in the non-sublation of a relation that is the content of a purport. The statement 'moisten with fire' is a case in point. There is no such property in the fire as is capable of being sprinkled on something else and moistening it. Thus there cannot be a connection between the fire and moistening. Where there is no fit and unsublated connection between words, there arises no verbal cognition. In other words, where there is no *tātparya-jnāna*, knowledge of the purport, there is no verbal cognition. There must be congruity between the subject and the predicate. Thus, the sentence "sprinkle the garden with fire" has no sense; sprinkle with water alone gives it sense.

Proximity (*Sannidhi*) is the cognition of the word-senses generated by words without any interval. The expression generated by words' is intended to show that the syntactical relation is not cognized by any evidence other than *sabda*. The Prabhakara school holds that it is not the

cognition of the word-senses generated by words that is the accessory of verbal knowledge, but only the mere cognition caused by perception of the sense through expectancy etc. of words. For a sentence to have sense, the predicate must be near the subject both in space and in time. After you utter the subject do not wait for many days to utter the predicate.

Purport (*Tātparya*) consists in the competency to generate that cognition. Thus the sentence 'pot in the house' generates knowledge in relation to pot and not in relation to cloth; therefore pot is its purport (Intention). When a word has two meanings, the speaker's intention and the context clarifies it. For example, "Bring salt, horse) takes the first meaning.

Refutation of Prabhakara's View

Prabhakara is unwilling to accord the status of *pramāna* to human statements though he recognizes scriptural statement as an independent source of knowledge. He maintains that human statements are apt to be falsified by the inherent defects of men. They are frequently found to be invalid so that no reliance can be placed on them. They simply convey what the speaker knows through other means of knowledge and depend for their validity on verification by other means. So they are not recognized as an independent *pramāna* in the world too. This view is criticized by Parthasarathi. If secular statements are not *pramāna* in their own capacity, then, how can scriptural statements be so? Both are words and if one is accepted to be *pramāna*, then the other too has to be accepted to be *pramāna*. The conclusion is that if *sabda* is not recognized to be a *pramāna* in the empirical sphere on the ground of its proneness to doubts or incoherence, then it will equally apply to the inference of the speaker's intentions too. If secular statements are not *pramāna*, then inference of intention too cannot be so.

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 understanding of *Sabda* in *Nyaya* philosophy?

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2. Describe what is Sabda and point out the different types of testimony.

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Sabda in Vaisesika System

The Buddhist and the Vaisesika do not accord the status of an independent *pramāna* to verbal testimony. The Buddhist maintains that the intention of a speaker finds expression in his statement. The intention is the cause and statement its effect. When a speaker utters a word, the hearer infers his intention as he infers the presence of fire from its effect, namely smoke. The Buddhist maintains that when a word is heard the hearer infers the intention of the speaker. But how can one infer the said intention unless he has already understood what the word means? Whatever the intention of the speaker may be, the meaning of the uttered word has already been cognised by the hearer without the help of syllogistic reasoning. The Vaisesika holds that the meaning of a word is cognised through inference, because just as the cognition of fire from smoke depends on the experience of a positive and negative experience of smoke-fire relationship.

Some people argue that verbal testimony is of the nature of inference because the validity of a sentence is inferred from the trustworthy character of the speaker. The meaning of a sentence is grasped exactly after it is heard for which no knowledge of the trustworthy or untrustworthy character of the speaker is needed. Even when a speaker of a sentence is not known at all, the meaning of the sentence is immediately grasped and it is only later that we have a recourse to inference when the validity of his assertion is doubted. Thus verbal testimony is independent of inference.

Sabda in Mimamsa and Advaita System

Sabda- pramāna is given greatest importance in Mimamsa. Sabara defines testimony as the knowledge of an object which is not present to a sense-organ produced by the knowledge of words. Kumarilla divides testimony into human and superhuman. The former is the testimony of

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trustworthy persons while the latter is the testimony of the Vedas. The former is valid if it is uttered by persons of trustworthy character, while the latter is valid in itself. Authority may either give information as to the existence of objects or give directions for the performance of some action. The Mimamsa is primarily interested in the impersonal authority of the Vedas because the Vedas give directions for performing sacrificial rites. The Vedas are looked upon as the book of commandments.

According to most of the pro-vedic schools, the authority of the Vedas lies in their being the words of God. But Mimamsa, which does not believe in any creator or destroyer of the world, believes that the Vedas like the world are eternal. According to Mimamsa, the Vedas are eternal and authorless. It is not the work of any person, human or divine. The sages are only seers and not authors of the Vedas. The Veda is not composed or spoken by God. According to the Mimamsakas there is no God and hence vedic statements are impersonal. Therefore the vedic commandments can never be contradicted by any source of valid knowledge. There can be no inner contradictions in the veda itself. Hence the vedic testimony is valid in itself. Prabhakara recognizes only the vedic testimony as the real testimony and reduces human testimony to inference because its validity is inferred from the trustworthy character of the person speaking.

The Mimamsa system furnishes several arguments to prove that the Vedas are impersonal. They argue that if the Vedas had any author, his name should have been known and remembered because they have been in constant use and have been passed down by an unbroken series of successive generations of teachers and learners from unknown antiquity. To defend the eternality and the authorless nature of the Vedas, the *Mimamsakas* put forward the theory that words and meanings as well as their relation are all natural and eternal. A word (*sabda*) is constituted of two or more letters and is a mere aggregate of letters and not a whole, though the letters must occur in a particular order. A *varna* is regarded as an articulated sound. It is eternal, omnipresent and integral. A *varna* is eternal and immutable.

The infallibility of the authority of the Vedas is founded on the fact that they are not vitiated by any defects to which the work of imperfect persons is subject. Although the testimony of the reliable person also is accepted by the Bhatta school as a valid source of knowledge, still

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the vedic authority has special credibility since it will never be contradicted by any *pramāna*. The order in which the words occur in the literary works is determined by their authors and therefore the works are subject to defects. But the order in which the words occur in the Veda is self-determined and therefore intrinsically valid.

Advaita Vedanta begins its theory of the criterion of knowledge by an examination of criteria of the other Indian systems. Sankara, following Nyāya, admits perception, inference and verbal testimony as means of valid knowledge.

4.4 THE CONCEPT *SPHOTA*

The Grammarians like Panini and Bhartruhari maintain that in the case of words, there is a supersensible entity called '*sphota*' manifested by the letters of the word. Or when itself is apprehended by the mind, it reveals the sense of the word directly. *Sphota* can be viewed either as the manifester or the maintained. The Grammarians hold that the eternal word called '*sphota*' is without parts, is the cause of the world. It is the Brahman (*Sabda-Brahman*). *Sabda* Brahman is the supreme word. He is the seed of all creation including language. The proof of the existence of *sphota* is perception itself. For example, there is one word 'cow' by which every one cognizes the meaning of it and cognizes the word distinct from the various letters composing it. The word *Sphota* simply means 'bursting forth. According to this theory, the meanings of sacred texts are not man's findings, they burst forth (*sphota*) of themselves.

Criticism of the *Sphota* Theory

Is it supposed that the *sphota* conveys the meaning when it itself is manifested or unmanifested?   Not the latter; because it would then follow that we should find the effect of conveying the meaning always produced since *sphota* is supposed to be eternal and therefore the cause is always present, the effect cannot possibly fail to appear. Sankara refutes the *sphota* doctrine saying that the letters only are the word. The argument that letters are momentary is profitless because they are persistent in as much as they are recognized each time they are uttered. It is not that the letters are recognized only as belonging to a class because they are recognized as such (as individual letters).

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Madana's Defence of *Sphota* and *Sabdādvaita*

With regard to *sphota*, Madana says that the letters cannot convey the entire sense of the word either individually or collectively. Individual letters cannot convey the meaning of the word as otherwise other letters will become useless. Nor can they convey collectively since they come in succession and do not exist together at the same time. There is neither simultaneity in time nor togetherness in space for them.

Madana believes as against Sankara that the Upanishadic texts '*OM iti Brahma*', *OM iti idam sarvam*' should be understood as establishing the identity of *pranavas* with Brahman and as supporting the *sabdādvaita* doctrine. The word '*aksaram*' signifies that Brahman is of the nature of sound. It also signifies the negation of destruction for Brahman. No transformation is possible in Brahman who is of the nature of sound. That Brahman is of the nature of sound is borne out by such scriptural declarations as 'the higher and lower Brahman, that is *Omkāra*. The word ending with the suffix '*kāra*' signifies that Brahman is not merely designated by the word '*OM*' but that *OM* is the very nature of Brahman. Sometimes it is suggested that *OM* is a symbol standing for Brahman to meditate on, since Brahman being beyond all specifications cannot be contemplated. This is similar to the practice of worshipping idols or images made of wood and stone as representing or symbolizing the various deities when the deities themselves cannot be worshipped directly. Or else, one might say that Brahman is to be contemplated by the name '*OM*' for *pranava* is its name.

4.5 LET US SUM UP

We have been making a general survey of the importance and implications of *sabda-pramāna* as a valid source of knowledge. The Indian epistemologies give sufficient attention to testimony especially for vedic testimony. The various explanations given in Nyāya epistemology especially in analysing the sentence and its syntax etc. show the precision with which Indian sages have worked out various systems. If western epistemologies give more importance to sense perception and inferences, Indian epistemology especially the classical systems, highlights more the significance of *sabda-pramāna* because of its heavy reliance on Vedic tradition.

The most distinguishing feature of Indian thinking on *pramāna* is the theory of *sabda* (testimony). Testimony (*sabda-pramāna*) is an important source of knowledge. Our experience shows that the major part of a person's stock of knowledge about the world is acquired from the oral or written testimony of other persons. Testimony may be verbal or non-verbal. Non-verbal testimony consists of gestures. But it is not important because it lacks precision. Gautama defines verbal testimony as the statement of a reliable person. Verbal testimony consists of verbal statements of people intended to express certain facts. The different systems in India give different explanations for *Sabda* and demonstrate its implications differently.

Sāmkya does not recognize secular testimony as an independent source of valid knowledge since it depends on perception and inference. Valid testimony is true revelation. Nayaya defines testimony as the instruction of a trustworthy person who has immediate knowledge of the Moral Law (*Dharma*) and who is competent to guide others in the performance of their duties and the abstention from sins for the attainment of good and avoidance of evil. The Buddhist and the Vaisesika do not accord the status of an independent *pramāna* to verbal testimony. *Sabda-pramāna* is given great importance in Mimamsa system as it is directly based on Vedas. Advaita accepts verbal testimony as the means of valid knowledge. The Grammarians hold that the eternal word called '*sphota*' is without parts, is the cause of the world. It is the Brahman (*Sabda-Brahman*).

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. Which are the four conditions required of a sentence for real meaning?

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2) Write a short note on *Sphota theory*.

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4.6 KEY WORDS

Sabda-pramāna: Verbal and non-Verbal testimony; *Sabda* in various systems; the **four conditions** to be fulfilled for a sentence to have real meaning: expectancy, competency, proximity and cognition of purport.

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4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1.The most distinguishing feature of Indian thinking on *pramāna* is the theory of *sabda* (testimony). Testimony (*sabda-pramāna*) is an important source of knowledge Gautama defines *Sabda* as *āptopadesa*, instruction from an apt or fit person and later on as *āpta-vākya*. The fit person is defined as *yathartha vakta,* speaker of truth. definition of *sabda: āpatasya vacanam sabdah*. The reliability of a person making a statement is a condition ensuring the validity of the knowledge derived in this way. There are two ways of classifying testimony. According to one classification testimony can be of two kinds that relating to perceptible object and that relating to imperceptible objects. The trustworthy assertions of ordinary, the saints and the scriptures about the perceptible objects of the world such as the statements of a reliable farmer about plants, the scriptural injunctions to perform certain rites to bring about rainfall etc. and the assertions of trustworthy persons, saints, prophets and the scriptures about super-sensible realities such as a scientists' assertions about atoms, ether etc., the prophet's instructions regarding virtue and vice, the scriptural texts regarding God, freedom, immortality etc. come under first classification. According to another classification, there are two kinds of testimony, the scriptural (*vaidika*) and the secular (*laukika*). The Vedas are not impersonal but personal compositions of God, the omniscient person and are therefore perfect and valid. The secular testimony of trustworthy persons is valid while that of unworthy persons is invalid. The first classification is based on the nature of the objects of knowledge and the second on the source of knowledge. But the two classifications agree in implying that testimony must always be personal, that is, based on the words of some trustworthy person, human or divine.

2. According to Nayayayikas the 4th means of valid knowledge is *sabda* (word). Knowledge of words is the instrumental cause, is the perception of words by the sense of hearing of verbal knowledge or the knowledge of words, which arises from seeing the script. The operation of the instrumental cause is the recollection of the meaning of words. Gotama defines testimony as the instruction of a trustworthy person who has immediate knowledge of the Moral Law (*Dharma*) and who is competent to guide others in the performance of their duties and the abstention from sins for the attainment of good and avoidance of evil. Trustworthy persons are those who perceive objects as they exist in their real nature and communicate their right knowledge to others for their benefit out of compassion for them. They are free from attachment. The assertions of those who know truth but speak falsehood are not valid. The assertions of

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trustworthy persons which are not fit for guiding persons in the performance of right actions and non-commission of sins are not testimony. Untrustworthy persons are tainted with delusion. Testimony is an instruction which is expressed in a sentence or proposition. While the validity of verbal knowledge depends on its being based on the statement of a trustworthy person, its possibility depends on the understanding of the meaning of the statement. Therefore *sabda* as a source of valid knowledge consists in understanding the meaning of the statement of a trustworthy person.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1.A sentence generates the cognition called *sabdi-pramāna* by four causes namely, expectancy, competency, proximity and cognition of purport. They are the four conditions which should be fulfilled for a sentence to have real meaning namely Expectancy, competency, proximity and the purport. Expectancy is defined as the capacity of the word-senses which are mutually the contents of the desire to know. For example, the sentence "Fetch the pot" generates a cognition in the servant who is so ordered. The word 'fetch alone or 'pot alone' will not generate this cognition. Both of them must be there. When the word 'fetch is 'uttered' the 'that' which is to be fetched is left as a question. When the 'pot alone' is mentioned, 'what to do with the pot' remains unsaid. Thus in a sentence there should be mutual affinity between the words. One cannot convey the full sense of the one without the other. The capacity of the words to serve the requirements mutually is very important. Any two random words will not have this expectancy. Competency consists in the non-sublation of a relation that is the content of a purport. The statement 'moisten with fire' is a case in point. There is no such property in the fire as is capable of being sprinkled on something else and moistening it. Thus there cannot be a connection between the fire and moistening. Where there is no fit and unsublated connection between words, there arises no verbal cognition. Proximity is the cognition of the word-senses generated by words without any interval. The expression generated by words' is intended to show that the syntactical relation is not cognized by any evidence other than *sabda*. .Purport consists in the intention to generate that cognition. Thus the sentence 'pot in the house' generates knowledge in relation to pot and not in relation to cloth; therefore pot is its purport. When a word has two meanings, the speaker's intention and the context clarifies it.

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2.The Grammarians like Panini and Bhartruhari maintain that in the case of words, there is a supersensible entity called '*sphota*' manifested by the letters of the word. Or when itself is apprehended by the mind, it reveals the sense of the word directly. *Sphota* can be viewed either as the manifester or the maintained. The Grammarians hold that the eternal word called '*sphota*' is without parts, is the cause of the world. It is the Brahman (*Sabda-Brahman*). *Sabda* Brahman is the supreme word. He is the seed of all creation including language. The proof of the existence of *sphota* is perception itself. For example, there is one word 'cow' by which every one cognizes the meaning of it and cognizes the word distinct from the various letters composing it. The word *Sphota* simply means 'bursting forth. According to this theory, the meanings of sacred texts are not man's findings, they burst forth (*sphota*) of themselves.

BLOCK 3

Knowledge is a 'justified true belief' and as such justification becomes one of the necessary conditions for a piece of information to be knowledge. The knowledge could be true and also from a reliable source but if it is not justified, that is, if one has no good reasons to hold it, then it ceases to be knowledge. It means that one cannot claim to have knowledge if only a particular belief happens to be true. In other words, not all true beliefs constitute knowledge; only true beliefs arrived at in the right way constitute knowledge. And that right way is what we call justification. Justification is a sound way of reasoning which includes evidence. Now the question is how much evidence do we need? The requirement that knowledge involves justification does not necessarily mean that knowledge requires absolute certainty; however we need enough evidence for our claim to knowledge.

This block has four units which introduce the Methods and Justification of Knowledge by various thinkers like Aristotle, Aquinas, Popperian method and naturalized epistemology.

Unit 1 studies the Metaphysical Method of Aristotle and Aquinas. In Aristotle's method we have being as substance, being as essence, matter and form, act and potency and God. Under the methods of Aquinas we have Metaphysics and Theology, discovery of Being as Being, analogy of Being, participation, essence and existence, substance and accidents, matter and form, and knowledge of God.

Unit 2 deals with two possibilities of answering skeptical claims and defending knowledge: Foundationalism and Coherentism. Foundationalism is nothing but basing our knowledge claims on some already justified, like self evident and so on. Coherentism is justifying our beliefs by cohering with some other set of beliefs. Which position is more reliable is a matter discussed in this unit.

Unit 3 introduces some complexities giving special reference to Hume and Kant. The principal objective in this unit is to become acquainted with the development of modern Philosophy particularly in Hume and Kant. We will be drawing upon the philosophical thinking of both these

thinkers, their shift of direction from the traditional thinking and concluding with the special reference to their view on the notion of knowledge.

Unit 4 probes into the Popperian Method and Naturalized Epistemology. These are the two new views recently developed in epistemology, after the traditional methods of justification, i.e., foundationalism and coherentism found to be too weak. This unit begins by introducing the crises faced by modern epistemology, introduces the method of naturalized epistemology, and tells about its implications today.

This block will lead us closer to our understanding of the concept of knowledge. By this time we will have analysed all concepts that define knowledge, i.e., justified true belief. A piece of information to be knowledge must first be true, from a reliable source and should have enough evidence to withstand all oppositions. All this has developed in the light of the skeptic challenges that have often been raised.

UNIT 1   METAPHYSICAL METHOD OF ARISTOTLE AND AQUINAS

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1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Aristotelian Method of Metaphysics

1.3 Metaphysical Method of St Thomas Aquinas

1.4 Metaphysics and Epistemology

1.5 Let us Sum up

1.6 Key Words

1.7 Further Readings and References

1.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.0 OBJECTIVES

Aristotle's thirst for knowledge pushes him beyond the phenomenal world. He does not just contemplate on them but arrives at them through causes. At the beginning of metaphysics which he called 'first philosophy' Aristotle had raised the problem of knowledge and wisdom. Aquinas devoted much of his thought to the question 'what does it mean to be'? Many Thomists think that his greatest philosophical ability was shown in the area of metaphysics. In this Unit you are expected to understand:

- The metaphysical method of Aristotle
- The metaphysical method of Aquinas
- The inseparable relation between metaphysics and epistemology

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The term metaphysics is not of Aristotle, it was of his disciple Andronicus of Rhodes (40 BC) who edited his works. The texts on 'first philosophy' were grouped after those of physics and were called *meta ta physika*. Aristotle defines metaphysics or first philosophy as "a science which investigates being as being". It is the science that studies being as being. Other sciences touch only a portion of the things. They touch on a particular sphere of being and analyse the attributes of being in that particular sphere. Metaphysics, on the contrary, considers being as such, entity as such in the universal manner and in its highest and most general determinations, thus seeking the ultimate causes. Thus metaphysics has for its object the totality of things.

Metaphysics for Aquinas was the effort to understand reality in general (*ens commune*) or being as being to find out an ultimate explanation of the manifold experience in terms of the highest causes. For Aquinas metaphysics, the first philosophy and the philosophical science of the divine (*scientia divina*) are one and the same.

1.2 ARISTOTALIAN METHOD OF METAPHYSICS

Aristotle's thirst for knowledge pushes him beyond the phenomenal world. He does not just contemplate on them but arrives at them through causes. At the beginning of metaphysics which he called 'first philosophy' Aristotle had raised the problem of knowledge and wisdom. The term metaphysics is not of Aristotle, it was of his disciple Andronicus of Rhodes (40 BC) who edited his works. The texts on 'first philosophy' were grouped after those of physics and were called *meta ta physika*. Aristotle defines metaphysics or first philosophy as "a science which investigates being as being". It is the science that studies being as being. Other sciences touch only a portion of the things. They touch on a particular sphere of being and analyse the attributes of being in that particular sphere. Metaphysics, on the contrary, considers being as such, entity as such in the universal manner and in its highest and most general determinations, thus seeking the ultimate causes. Thus metaphysics has for its object the totality of things.

Metaphysics is the inquiry into the highest principles of being. A principle (*arche*) is that from which "a thing is or comes to be or is known", and "the philosopher must grasp the principles and causes". What is being then? The idea of 'being' is the most abstract of all ideas.

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Everything that exists or can be thought of as existing is 'being'. There are many senses in which a thing is said to be, but all refer to one starting point, i.e., being. Being is thus the most universal idea, for everything of which we form an idea is represented to the mind as something, as being.

The idea of being is transcendental. It is above any kind of classification. We cannot say that spiritual being and corporeal being are different kinds of being as being. However body and spirit are beings in the same manner. 'Being' is said to be analogous. Everything represents being in some manner: a healthy man, a healthy influence, a healthy appetite etc. From the idea of being Aristotle develops certain self-evident principles: 1) the principle of contradiction: something cannot both be and not be in the same place at the same time under the same circumstances. "It is impossible for the same thing to be 'A' and not to be 'A', or 'A' is not 'A'. 2) the principle of identity: everything is what it is. Everything is its own being. A is A, i.e., that which is, is; that which is not, is not. 3) the principle of excluded middle: The formula of the law of excluded middle is 'A is either B or Not-B. This man is either a fool or not a fool. It is clear that if we accept one of the alternatives we have necessarily to reject the other. The acceptance of one of the alternatives necessarily means the rejection of the other. These are the first principles of the laws of thought and they are self-evident and known immediately.

Being as Substance

Metaphysics is the science of substance as well. That which gives form is the substance. In Greek 'substance' is *ousia*. In the ordinary language this word means holdings, property, goods, that which is possessed. It is the whole complex of available components of a thing. The word 'substance' also means, something that is *sub-stantia*, that which is underneath, subject, meaning *sub-jectum*, which is the translation of the Greek word, *hypokeimenon*, which means substratum or subject. Substance is the support or substratum for its accidents: red, square etc supported by the substance 'table'. Accidents are predicated of other things. The table is the table itself, whereas the red is the red of the table.

For Plato, the term 'substance' (*ousia* = that which is) is said first of ideas and forms, separated from the real world. For Aristotle the ideas, the universal, have reality not only in the

mind but also in the things. Individuals belonging to the same species are real substances. Thus individuals are true substance (*ousia*). The universals are substances only in a secondary sense.

There are various classes of substances. Substance in the truest and most primary sense is that which is neither predicable of a subject nor present in a subject; for instance, the individual man and horse. But in the secondary sense those things are called substances within which, as species, the primary substances are included, also those which, as genera, include the species. For instance, the individual man is included in the species 'man', and the genus to which the species belongs is animal; these, therefore, the species 'man' and the genus 'animal' are termed secondary substances. Thus Aristotle has two kinds of substances: primary substances and secondary substances. In the former comes 'this man', 'this cow' etc. Primary substances are most properly called substances in virtue of the fact that they are the entities which underlie everything else and that everything else is either predicated of them or present in them. Thus the primary substance is the individual which can neither exist nor be predicated of another. The secondary substance is the universal which as such does not exist in another but may be predicated of another.

Being as Essence

Being in the primary sense is that which is; that which is the thing. Aristotelians called this quiddity and the modern thinkers call this essence. The essence is precisely what something is. There is a slight distinction between the term 'substance' and 'essence'. Essence is expressed in Greek by a strange expression, *to ti en einei*, which is translated into Latin as: *quod quid erat esse*, literally 'what being was'. This expression is in the past tense. Essence is therefore, prior to being. It is what makes it possible, what makes it be. Essence is not a complex of important attributes, rather, it expresses that which makes an entity be what it is. We do not consider man as a composite of animality and rationality. Essence always has a strict ontological significance and it cannot be understood as a mere correlative of a definition.

Matter and Form

Being is conceived as substance. Here Aristotle puts forward the important theory of matter and form. Substance in the primary sense is the individual substance, which is composed of matter and form and the substance in the secondary sense is the formal element that corresponds to the universal concept. By matter Aristotle means something quite different from

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what we ordinarily mean by it. To Aristotle matter signifies anything physical, mental, moral or spiritual that can contribute to the existence or make-up of anything else. Matter is part of the essential nature. Though it is undifferentiated, it is a constant factor and enters a definition as *materia communis*. Form, the determining principle, makes the particular thing the kind of particular it is; in other words, form is what makes a thing be what it is. Matter and form are two ontological ingredients in the substance and hence they cannot exist apart from one another. Matter (*hyle*) and form (*morphe*, *eidos*) form a hylemorphic compound. For Aristotle, there is no form without matter and there is no matter without form. Aristotelian theory of matter and form solves the Platonic problem of the relation of ideas and species to individual things. Universals are substances but they are abstract substances and are thus secondary substances. The individuals are truly substances.

Act and Potency

Aristotle's theory of matter and form comes close to that of the potential and the actual. Matter and form denote two different directions in which each particular thing points. Every particular object exists by virtue of realizing new forms and hidden possibilities. Also no particular substance completely exhausts and realizes within itself its own capacities. It is also a matter, out of which other things can be made. It is therefore both form and matter – form relatively to what has made its existence possible; matter relatively to what existence, in its turn, makes possible.

Matter assumes different forms or a series of forms, one form following the other. In order to explain change or growth we must assume a substratum (matter) that persists. Matter is an indeterminate element. Form is a determining element and can thus be conceived as a force, a power, a potency, developing the whole which is virtually contained within the individual – this form is called 'active potency' and matter considered as the complex of these conditions which make possible the activity of the form is called 'passive potency'. Every form since it designates some actual determination of matter is also called act. Thus the analysis of the becoming or development of becoming has given us concepts of matter (substratum), form (determining element), potency (both active and passive) and act.

Form and matter are inseparable yet distinguishable aspects of a single substance. Potentiality and actuality are stages in the development of a substance. Aristotle explains the

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distinction between potentiality and actuality by the analogy of the materials of a building to the completed structure. Potential (*dunamis*) is that which lies within a thing. Actuality (*energeia*) points to the completed reality.

Actuality and potentiality are the first principles of being in the order of determination. The former is the determining principle of being and the latter is the determinate. While actuality signifies perfection, potentiality is the capacity of perfection. It signifies the capacity to receive the perfection not at present (actually) possessed. An existing being possesses the perfection of its present existence; it is actually what it is. It may be modified to become something else. Towards this something else, towards this new substantial or accidental perfection, the existing being stands in potency. Thus we may say that an existing being is actually what it is, potentially what it may become. Potentiality does not exist in the abstract; potentiality is always a potentiality for a specific actuality. For example, the seed of the oak tree has the potential to be an oak tree, not to be a cow.

Aristotle uses different words to denote actuality: *energeia* and *entelechy*. Though they are used synonymously, they are not same. *Energeia* indicates simple actuality. *Entelechy* means 'that which has arrived at its end' – its *teleos*, and therefore supposes an actualization. It is possible to say that God is pure actuality, who does not either have potentiality or motion, who is then actual, but not actualized – is *energeia*. God is not *entelechy*. Actual is ontologically prior to the potential. Potential being in order to exist must have certain state of existence although not as actuality.

Causes

Metaphysics or first philosophy is the science of being as being. It considers being as such, in its highest and most general determinations and consequently it is concerned with the highest or ultimate causes. With experience science originates but this science requires that we search for the cause of causes. These characteristics of knowing all things must belong to him who has the highest degree of knowledge. For, he knows in a sense all the instances that fall under the universal. These universals are on the whole the hardest for man to know; for they are farthest from senses. The first principles and causes are most knowable; for by reason of these and from these, all other things come to be known, and not these by means of the things subordinate to them.

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For Aristotle, knowledge which is concerned with universals are demonstrative knowledge, a knowing which makes things known by their causes and principles. Aristotle has introduced four causes in the physical sphere: material cause, formal cause, efficient cause and final cause. Of these material and formal are intrinsic constituents of a being, while the other two are extrinsic principles. i) Material cause: It is matter (*hyle*) out of which something is made. Bronze is the material cause of the statue. Matter is the substratum (*hypekeimenon*), indeterminate but capable of having determination. ii) Formal cause: it is form (*eidos*, *morphe*) which is at the heart of the matter. Form is that into which a thing is made. Without form matter cannot exist. Form is actuality. It is the principle of determination overcoming the indeterminancy of matter. Matter is made for the form. iii) Efficient cause: it is defined as that by which the effect is produced. It is the principle of motion or change. It is what makes the thing that is caused. Matter by itself cannot determine itself. Form by itself cannot determine matter, for it is not a motor. It is act. Thus in the nature neither matter nor form is alone. It is the union of both. Neither hydrogen alone nor oxygen alone generates water. It is the efficient cause which is responsible for becoming water. iv) Final cause: it is the end or that for the sake of which a thing is done, i.e., that on account of which the effect is produced. The final cause is the answer to the question, for what purpose? For Aristotle, final cause is the most important of all four causes.

God

Aristotle's metaphysics culminates in a theology. Thus metaphysics is rightly called the theological science. God is the highest object of metaphysical inquiry.

Aristotle tells that all things that are in motion must be moved by something, i.e., although motion is eternal, there cannot be an infinite series of movers and moved. There must be one, the first in the series, which is unmoved. He speaks about it as supreme intelligence. It is the supreme intelligence which moves everything without being moved by anything, which is one and eternal, invisible, without parts and without magnitude.

There exists a being which is not caused. Since there is something which moves while itself unmoved, existing actually, this can no way be otherwise than as it is. The first mover, then exists of necessity; and in so far as it exists by necessity, its mode of being is good, and it is in this sense a first principle.

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There is the order in the world. All are ordered together to one end. Thus the order in the universe is linked in an excellent way to God.

Aristotle argues that the actual is, of its nature, antecedent to the potential. Consequently before all matter and before all composition of actual and potential pure actuality must have existed. Actuality is therefore the cause of all things that exist and since it is pure actuality its life is essentially free from all material and corporeal conditions. It is the thought of thought (*noes* is *noeseos*).

Check your progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1. Explain the nature of being presented by Aristotle

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2. Explain matter and form and act and potency in Aristotle

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1.3 METAPHYSICAL METHOD OF ST THOMAS AQUINAS

Aquinas distinguishes between the philosophical science (metaphysics or first philosophy) and divine science, which studies God only indirectly. Aquinas is convinced that there can be no real conflict between metaphysics which deals with being as being and theology that has God as its subject and depends on belief in divine revelation for its principles. There can be no conflict between reason and faith because both derive from one and the same ultimate source. On the one hand God viewed as the creative source of human intellect and of the created universe and on the other hand God viewed as the author of revelation.

Aquinas distinguishes between the orders to be followed in philosophy and in the teaching based on faith. In the case of philosophy one considers created reality in itself and moves from an examination of reality to a knowledge of God. One begins with one's discovery of being as being or being in general; in the course of one's effort to understand this, one should ultimately discover the principle or cause of that which falls under it, God. In the teaching based on faith, however, one first turns to a study of God and only thereafter examines created reality insofar as it in some way imitates and represents the divine reality.

Discovery of Being as Being

If metaphysics has as its subject being as being, the very possibility of metaphysics presupposes that one can discover being as being. Aquinas distinguishes two notions and concepts of being. The first is that being is open to every thinking of human being and is implied in our more particular concepts and descriptions of reality. For instance, if we are considering a horse and identifying it as a sensitive-living-corporeal substance, we implicitly also acknowledge and recognize that it is a being. This is the kind of understanding of being that Aquinas seems to have in mind when he writes that "being is that which the intellect first discovers as most known and into which it resolves all its other conceptions".

Contemporary interpreters disagree over whether Aquinas thinks that this primitive understanding of being is reached by the intellect merely through its first operation (in which it recognizes that something is, without either affirming or denying anything about it), or it requires its second operation – judgement (composition or division) in which the intellect affirms or denies. For Aquinas the notion of being is complex, including both quidditative and existential

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components – essence and existence. Hence both simple apprehension and some judgement of existence seem to be required for us to formulate the primitive notion of being.

Analogy of Being

Aquinas' view about the discovery of being as being leads to another closely related issue: what kind of unity must characterize the notion of being if it is to apply to each and every being and to the differences that obtain between beings? Aquinas' answer to this is that being is predicated analogically rather than purely univocally or purely equivocally. He criticizes Parmenides for having mistakenly thought that 'being' or 'that which is' is used only in one way. For Aquinas it is used differently. For instance, taken in one sense it means substance, and in another accident, with latter sense allowing for different usages in accord with the various supreme genera or categories of accidents. Or again being may be applied both to substance and accidents.

The problem of analogy arises for Aquinas at two different levels: horizontal level that we may ask how 'being' can be applied to substance and to other categories; and vertical or transcendental level where we see how being can be applied not only to created realities but even God himself.

Aquinas says that something is predicated univocally, when it remains the same in name and intelligible content or definition. In this way the term 'animal' is predicated to human being and donkey. Something is predicated equivocally when the name remains the same but its meaning differs in different applications. In this word 'dog' may be said of 'a barking creature' and of 'a heavenly body'. Finally something may be predicated analogically of different things that differ in definition but that are relevantly related to one and the same thing. The name 'health' is said of an animal's body, of urine or medicinal potion, but not in the same way.

Aquinas distinguishes different causal orders that may ground analogical predication. Such predication may be based, first, on the fact that different secondary analogates are ordered to one and the same end, as in the example of health. Or second, it may be based on the fact that the secondary analogates are ordered or related to one and the same agent (efficient cause). For instance, the term 'medical' may be applied to a physician who possesses and works by means of the art of medicine, to another person who works without possessing this art but who has an aptitude for it, and finally, even to an instrument used in the practice of medicine, but in each

case by reason of a relevant relationship to one agent, the art of medicine. Or third, it may be that the analogical predication rests on the fact that different secondary analogates are ordered and related to one and the same subject. In this third way 'being' is said of substance, quality, quantity and other accidents. The accidents are named by 'being' because they are relevantly related to, i.e., inherent in a subject: substance.

Frequently Aquinas makes the point that the intelligible content (*Ratio*) corresponding to an analogical term is "partly the same and partly diverse", in its various analogical usages. He means that because each of the secondary things to which a term such as 'being' is applied is differently related to the primary analogate (substance in the case of being), the intelligible content of each of them will differ. But because the various secondary analogates are relevantly related to some one thing (to substance, in the case of being), their intelligible contents are also partly the same. In other words, Aquinas's theory of analogical predication is grounded on sameness and difference that obtain in reality.

Participation

Reference to Aquinas' hierarchy of being naturally leads to the consideration of his metaphysics of participation. His theories of analogy of being and participation in being are closely connected. The first addresses itself to the unity and diversity involved in our understanding and predication of 'being' and the second is concerned with the ontological situation that gives rise to such unity and diversity. Aquinas' theory of participation of beings in being also lies at the heart of his answer to the problem of the One and Many in the order of reality.

'Participation' comes from the Latin words *partem capere* which literally mean 'to seize a part' or *partim capere* meaning 'to seize partly'. So when something receives particularly that which belongs to another universally (totally), the former is said to participate in the latter. Aquinas distinguishes a number of ways in which participation may occur. 1) Human being is said to participate in animal because human being does not possess the total intelligible content of animal. In like fashion an individual (Socrates) is said to participate in human being. In these cases a less extended intelligible content is said to participate in a more extended intelligible content either as species in a genus or an individual in a species. Since intelligible contents are at issue this kind of participation may be described as 'logical'. 2) So too a subject participates

in an accident and a matter participates in form. Both are described as instances of participation because the forms in question whether accidental or substantial, while not restricted to any given subject when considered in themselves, are now limited to this or that particular subject. Since in both a real composition results it may be described as a 'real' or 'ontological' participation. 3) Finally, an effect is said to participate in its cause, especially when it is not equal to the power of its cause. To this kind of participation Aquinas gives greatest interest.

Aquinas speaks of entities other than God as participating in existence in general (*esse commune*). Among them there are certain pure forms that do not exist in matter. They do not identify existence (*esse*), but they have existence. They participate in it. Similarly Aristotelian separate substances or Christian angels participate in *esse commune*. How are caused or created beings participate in divine existence (*esse subsistens*)? Aquinas is of opinion that all things participate in God as their first exemplar cause and he identifies three differences in the way *esse commune* stands in relationship to God and to other existents. 1) while other existents depend on *esse commune*, God does not. Rather, *esse commune* itself depends on God. 2) While all other existents fall under *esse commune*, God does not; rather, *esse commune* falls under the power of God. Aquinas explains this by noting that God's power extends beyond (actually) created beings, presumably to all that could possibly be created. 3) All other existents participate in *esse*, but God does not. *Esse* is a certain participation in God and likeness of him. *Esse commune* participates in God and if other existents depend on *esse commune*, they too participate in God.

Essence and Existence

Aquinas defends a composition of essence and act of being (*esse*) in all finite substantial entities. He does not also describe essence and existence as something independent. They are not being in their own right. According to St Thomas existence comes from God, the cause of existence. In God alone are essence and existence identical. God exists necessarily because His essence is existence. All other beings receive or participate in existence. They have only a 'derived or received' existence.

There is no essence without existence and no existence without essence; two are created together. Created existence and essence arise together and although the two constitutive principles are objectively distinct, existence is more fundamental. Existence is the principle of

perfection and essence is the principle of limitation we find in every being. Each being is one and multiple at the same time. This experience of the multiple modes of reality leads to the discovery that each such being is composed of a constitutive co-principle of perfection (*esse*; *quo est*) 'in virtue of which a substance is called a being' and a constitutive co-principle of limitation (essential; *quo est tale*) 'in virtue of which it is such-and-such a being'. These principles of being are objectively distinct and yet they are incapable of existing apart.

Substance and Accidents

Aquinas develops the theory of substance and accidents basing himself on the theory of Aristotle. For both Aristotle and Aquinas substances are beings in the primary and principal sense. Substance has a stronger claim on being than negations, privations, sensations, corruptions, motions and various accidents. This is because substance exists in its own right and *per se*. Aquinas refers to substance as the particular or individual substance of which all else is predicated. According to Aquinas substance serves as the ultimate subject of propositions and it subsists in itself and is distinct or separate from other things.

Substance subsists in itself and stands under accidents or serves as their foundation and support. It is similar to the diverse way of predication, which is the different ways of the realization of being (*diverse modi essendi*). Accidents can be characteristics of a substance that is not essential to the substance. Aquinas presents one substance and nine supreme kinds of accidents – thus ten categories. In it substance is the individual substance of which everything is predicated; e.g., Socrates is an animal. Here 'Socrates' signifies the substance. The nine categories of accidents are the following: 1) quantity, as following from the matter; 2) quality as following from its form; 3) relation, in so far as subject is related something else; 4) time, measurement of subject in terms of movement; 5) space, the predicate measures the subject in terms of space; 6) position, where the subject is measured in terms of the way the parts of the body are ordered; 7) state, the form in which the predicate is taken as entirely outside the subject and does not in any way measure the subject; 8) action, the predicate is taken as partly external and partly internal to the subject as the principle of action; 9) passion, as the subject which receives the action.

Matter and Form

Aquinas speaks about the constitution of material being. When the cow eats grass, it becomes through assimilation, something else, i.e., flesh. It is a substantial change because the grass itself is changed, not merely its colour or size. The analysis of substantial change leads the mind to discern two elements: one element which is common to the grass and to the flesh which grass becomes, another element which confers on that something its determination, its substantial character, making it to be first grass and then flesh. The first element is prime matter, the indeterminate substratum of substantial change; the second element is the substantial form, which makes the substance what it is. Every material substance is composed in this way of matter and form.

St Thomas accepts Aristotelian doctrine of the hylomorphic composition of material substances, defining prime matter as pure potentiality and substantial form as the first act of a physical body, which determines its essence. However prime matter cannot exist by itself, for to speak of a being actually existing without form would be contradictory. St Thomas is thus quite clear that only concrete substances (composition of matter and form) actually exists in the material world.

The form needs to be individuated. The form is the universal element, being that places an object in its species making it to be horse, iron, or coconut tree. The principle of individuation is matter, which it receives from union with the form. Substantial change cannot take place except in bodies and it is only matter, the substratum of change, which makes it possible. On the principle which St Thomas adopted from Aristotle that what is changed or moved is changed or moved by another one might argue at once from the changes in the corporeal world to the existence of an unmoved mover, with the aid of the principle that an infinite regress in the order of dependence is impossible.

God

One of the important attempts to demonstrate the reality of God was that of St Thomas Aquinas, who offers five ways of proving divine existence. Unlike the ontological argument which focuses attention upon the idea of God and proceeds to unfold its inner implications, Aquinas' proofs start from some general feature of the world around us and argue that there could not be world with this particular characteristic unless there were also ultimate reality which we call God. Since these theistic arguments proceed from the world to God it is described as

cosmological. In this sense they are called 'a posteriori' arguments as well. These arguments are called 'ways', because, the same point is reached along different paths or ways.

All these arguments hinge upon the 'principle of sufficient reason'. The first way argues from the fact of change to a prime mover, the second from causation to a first cause; the third from contingent beings to a necessary being; the fourth from degrees of value to absolute value; and the fifth from evidences of purposive-ness in a nature to a divine designer.

Knowledge of God

Aquinas maintains that we can know that God is and what he is not but not what he is. In other words, quidditative knowledge of God is not possible for human beings in this life either as a result of philosophical investigation or as based on divine revelation.

This does not mean that we cannot apply certain attributes which stand for pure perfections cannot be applied to God. They are predicated of God substantially. But as regards the way in which they signify (*modus significandi*), they are not properly of God, they retain a mode of signifying that pertains to creatures.

Aquinas rejects univocal predication of any names of God and creatures. He refuses to acknowledge that all names are predicated of God and creatures in purely equivocal fashion, and instead defends analogical predication. The names applied to God are also applied to men. Therefore, the terms such as Being, Cause, Truth, Wisdom, Goodness, Love, Benevolence, Providence, Actuality, Perfection Unity, Immanence etc are applied to God and men, but they are not applied in the same sense and order.

1. 4 Metaphysics and Epistemology

Formerly epistemology was considered as a part of metaphysics. Knowledge and being were not seen separately. The pre-Socratic philosophers did not give any attention to this branch of philosophy, for they were primarily concerned with the nature and possibility of change. They took it for granted that the knowledge of nature was possible. Thus Heraclitus emphasised the use of senses and Parmenides in effect stressed the role of reason. But none of them doubted that knowledge of reality is impossible. It was not until 5th century B.C. that such doubts began to

emerge and the Sophists were generally responsible for them. In fifth century B.C. human practices and institutions came under critical examination for the first time. Numerous things, which had previously been thought to be part of nature, were seen not to be. Thus a general antithesis was drawn between nature and human convention.

All men have a global knowledge about reality, acquired through the light of natural reason. They know what they mean when they talk about 'being", "truth", or "good". They have some knowledge regarding human nature and the difference between "substantial" and "accidental" realities. Moreover they know God as the First Cause of the universe, who sustains and guides all things towards their end. This kind of knowledge which we can call spontaneous, deals with the same issues or topics studied by metaphysics. This should not prove surprising, for man has a natural tendency to know the world, his place in it, the origin of the universe, and other related matters. The course of his life depends largely on the knowledge he has of these questions. Hence, it is understandable that this knowledge has been called *spontaneous metaphysics or natural metaphysics of the human intelligence*. But there is the need for a metaphysics developed as a science. Human mind is frequently imperfect or imprecise. It is subject to certain ideologies prevailing in certain cultures. Moral convictions have a decisive influence on his or her knowledge about metaphysical question. Experience shows that as individuals lose their moral uprightness, they also lose their basic intellectual convictions, thereby falling into a skeptic attitude towards the truth.

We find that there is an intimate relationship between 'knowing' and 'being'. Our knowledge is only a reproduction on the mental plane of the real world outside of us. There is a close relation between knowledge and the real world. It is for this reason that we say that epistemology passes over to ontology and the line of demarcation is very thin. By gradual and imperceptible stage the theory of knowledge develops into the theory of being.

But reason operates only within the relational scheme of things. Human thinking at its highest is dissatisfied with the relational scheme of things. Just as thought cannot rest in the negative but points to the affirmative that is beyond, thought cannot rest in the relative but points to a reality that is non-relational. Bradley says that thought commits suicide at this stage. It willingly makes place for another approach, called 'intuition' or 'integral experience'. There is no rivalry between intellectual thinking and intuition. The crown of intellective thinking is

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intuition. Such experience is a communion with the Supreme Being. The laws of thought point to the reality which is beyond all relations and which is beyond reason too.

1.5 LET US SUM UP

With Aristotle metaphysics gets an organized form. It becomes *meta ta physika*. Aristotle describes metaphysics as the study of being as being. Philosophers should study from which a thing comes to be. Therefore the idea of being is most abstract and transcendental. Metaphysics is the study of substances which give form. There are different classes of substances: primary and secondary. Being is essence – which makes a being possible.

Substance in the primary sense is composed of matter and form. Every particular object is constituted of matter and form – potency and actuality are the stages of the development of a substance. Metaphysics is the study of the highest causes and Aristotle explains four kinds of causes – material, formal, efficient and final. Aristotelian metaphysics culminates in theology.

According to St Thomas metaphysics is the study of reality in general. Metaphysics culminates in the study of the divine. Aquinas distinguishes two ways of the study of the being: being as capable of being understood by the mind and being is understood through the operations of the mind. Understanding of being differs in different cases, therefore the analogical understanding of being is proposed. Every being participates in *esse commune / esse subsistens*. Existence and essence are co-principles except in God. There are substance and accidents, matter and form in the corporeal beings. To prove God St Thomas uses 'a posteriori' methods. Knowledge of God is not connatural to man.

Metaphysics and epistemology were not two distinct disciplines in the beginning. The distinction came when there began doubt about human capacity of knowledge. Men are natural metaphysicians. Human capacity of knowledge becomes ineffective in knowing the infinite being.

1.6 KEY WORDS

1. Metaphysics: The texts on 'first philosophy' were grouped after those of physics and were called *meta ta physika*. Metaphysics or first philosophy is "a science which investigates being as being". It is the science that studies being as being. Other sciences touch only a portion of the things. They touch on a particular sphere of being and analyse the attributes of being in that particular sphere. Metaphysics, on the contrary, considers being as such, entity as such in the universal manner and in its highest and most general determinations, thus seeking the ultimate causes. Thus metaphysics has for its object the totality of things.

2. Substance: The word 'substance' means, something that is *sub-stantia*, that which is underneath, subject, meaning *sub-jectum*, which is the translation of the Greek word, *hypokeimenon*, which means substratum or subject. Substance is the support or substratum for its

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accidents: red, square etc supported by the substance 'table'. Accidents are predicated of other things. The table is the table itself, whereas the red is the red of the table.

3. Act and Potency: Actuality and potentiality are the first principles of being in the order of determination. The former is the determining principle of being and the latter is the determinate. While actuality signifies perfection, potentiality is the capacity of perfection.

4. Existence and Essence: Existence is the principle of perfection and essence is the principle of limitation we find in every being. Each being is one and multiple at the same time. This experience of the multiple modes of reality leads to the discovery that each such being is composed of a constitutive co-principle of perfection (*esse*; *quo est*) 'in virtue of which a substance is called a being' and a constitutive co-principle of limitation (essential; *quo est tale*) 'in virtue of which it is such-and-such a being'.

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1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Metaphysics is the principle of being. A principle is that from which "a thing is or comes to be or is known", and "the philosopher must grasp the principles of causes. The idea of being is the most abstract of all ideas. Everything that exists or can be thought of as existing is being. Being is the most universal idea. The idea of being is transcendental. Being is analogous. Being is substance - that which gives form. It is substance, that which is underneath – subject – *subjectum*. Individuals are true substances. Substance are of various classes – individual, species. Being as essence – that which a thing is – quiddity – that which makes a being possible.

2. Substance is composed of matter and form. Matter is anything physical, mental, moral or spiritual which will go to the existence of a thing. Form determines a thing. There is the hylemorphic union.

Act and potency – every object exists by virtue of realizing new forms and hidden possibilities – potency: active potency and passive potency; potentiality which lies within - actuality is the completed reality – entelechy – energeia.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. The concept of being is analogical – difference between univocal, equivocal and analogical use. Analogy - horizontal and vertical.

Meaning of participation – ways of participation – *esse commune* and *esse subsistens* – difference.

2. Two co-principles – existence and essence – But God is existence – pure existence. Existence is the principle of perfection and essence is the principle of limitation.

Substance as particular and individual of which everything is predicated. Accidents are characteristics of substance. There are one substance and nine categories of accidents.

Contents

2.0. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit - Epistemology deals with the nature and possibility of knowledge. A central problem in epistemology consists in the sceptical challenge which in a generalized manner casts doubt on our justifications for knowledge claims, thereby threatening the very possibility of knowledge. In order to defend the possibility of justification, and hence of knowledge, against that challenge, there are, two possibilities. First position is called (epistemological) foundationalism. We analyse the sceptic challenge by identifying a set of beliefs with some special epistemic property (like self-evidence, or infallibility), such that all other beliefs can be said to rest on that ultimate foundation of justification. Second, we investigate a coherentist view on which there are no ultimately privileged beliefs, but justification is still possible because it is provided by coherence within a set of beliefs. Which option is more reliable to account for epistemic justification has been one of the central issues in

modern epistemology and the discussion still goes on. Let us also discuss about foundationalism and coherentism in this unit.

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

- to have a basic understanding of foundationalism and coherentism;
- to distinguish foundationalism and coherentism;
- to relate it with epistemic justification;
- to explore the argument between foundationalism and coherentism
- to have a holistic understanding of justification of knowledge through foundationalism and coherentism;
- to apply this justification of knowledge especially foundationalism and coherentism in our day-to-day life.

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The justification of beliefs about epistemic principles is the pivotal problem in epistemology i.e., principles stating which kinds of beliefs are justified and which are not. It is in general regarded as circular to justify such beliefs empirically. However, foundationalism claims that our empirical beliefs are rationally constrained by our non-verbal experience. Non-verbal experience is caused by events in the world. Some recent defenders of foundationalism have argued that, within a foundationalist framework, one can justify beliefs about epistemic principles empirically without incurring the charge of vicious circularity. Coherentism suggests that empirical beliefs are rationally constrained only by other, further empirical beliefs. And beliefs are caused by sensations and worldly events.

The debate over the structure of knowledge and justification is primarily one among those who hold that knowledge requires justification. From this point of view, the structure of knowledge derives from the structure of justification. With this introduction now let us proceed to see some of the definitions that explain about foundationalism and coherentism.

2.2. DEFINITION OF FOUNDATIONALISM AND COHERENTISM

The term foundationalism is often understood with derogatory connotations and without any clear definition both in literary and religious circles to refer to various positions that stand in contrast to relativism, such as the belief that there is absolute truth or a real world that we do not construct or the belief that it is possible to know anything rationally. Philosophers understood foundationalism as a position regarding the structure of justified belief or of knowledge.

Foundationalism is a position regarding the structure of justified belief or of knowledge. A foundationalist holds that all inferred beliefs must, to meet the requirements of rationality, be supported by a finite chain or tree of supporting beliefs, rather than by loops or circles of inference or by an infinite regress of reasons. According to foundationalism all knowledge and justified belief rest ultimately on a foundation of noninferential knowledge or justified belief. Foundationalism is any theory in epistemology that holds that beliefs are justified based on what are called *basic beliefs.*

Coherentism is a theory of epistemic justification. The view about the structure of justification or knowledge is coherentism. The thesis of coherentist's is normally formulated in terms of a denial of its contrary foundationalism. Coherentism thus claims, minimally, that not all knowledge and justified belief rest ultimately on a foundation of noninferential knowledge or justified belief.

The Rutledge encyclopaedia of philosophy defines coherentism is a matter of how the beliefs in a system of beliefs fit together or dovetail with each other, so as to constitute one unified, organized, and tightly structured whole. And it is clear that this fitting together depends on a wide variety of logical, inferential and explanatory relations among the components of the system.

Coherentism is not the coherence theory of truth. Coherence theory of truth holds that a proposition is true just in case it coheres with a set of propositions. This theory of truth is said to be too permissive. The reason is that this theory of truth does not tell anything about the conditions under which a belief is justified.

Coherentist insists that there is no way to appeal for justification to anything out side of one's system of beliefs because any such supposed source of justification would have to be apprehended by the person in question in a belief or belief-like state before it could play any justificatory role, and then it would be the belief rather than the external item that was the immediate source of justification. With this basic understanding let us move on to the next section where we explore foundationalism.

2.3 FOUNDATIONALISM

The basic idea of Rationalism is that the only source of sure knowledge is reason. We all know that senses sometimes deceive us and we make perceptual errors. In contrast 2+2=4 can never false. Therefore, they contend that all true and certain knowledge comes from our reason. Rationalists take mathematics as the model of knowledge and hold that certain knowledge is *a priori*. A priori means knowledge which is justified or known to be true independent of experience.

We have the Empiricist**s,** on the other extreme, who hold that all genuine knowledge comes from or is justified by sense experience. Of course, the difference between rationalists and empiricists consists in whether reason or sense experience is considered as the primary and most reliable source of knowledge. The empiricists and rationalists are foundationalists. They differ only in what they consider to be the foundations. Empiricists hold the data of experience to be foundational whereas the rationalists give that role to innate ideas.

Traditional Foundationalism

The foundations of knowledge have been seen as infallible (which cannot be wrong), incorrigible (which cannot be refuted), and indubitable (which cannot be doubted). For empiricists these foundations consist in our beliefs about our own experience. Our beliefs are basic and non-basic. Our basic beliefs comprise such belief as that we are now seeing a blue shape in our visual field. In order to justify our non-basic belief we must be able to infer it from other beliefs. The claim of the traditional foundationalists is that inferential justifications are not required for our basic

beliefs. There may not actually be a blue object in the world because we may be hallucinating, but, on the other hand, we cannot be wrong about the fact that we now believe that we are seeing something blue. Justifications for such beliefs is provided by experiential status that are not themselves beliefs, that is, by our immediate apprehension of the content of our sensory, perceptual experience, or what is sometimes termed 'the Given'. We may call it traditional foundationalism.

Modest Foundationalism

Some foundationalists hold that the Given is in some ways problematic. Yet they maintain a 'moderate' foundationalism. This view was promoted by Alwin Plantinga and Audi. Our perceptual beliefs about the world and our experience are not seen as infallible. We can believe that we see blue or we seem to see blue, yet either belief can turn out to be unjustified. Non-conceptual perceptual experience does not play a justificatory role. Perceptual beliefs are simply self-justified. Such a view of perception remains foundationalist in nature because we still have basic beliefs, beliefs that are non-inferentially justified. Modest foundationalism avoids the dilemma that faces traditional foundationalism. It does not have to be infallible for a perceptual belief to be justified. We may call this a modest view of foundationalism or modest foundationalism.

Foundationalism holds that our justified beliefs are structured like a building. They are divided into a foundation and a superstructure, the latter resting upon the former. Beliefs belonging to the foundation are 'basic'. Beliefs belonging to the superstructure are 'nonbasic' and receive justification from the justified beliefs in the foundation. The claim of the foundationalism is that the superstructure of our belief system inherits its justification from a certain subset of perceptual beliefs upon which the rest sits. These beliefs are called 'Basic Beliefs'.

There are two types of arguments in foundationalism. On the one hand, they argue that non-foundational inference structures are rationally defective. These arguments include explanations of the vitiating nature of both circular reasoning and infinite regresses of reasons. On the other hand, foundationalists argue that there are foundational beliefs i.e. beliefs that it is rational to hold without inferring them from anything else and that these differ clearly from beliefs that do require support.

To prove the foundationalist account of justification it has to solve two problems. The first problem is by virtue of what exactly are basic beliefs justified? And the second problem is how do basic beliefs justify nonbasic beliefs? It would be better if we first consider the question of what it is that makes a justified belief basic in the first place. Then we can move on to the other questions.

Doxastic Basicality (DoBa)

Doxastic Basicality is that which makes basicality a function of how our doxastic system (belief system) is structured. *R*'s justified belief that *s* is basic if and only if *R*'s belief that *s* is justified without owing its justification to any of *R*'s other beliefs. For our understanding let us consider DoBa as Doxastic Basicality.

Let us now analyse what would, according to Doxastic Basicality, qualify as an example of a basic belief. Suppose we notice someone's T-shirt, and you also notice that that T-shirt looks yellow to us and so we believe. *Ba* It appears to me that that T-shirt is yellow.

Ba is an example of a justified belief. *DoBa* tells us that *Ba* is basic if and only if it does not owe its justification to any other beliefs of ours. So if *Ba* is indeed basic, there might be some item or other to which *Ba* owes its justification, but that item would not be another belief of ours. We call this kind of basicality 'doxastic' because it makes basicality a function of how our doxastic system is structured.

Now let us get back to the question of where the justification that attaches to *Ba* might come from. Note that *DoBa* merely tells us how *Ba* is 'not' justified. It says nothing about 'how' *Ba* is justified. Therefore *DoBa* does not answer that question. What we need, in addition to *DoBa*, is an account of 'what it is' that justifies a belief such as *Ba*. According to one strand of foundationalist thought, *Ba* is justified because it can't be false, doubted, or corrected by others. So *Ba* is justified because *Ba* carries with it an "epistemic privilege" such as infallibility, indubitability, or incorrigibility. Here *Ba* is justified by virtue of its intrinsic nature, which makes it possess some kind of an epistemic privilege. This is called *Privileged Foundationalism*.

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Here we must notice that *Ba* is not a belief about the T-shirt. Instead, it's a belief about how the T-shirt 'appears' to us. So *Ba* is an introspective belief about a perceptual experience of us. According to the thought we are considering here, a subject's basic beliefs are made up of introspective beliefs about the subject's own mental states, of which perceptual experiences make up one subset.

According to another version of foundationalism, *Ba* is justified not by virtue of possessing some kind of privileged status, but by some further mental state. That mental state, however, is not a further belief. Rather, it is the very 'perceptual experience' that *Ba* is about: the T-shirts's looking yellow. Let *E* represent that experience. According to this alternative proposal, *Ba* and *E* are distinct mental states. The idea is that what justifies *Ba* is *E*. Since *E* is an experience, not a belief of ours, *Ba* is, according to *DoBa*, basic. This is called *Experiential Foundationalism*.

Privileged foundationalism restricts basic beliefs to beliefs about one's own mental states. Experiential foundationalism is less restrictive. According to it, beliefs about external objects can be basic as well. Experiential Foundationalism combines to two crucial ideas: 1 when a justified belief is basic, its justification is not owed to any other belief; 2 what in fact justifies basic beliefs are experiences.

Let us briefly analyse how justification is supposed to be transferred from basic to nonbasic beliefs. There are two options: the justificatory relation between basic and nonbasic beliefs could be deductive or non-deductive. If we take the relation to be deductive, each of one's nonbasic beliefs would have to be such that it can be deduced from one's basic beliefs. This seems excessively demanding. If we consider a random selection of typical beliefs we hold, it is not easy to see from which basic beliefs they could be deduced. Therefore, foundationalists, typically conceive of the link between the foundation and the superstructure in non-deductive terms. They would say that, for a basic belief, B, to justify a nonbasic belief, *B*, it isn't necessary that B entails *B*. Rather, it is sufficient that, given B, it is likely that *B* is true.

Now we are half between the two rivals in the epistemic justification or justification of knowledge let us proceed to explore more about coherentism the arch rival of foundationalism.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) What is your general understanding of Foundationalism?

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2) How do you understand Doxastic Basicality?

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2.4 COHERENTISM

In the history of philosophy coherentism is a relatively recent innovation. We can interpret Spinoza and Kant as advocating versions of coherentism. We can trace out the coherentist positions in nineteenth century through the absolute idealists.

The title holders of coherentism are the British Idealists F.H. Bradley (1846-1924), Bernard Bosanquet (1848-1923) and the Philosophers of Science Otto Neurath (1882-1945), Carl Hempel (1905-1997), and W.V. Quine (1908-2000). Unfortunately they were not able to distinguish epistemological and metaphysical issues. Notwithstanding it was developed and defended by a group of contemporary epistemologists and the noted personality here is Laurence BonJour and Keith Lehrer and they were accompanied by Gilbert Harman, William Lycan, Nicholas Rescher, and Wilfrid Sellars. One should not judge by seeing this long list of name that coherentism is very popular among epistemologists. In spite of these many people developing and defending

coherentism it has got only a minority position among the epistemologists. Coherentism is the main alternative to foundationalism

Coherentism implies that for a belief to be justified it must belong to a coherent system of beliefs. For a system of beliefs to be coherent, the beliefs that make up that system must "cohere" with one another. Usually, coherence is taken to imply something stronger than mere consistency. Coherentism adopts a subjective viewpoint regarding the items that need to cohere. It maintains that the system on which coherence is defined is the person's system of beliefs. Coherentism holds that knowledge and justification are structured like a web where the strength of any given area depends on the strength of the surrounding areas. Coherentists deny that there are any basic beliefs.

The strongest form of coherentism says that belonging to a coherent system of beliefs is

A. necessary for a belief to be justified and

B. *by itself* sufficient for a belief to be justified.

This view is called *Strong Coherentism*. This view can be differentiated with two weaker varieties of coherentism. *Necessity Coherentism* just makes the necessity claim at (A). It imposes coherence as what is often called "a structural condition" on justification. Structural conditions tell us how beliefs must be related to one another if they are to be justified. However, since there might be additional non-structural conditions on justified belief, being related to one another in the required way may not be sufficient for justification.

The other view is called non-coherentist view which holds that coherence can boost the justification of a belief as long as that belief is already independently justified in some way that is not due to coherence. According to this view coherence is sufficient to boost beliefs that are independently justified. This, however, is not thought to be strong enough to be called a coherentist view. To make coherence sufficient for justification we must claim that coherence is sufficient, by itself, to generate justification, in other words, coherence must generate justification from scratch. This view is called *Sufficiency Coherentism*.

Doxastic Coherentism (DoCo)

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According to doxastic coherentism every justified belief receives its justification from other beliefs in its epistemic vicinity. Let us take for an example H) That T-shirt is yellow. Here H is justified. According to coherentism, H receives its justification from other beliefs in the epistemic vicinity of H. They constitute our evidence or our reasons for taking H to be true. Now the question is which beliefs might make up this set of justification-conferring neighborhood beliefs? We have two approaches to answer this question. One is *Explanatory Coherentism* and the other is *Reliability Coherentism.*

Explanatory Coherentism

Explanatory coherentism is known as inference to the best explanation. In this approach, we form a belief about the way the T-shirt appears to us in our perceptual experiences, and a second belief to the effect that our perceptual experience, the T-shirt's looking yellow to us, is best explained by the assumption that H is true. Hence we believe that 1) we are having a visual experience E: the T-shirt looks yellow to us. 2) Our having E is best explained by assuming that H is true. Here Explanatory coherentism strongly believes in the T-shirts's actual yellowness is a superior explanation. That's why we are justified in believing H.

Explanatory coherentism finds difficult in make us understand in nonepistemic terms, why the favored explanation is really better than the competing explanations. Explanatory coherentism is supposed to make us understand where justification comes from. It doesn't do that if it accounts for the difference between better and worse explanations by making use of the difference between justified and unjustified belief. If explanatory coherentism were to proceed in this way, it would be a circular, and thus uninformative, account of justification.

Reliability Coherentism

Keep in mind what a subject's justification for believing *s* is all about: possessing a link between the belief that *s* and *s*'s truth. Presume the subject knows that the origin of her belief that *s* is reliable. So she knows that beliefs coming from this source tend to be true. Such knowledge would give her an excellent link between the belief and its truth. So we might say that the neighborhood beliefs which confer justification on H are the following: 1) We are having a visual experience E: the T-shirt looks yellow to us. 3) Experiences like (E) are reliable. This kind of coherentism is called reliability coherentism. If we believe 1 and 3, we are in possession of a good reason for thinking that the T-shirt is indeed yellow. So we are in possession of a good

reason for thinking that the belief in question, H, is true. In this way we are justified in believing H according to reliability coherentism.

Reliability coherentism also faces a circularity problem. If H receives its justification in part because we also believe 3, 3 itself must be justified. But where would our justification for 3 come from? One answer would be: from our memory of perceptual success in the past. Our visual experiences have had a good track record. We can't justifiably attribute a good track record to our perceptual faculties without using our perceptual faculties. Hence it would have to be legitimate to use a faculty for the very purpose of establishing the reliability of that faculty itself.

We have seen that explanatory coherentism and reliability coherentism each face its own distinctive circularity problem. Since both are versions of doxastic coherentism. Both are facing another difficulty i.e. they make excessive intellectual demands of ordinary subjects who are unlikely to have the background beliefs that are needed for justification. This can be avoided by another type.

Dependence Coherentism

Whenever we are justified in believing a proposition s_1, our justification for believing s_1 depends on justification we have for believing some further propositions, $s_1, s_2, \ldots s_n$.

According to explanatory coherentist to be justified in believing H, it's not necessary that we actually believe 1 and 2. However, it is necessary that we have justification for believing 1 and 2. It is having justification for 1 and 2 that gives you justification for believing H. A reliability coherentist might make an equivalent point. According to them to be justified in believing H, we need not believe anything about the reliability of our belief's origin. However, we must have justification for believing that our belief's origin is reliable i.e. we must have justification for 1 and 3. Both versions of dependence coherentism rest on the supposition that it is possible to have justification for a proposition without actually believing that proposition.

Dependence coherentism holds that justification need not come in the form of beliefs. It can come in the form of introspective and memorial evidence that gives a subject justification for beliefs about either reliability or explanatory coherence. In fact, dependence coherentism allows

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for the possibility that a belief is justified, not by receiving any of its justification from other beliefs, but solely by suitable perceptual experiences and memory content and this is called *compromise position.* Having explored the foundationalism and coherentism let us go ahead to see the significance of foundationalism and coherentism.

2.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF FOUNDATIONALISM

In this section I would like to introduce to you the regress argument. Regress argument is the main argument for foundationalism. It's an argument from elimination. Regarding every justified belief B1, the question arises of where B1's justification comes from. If B1 is not basic, it would have to come from another belief, B2. But B2 can justify B1 only if B2 is justified itself. If B2 is basic, the justificatory chain would end with B2. But if B2 is not basic, we need a further belief, B3. If B3 is not basic, we need a fourth belief, and so on. Here we get two possibilities unless the consequent regress terminates in a basic belief i.e. the regress will either loop back to B1 or

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continue *ad infinitum*. According to the regress argument, both of these possibilities are unacceptable. Therefore, if there are justified beliefs, there must be basic beliefs. From this regress argument we can understand foundationalism in two descriptions. The first description is an asymmetry condition on the justification of beliefs i.e. that inferential beliefs are justified in a way different from the way in which non-inferential beliefs are justified. The second description is an account of intrinsic or self-warrant for the beliefs which are foundationally warranted and which support the entire structure of justified beliefs.

Foundationalism relies on the claim that it is not necessary to ask for justification of certain propositions, or that they are self-justifying. If someone makes an observational statement, such as 'the climate is very chill', it does seem reasonable to ask how they know - did they look out the window? Did someone else tell them? Did they just come in shivering? The regress argument merely defends experiential foundationalism against doxastic coherentism. Experiential foundationalism can be supported by citing cases like the yellow T-shirt example. Such examples make it credible to assume that perceptual experiences are a source of justification.

2.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF COHERENTISM

The coherence thinker rejects the foundationalist's presupposition that justification is linear. The coherentist response to the argument for foundationalism is only as plausible as the coherence theory of justification. Coherentism denies the soundness of the regression argument. The regression argument makes the assumption that the justification for a proposition takes the form of another proposition: P2 justifies P1, which in turn justifies P. According to coherentism, justification is a holistic process. P is not justified as a part of some inferential chain of reasoning, but because it coheres with some system of which it forms a part. Here it is necessary for coherentism to explain in some detail what it means for a system to be coherent.

Another significant idea that we have to notice is the distinction between subjective and objective approaches. The most popular objective approach is explanatory coherentism, which defines coherence in terms of that which makes for a good explanation. On such a view,

hypotheses are justified by explaining the data, and the data are justified by being explained by our hypotheses. The central task for such a theory is to state conditions under which such explanation occurs.

A different objective account of the coherence relation has been presented by BonJour. He has mentioned the following five features in his account 1) logical consistency, 2) the extent to which the system in question is probabilistically consistent, 3) the extent to which inferential connections exist between beliefs, both in terms of the number of such connections and their strength, 4) the inverse of the degree to which the system is divided into unrelated, unconnected subsystems of belief, and 5) the inverse of the degree to which the system of belief contains unexplained anomalies. These factors are a good beginning toward an account of objective coherence, but by themselves they are not enough. We need to be informed what function on these five factors is the correct one by which to define coherence. That is, we need to know how to weigh each of these factors to provide an assessment of the overall coherence of the system.

Coherentism insists that it is always reasonable to ask for a justification for any statement. Coherentism challenges that foundationalism provides an arbitrary spot to stop asking for justification so that it does not provide reasons to think that certain beliefs do not need justification. Coherentism typically holds that justification is solely a function of some relationship between beliefs. They attack foundationalism by arguing that no plausible version of the view will be able to supply enough in the way of foundational beliefs to support the entire structure of belief.

Coherentists have gone beyond negative philosophy to provide a positive characterization of their view. Coherentists typically adopt a subjective viewpoint regarding the items that need to cohere, maintaining that the system on which coherence is defined is the person's system of beliefs. Social versions of coherentism may define coherence relative to the system of common knowledge in a given society. Thus we come to the end of this unit.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1) What is the significance of foundationalism?

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2) Reflect on the importance of coherentism.

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2.7. LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to give a brief notion of foundationalism and coherentism. The argument of foundationalism is very simple. If knowledge is to be reasonable and our beliefs are justified, then those justified beliefs must be based on some other beliefs which are reasonable and they on further beliefs and so on. But ultimately this process of justification must end up in some beliefs that require no justification or are self-justified or self-evident. Foundationalists insist that there must be some beliefs that are directly or immediately justified, as opposed to being justified by inferences from other beliefs. They maintain that these special non-inferentially justified beliefs form the foundation of all knowledge and that all the rest of our beliefs are ultimately justified in relation to the foundational beliefs. To establish this understanding we have analysed various kinds of foundationalism. Then we moved on to explore

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coherentism, the rival of foundationalism. It is obvious that logical coherence is important in any system of beliefs if it is to be accepted as true; otherwise we would lapse into meaninglessness. Coherentism clearly showed us that the better a belief system hanging together the more coherent it is. Here it stressed the importance of logical consistency in the justification of knowledge. To establish this conception we have analysed different kinds of coherentism. Finally we concluded with the significance of foundationalism and coherentism.

2.8. KEY WORDS

Doxastic Basicality: it is that which makes basicality a function of how our doxastic system (belief system) is structured.

Basic beliefs: beliefs that give justificatory support to other beliefs, and more derivative beliefs are based on those more basic beliefs that are self-justifying or self-evident.

Non-basic beliefs: beliefs that receive justification from the justified beliefs in the foundation.

Doxastic Coherentism: it is the idea that every justified belief receives its justification from other beliefs in its epistemic vicinity

A priori: knowledge which is justified or known to be true independent of experience.

Compromise position: the possibility that a belief is justified, not by receiving any of its justification from other beliefs, but solely by suitable perceptual experiences and memory content.

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2.10. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1) Foundationalism is any theory in epistemology that holds that beliefs are justified based on what are called *basic beliefs.*Foundationalism is a position regarding the structure of justified belief or of knowledge. It holds that all inferred beliefs must, to meet the requirements of rationality, be supported by a finite chain or tree of supporting beliefs,

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rather than by loops or circles of inference or by an infinite regress of reasons. Here we have traditional foundationalism which holds that knowledge is infallible and modest foundationalism which holds that our perceptual beliefs about the world and our experience are not seen as infallible. There are two kinds of arguments one is that that non-foundational inference structures are rationally defective and the other is that there are foundational beliefs; beliefs that it is rational to hold without inferring them from anything else and that these differ clearly from beliefs that do require support.

2) Doxastic Basicality is that which makes basicality a function of how our doxastic system (belief system) is structured. R's justified belief that s is basic if and only if R's belief that s is justified without owing its justification to any of R's other beliefs. We call a basicality 'doxastic' because it makes basicality a function of how our doxastic system is structured.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1) Coherentism is a theory of epistemic justification. The view about the structure of justification or knowledge is coherentism. The thesis of coherentist's is normally formulated in terms of a denial of its contrary foundationalism. Coherentism thus claims, minimally, that not all knowledge and justified belief rest ultimately on a foundation of noninferential knowledge or justified belief. Coherentist insists that there is no way to appeal for justification to anything out side of one's system of beliefs because any such supposed source of justification would have to be apprehended by the person in question in a belief or belief-like state before it could play any justificatory role, and then it would be the belief rather than the external item that was the immediate source of justification. Strong Coherentism, Necessity Coherentism, Sufficiency Coherentism, Doxastic Coherentism which holds that every justified belief receives its justification from other beliefs in its epistemic vicinity. Further we have Explanatory Coherentism and Reliability Coherentism and the important one is Dependence Coherentism.

2) The explanatory coherentism and the reliability coherentism each face its own distinctive circularity problem. Since both are versions of doxastic coherentism. Both face another difficulty i.e. they make excessive intellectual demands of ordinary subjects who are unlikely to have the background beliefs that are needed for justification. This can be solved by dependence coherentism which holds that justification need not come in the form of beliefs. It can come in the form of introspective and memorial evidence that gives a subject justification for beliefs about either reliability or explanatory coherence. Dependence coherentism allows for the possibility that a belief is justified, not by receiving any of its justification from other beliefs, but solely by suitable perceptual experiences and memory content and this is called compromise position. Thus Dependence coherentism solves the problem in explanatory coherentism and reliability coherentism.

Answers to Check Your Progress III

1) First and foremost it is the regress argument. If there are justified beliefs, there must be basic beliefs. From this regress argument we can understand foundationalism in two descriptions. The first description is an asymmetry condition on the justification of beliefs i.e. that inferential beliefs are justified in a way different from the way in which non-inferential beliefs are justified. The second description is an account of intrinsic or self-warrant for the beliefs which are foundationally warranted and which support the entire structure of justified beliefs.

2) The coherentist response to the argument for foundationalism is only as plausible as the coherence theory of justification. Coherentism denies the soundness of the regression argument. Another significant idea that we have to notice is the distinction between subjective and objective approaches. The most popular objective approach is explanatory coherentism, which defines coherence in terms of that which makes for a good explanation. Coherentism insists that it is always reasonable to ask for a justification for any statement. Coherentism challenges that foundationalism provides an arbitrary spot to stop asking for justification and so that it does not provide reasons to think that certain

beliefs do not need justification. Coherentism typically holds that justification is solely a function of some relationship between beliefs.

UNIT 3   INTRODUCING SOME COMPLEXITY

Contents

3.0. OBJECTIVES

The ancient philosophy of the Greco-Roman world was concerned about understanding the fundamental causes and principles of the universe and explaining it in an economical and uniform way. The medieval philosophy remained wedded to Theology but in contrast the modern philosophy arose in the wake of science and remained subservient to scientific methodology. This aggressiveness of modern philosophy results in recapturing of faith in human capacity to know and an ever increasing quest for the new reliable foundations. Instead of searching for the first principles of being, modern philosophers are looking for the first principles of human knowledge. This epistemological turn away from the ancient ontology of nature was performed in a ground breaking manner by Rene Descartes in his *Meditations on First Philosophy* and more decisively and elaborately carried out by Hume and Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*.

The principal objective in this course is to become acquainted with the development of modern Philosophy particularly in Hume and Kant. In pursuing that goal, the students should develop necessary skills to evaluate the main arguments of these thinkers. The second goal is to

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help students to understand the rationale and the motivation of the empirical and the transcendental positions.

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The history of philosophy is marked by the epistemological revolution which occurred around the time of Descartes. For centuries, the philosophers assumed the reliability of human mind. It was Descartes who called in question the very foundation of knowledge by doubting the reliability of our knowing. The problem of our knowing springs from the inquiry into the presuppositions of knowledge and the limits within which our thought processes are valid. The primary origin of thought is spontaneous. Therefore, it is legitimate to ask to what extent we are then justified in ascribing real meaning to the results of our thought. Where does the truth of knowledge consist? This was the question which was taken up for discussion by the thinkers of the modern philosophy and this intellectual enquiry resulted in some amount of complexity in understanding this vital issue. Hume and Kant are the two fine thinkers who made their contributions in understanding this epistemological problem in their own inimitable style. In this unit we try to understand the philosophies of these two thinkers.

3.2 THE PHILOSOPHY OF HUME: LIFE AND WORKS OF HUME

David Hume is the most prominent philosopher ever to write in English and belongs to the exclusive club of three "British empiricists". He was also well-known in his own time as an historian and essayist. David Hume was born at Edinburg, Scotland in the year 1711 and took up philosophical learning against the wish of his family who wanted him to study Law. He went to France in 1734, to devote himself to literary pursuits and returned in 1737. Hume was to stay three years in France during which time he worked on his first book, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. In 1737, Hume returned from France and spent about a year and half at London completing and publishing his work. He sought employment at the university at Edinburgh as a professor but he did not get the job due to his controversial religious stand. In 1766, Hume was appointed as an Under-Secretary of State, a position in the Home Office. But, due to ill health he was obliged to give up his Home Office position after about a year, and he died on the 25th of August, 1776. Hume's philosophical work, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, was written in 1748. It was a follow up to an earlier work, a less popular work, *A Treatise of Human*

Nature. In addition, in 1752, Hume wrote *Political Discourses*. In 1755, he wrote *The Natural History of Religion.*

Hume's Theory of Knowledge

Following Locke, Hume agrees that all our knowledge originate from experience. His major philosophical quest was to enquire seriously into the nature of human understanding and then go on to analyze its power and capacity. In his theory of knowledge, the primary concern of Hume has been the origin of *Ideas*. He begins to treat this question of *Ideas* by saying that there is a considerable difference between the perceptions of the mind and its memory in the mind. For instance, it is one thing to feel the pain instantly and quite another to recall it to one's memory or anticipate it by imagination. This might present us with the pale images of the perceptions by the senses but they would never have the vivacity of the original. After all, the portrait is only the representation of the reality. It would mean that even the liveliest thought is still way behind even the vague form of sensation. When we reflect on the past our thought is like a faithful mirror which projects the object on it. Thus it is clear that original is a no match for the reality. His concept of 'Perception' includes the entire contents of the mind.

He divides perceptions into two categories, distinguished by their different degrees of force and vivacity namely; *Impressions* and *Ideas*. By *Impressions* Hume means the perceptions of seeing, hearing, loving, feeling or willing. The *Ideas* can be distinguished from the fact that they are less lively than the *Impressions* and which come to our knowledge as resulting from the reflection on those sensations. The impressions are similar to sensation and the immediate data of experience and by ideas he means the copies or the faint images of thinking and reasoning. Thus the difference between these two lies only in the grade of their perfection. When I look through the window I get the lovely landscape and when I close my eyes and think of them the ideas which come to my mind are the images of the representations and thus we see that the Ideas and Impressions always seem to correspond to each other. In Hume's understanding Idea refers to some form of image. Locke attempted to arrive at knowledge from simple Ideas whereas Hume makes it through the Impressions arising from the sense experience.

Hume argues that *Impressions* and *Ideas* seem always as corresponding to each other. This would further mean that without impressions there could be no ideas. For if an idea is simply an *Impression* it follows that for every *Idea* there must be a prior Impression. However it is here Hume makes a distinction between simple and complex perception which can be applied to both Idea and Impression. This distinction becomes extremely significant in understanding the correlation between these both. This could be better understood through some examples. The perception of a gray area on the wall is a simple impression and the very thought of it brings about the simple Idea. But, when I go on to the top of St. Peter's Basilica, I get the complex impression of the entire Vatican City and if I think of that complex Impression at a later time then I get the complex Idea. Here, the complex Idea corresponds to the complex Impression. There could be a similar instance, where what was never seen or heard of, may yet be conceived as our thought appears to possess this boundless freedom. A closer look at this will tell us that this is nothing more than the ingenious power of the mind to compound, transpose and gather the materials provided by the senses. When we think of a "flying horse", our imagination joins two of our ideas, 'wings' and 'horse' which were originally acquired as Impressions through the senses.

We cannot argue with absolute certainty that to every idea there is a corresponding impression but is important to realize that the complex idea like the "flying horse" in our previous example could be broken into simple ideas and then a corresponding impression to every idea would be traced. Hume states, "The rule here holds that without any exception, and that every simple idea has a simple impression which resembles it, and every simple impression a correspondent idea." Though we cannot make a study of all cases and prove his claim, we can certainly ask the person who denies it to prove the contrary.

The next dilemma that we would be confronted with is, whether these Impressions are derived from Ideas or the Impressions are derived from the Ideas. It is a question on the order of appearance and Hume answers it saying that the Impressions precede Ideas. But Hume would hold an exception to this rule that Ideas are derived from Impressions. Hume explains it with an example of a person who had enjoyed excellent eye sight for thirty years during those thirty years he had the privilege to see all colours and particularly all shades of Blue, with no exception from deepest to the lightest. Now, if he is presented with the entire series of shades of Blue in a

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graded continuity, and if all others except one blue shade which he has never seen were to be presented, then he would see a blank in the continuous series. Is it possible for him to supply to this deficiency through his own imagination and formulate an 'idea' of this particular shade though he never experienced an 'impression' corresponding to it? And, Hume says that this is an extreme case and it does not deserve the attention to the level of changing our general maxim that every Idea comes from a corresponding Impression. However Hume would also speak about the possibility of forming ideas of ideas. These 'ideas of ideas' are also referred as 'secondary ideas' which evolve from previous ideas rather than directly coming from impressions. Hume argues that this is not an exception to the general rule that the impressions precede ideas because they evolve from ideas which were originally the results of impressions.

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 Hume distinguish *Perception* from *memory* in presenting his origin of Ideas?

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2) How do Impressions and Ideas correspond to each other?

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Association of Ideas

   All the ideas and abstract ideas in particular are vague and lack clarity and the mind does not possess a clear hold of them. So, often when we use certain terms we use to mean these ideas without a distinct meaning. We only imagine that the term means a particular idea. But in case of doubt over the authenticity on the reliability of a philosophical term, meaning if a term is used

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without any meaning or idea, Hume says that we need to enquire about the Impression which is at work behind such an Idea. If it is impossible to assign any then our suspicision is confirmed. Thus Hume arrives at the theory of truth which states that if it is possible to trace the original impression corresponding to an idea, that idea is true, if it is not possible to trace the corresponding impression, that idea is false.

Hume argues that it is not by chance that these ideas relate to each other. There is a principle of connection, a bond of union at work among them. There is an associating quality which naturally brings them together and they introduce to each other with some amount of regularity and method and anything which splits this chain of ideas is immediately rejected. Hume would further state that what brings these ideas together is not a faculty in the mind rather the pattern of thinking and grouping of our ideas which explains it. He further explains that there are certain qualities in these ideas due to which they are associated to each other. They are basically three in number. They are, *Resemblance, Contiguity* in time or place and *Cause* or *effect*. We can understand them better through the following examples. *Resemblance* is made clear through the example that a picture naturally leads our thoughts to the original; the mention of one apartment in a building naturally introduces an enquiry concerning others which is an example of *Contiguity* and *Cause effect* relation is seen in the example of 'wound and pain', where if we think of a wound, we cannot overlook the pain involved in it.

Hume's Fork

David Hume in his *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section IV Part I, explains what mattered most in his philosophy, where we find the following quoted passage: "All the objects of human reason or enquiry may naturally be divided into two kinds, *Relations of Ideas*, and *Matters of Fact*."

Here we see Hume making a distinction between 'relations of ideas' and 'matters of fact' which is broadly known today as *Hume's Fork*. It is a distinction central to Hume's epistemology and one that he exerts with great argumentative effect. It is more rarely a name sometimes given to the dilemma that either our actions are determined, or that they are the results of random events. However in both of these cases we are not responsible for them. Some scholars also

expand this distinction to much broader areas of his philosophy and bring them all under the umbrella of Hume's Fork. According to them, the description of his fork corresponds to three separate distinctions which have been important in analytic philosophy. Though not explicit, Hume's fork identifies three dichotomies namely*, analytic/synthetic, necessary/contingent* and a *priori/a posteriori*.

The importance of Hume's fork lies not only in its clear presentation, but holds the central place in Hume's philosophy. It is the seed of Hume's scepticism, which precisely draws up the boundaries of the scale of deductive reason than had until then appeared. Hume's reasoning forward from the fork is well structured. Having asserted that our evidence for matters of fact is quite distinctive from that we have for relations between ideas, he goes on to say that our conclusions about matters of fact are obtained from their evidence by causal reasoning. This constitutes a more detailed account of what lies on the two sides of this fundamental dichotomy, and what Hume provides here is far better than any previous account. Let us briefly look into what Kant would mean by these two terms namely; *Relations of Ideas* and *Matters of fact*.

In his *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section IV, Part I, Hume states that "of the first category are the sciences of Geometry, Algebra, and Arithmetic; and in short, every affirmation which is either intuitively or demonstratively certain. *That the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the square of the two sides* is a proposition which expresses a relation between these figures. *That three times five is equal to the half of thirty,* expresses a relation between these numbers. Propositions of this kind are discoverable by the mere operation of thought, without dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe. Though there never were a circle or triangle in nature, the truths demonstrated by Euclid would forever retain their certainty and evidence."

The *Matters of fact* which are the second objects of human reason cannot be arrived at in the same manner. But this does not mean that the matter of fact is impossible rather it is very much possible and it does not involve a contradiction. The mind is capable of understanding it clearly and distinctly. The contrary of every matter of fact is still possible without being contradictory. The following example is sighted by Hume to explain what he means by *Matters of fact.* "The sun will not rise tomorrow" involves no contradiction than its affirmation that "The sun will rise tomorrow". So any effort to disprove it will be considered futile as it is not

demonstratively false. Thus we find here that in this example that "The sun will not rise tomorrow" is as much a matter of fact as its contrary is.

According to Hume, every analysis regarding the Matter of fact is to be established based on the relation of cause and effect because only such a relation takes us beyond our sense experience and memory. For Hume, that the knowledge of cause and effect is not achieved *a priori* rather arises as a result of experience. For instance, someone who finds a watch or a similar object in an isolated desert would immediately think that there were people living there. There is a connection between the present fact and that which we infer from it. The inference is invalid if there is nothing which binds them both and thus the causes and effects are discoverable not by reason but by experience. This makes us to conclude that every effect is a distinct event from its cause and is therefore independent.

We have already seen how the ideas are associated to each other and there is a connection existing between them. Hume asks by what impression the idea of causation is derived. First of all, the so called 'causes' cannot be the origin of the idea of causation since we cannot determine any feature which is common to them all. Thus there is no impression corresponding to the idea of causality. If so, how does this idea of causality arise in mind? Hume says that the idea of causality arises in the mind when we experience certain relation between objects. When we speak of cause and effect we mean that 'A' causes 'B'. But what kind of relation does this indicate between 'A' and 'B'? Hume reduces this principle of connection between them into three.

The first kind of relation which Hume speaks about is Contiguity and this means that 'A' and 'B' are always closer to each other. By this Hume does not mean that the things which we consider as causes and effects are always immediately contiguous. For instance, if we consider Cause 'A' and its effect 'Z', then 'A' and 'Z' are not immediately contiguous to each other rather we will be able to discover that 'A' and 'B' , 'B' and 'C' are contiguous. And this will go on further and we will be in a position to understand the relation existing between Cause 'A' and effect 'Z'. The second kind of relation which Hume speaks about is the 'Temporal priority'. This means the priority in time for, 'A' the cause is always temporally prior to the effect and the cause and effect cannot be contemporaries. If all effects are contemporaries to the cause then there is

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no way one thing following the other could be talked about. The third kind of relation which he speaks about is the 'Constant Conjunction'. This is because we see that 'A' is always followed by 'B'.

But there seems to be another type of relation which is at work between 'A' and 'B' besides the three we have just mentioned above which is a 'necessary connection' between them. For Hume, no there is no object that implies the existence of another when we consider objects individually. For instance, no amount of observation of hydrogen will mean that when blended with oxygen will give water unless we see them together. Thus it is the experience of seeing them both which makes us to infer the existence of another object. Though we have the impressions of Contiguity, Priority in time and constant conjunction, we don't experience similar kind of impressions with regard to the 'necessary connection'. Thus he concludes that causality is not a quality in the objects we observe but it is the result of the "habit of association" we experience at the level of mind due to the repetition of events of the same nature. However it is to be noted that Hume does not deny that there are causal relations between two objects rather what he wants is to make an enquiry into the statements regarding their meaning. Thus he does not put causal relations into question rather what do we mean by them and in the similar fashion he does not question the existence of 'necessary connections' but what do we mean by it when we say that there are 'necessary connections'.

The External Realities

Hume's extreme empiricism leads him to argue that there is no rational explanation to say that the bodies have an independent existence external to us. For him, the continual existence of external of things is simply a matter of belief. All that the mind has is nothing but impressions and therefore, we are simply confined to the world of perceptions and do not have any access to the world of objects existing independently. Though Hume says that ideas are basically reducible impressions, he does not deny the existence of bodies independently of our perceptions. He says that we are not able to prove that the external world exists and at the same time feel the inability to prove it's opposite. He further asks what makes us to take the independent existence of external world for granted. We do find that the human mind has no way to go beyond the impressions or the Ideas made possible by the impressions. So he concludes that the continued

existence of the external world is not to be attributed the senses or to reason or understanding rather to imagination and primarily to two specific features of imagination namely: Constancy and coherence. It is due to these two features that the imagination leads us to believe that some things exist outside of us independently and this is only a belief and not a rational proof.

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 the argument for the association of ideas put forth by Hume.

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 2)   What do we mean by the term "Hume's Fork"?

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3.3. THE PHILOSOPHY OF IMMANUEL KANT: LIFE AND WORKS OF IMMANUEL KANT

Immanuel Kant was born in the year 1724 in the small provincial town of Konigsberg in East Prussia. His parents were of modest means, and their religious spirit, nurtured by a sect known as Pietists, was to have a permanent influence upon Kant's thought and personal life. In 1740 Kant entered the University of Konigsberg where he studied the classics, physics, and philosophy and he was a professor in his native city of Konigsberg.

Although Kant's personal life contains no extraordinary events, as he did not travel or build up any notable political or social connections, he was immensely successful as a lecturer and was an interesting conversationalist and charming host. He was a man of great self discipline and With out this discipline, however, he could hardly have produced such a striking succession of famous books as his monumental *Critique of pure Reason in 1781, Prolegomena to Any*

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Future Metaphysics in 1783, Principles of the Metaphysics of Ethics in 1785, Metaphysical First Principles of Natural Science in 1786, the Critique of Practical Reason in 1788, the Critique of Judgment in 1790, Religion within the Limits of Mere Reason in 1793, and the small work *Perpetual Peace in 1795.*

Kant's Critical Philosophy

The turning point in Kant's intellectual development was his encounter with Hume's empiricism. Hume had argued that all our knowledge is derived from experience and that therefore we cannot have knowledge of any reality beyond our experience. This argument struck at the very foundation of rationalism whose proponents had argued that human reason can gain knowledge about realities beyond experience simply by moving from one idea to another as one does in mathematics. Kant read Hume's arguments with dismay, and finally tossed them aside with contempt as "dogmatic dreams." Hume takes away all grounds of certitude and the best that a man can have is only a probability and this for Kant is no knowledge at all. Kant was convinced that what man seeks is scientific knowledge, meaning, knowledge that is universally and necessarily true and reliable.

Kant's critical philosophy consists of an analysis of the powers of human reason, by which he meant "a critical inquiry into the faculty of reason with reference to all the knowledge which it may strive to attain independently of all experience." The way of critical philosophy is, therefore, to ask the question, what and how much can understanding and reason know, apart from all experience? Kant asked the critical question whether the human reason enjoys the privilege to undertake such inquest. If metaphysics has to do with knowledge that is developed by reason alone, which is *a priori* in nature then the critical question is how is such *a priori* knowledge possible?

The Metaphysical Dilemma

Kant takes up this issue right at the first edition of the *Critique of pure reason,* which is a clear indication of the seriousness he gives to this problem. The priority for Kant is not the possibility of Metaphysics rather if Metaphysics can do anything at all to expand our knowledge of reality. For Kant the main concerns of Metaphysics are God, freedom and Immortality, which he calls as the three moral postulates. So the question could be restructured as; whether

Metaphysics is able to give us certain knowledge regarding these assumptions. Kant agrees that Metaphysics was held in high esteem for a long time and it has fallen into some amount of disrepute over the years due to the progress of mathematics and natural sciences. The major difficulty with Metaphysics is its inability to find any sure scientific method in line with the one offered by Physics.

Kant disagreed with Locke that all our knowledge derives from experience but he did not accept its opposite that all our ideas are innate. However he did believe that there are concepts which the reason is able to bring forth from within itself on the occasion of experience. And so these kinds of concepts are *a priori* in nature.

The Kantian *a priori* and *a posteriori* distinction

Kant was convinced that we all have a faculty which is able to bring forth knowledge from within itself without appealing to any experience. He did agree with the empiricists that our knowledge begins with experience but it does not mean that it arises out of experience. For Hume, our knowledge is nothing more than impressions which come to us through the senses and Hume certainly failed to spot this Kantian perspective. Hume and Kant are unanimous in agreeing that we don't get the idea of causality from experience but certainly for different reasons. For Hume, Causality is simply the psychological habit of connecting two events called cause and effect. But for Kant, we know causality not from the experience of the senses but directly from the faculty of rational judgment and therefore *a priori*. An example that Kant gives in this regard is that a child has no idea of causality but on the occasion of experience, its reason obtains the concept from within itself. It is a concept that evolves before experience but at the same time goes in line with the experience.

We have to be careful here and not to conclude that Kant is speaking about innate ideas, which are ideas before experience. *A priori* knowledge is *a priori* to all experience and is explicitly present to the mind. It is a kind of knowledge which is not derived from experience though it corresponds to the knowledge we have at the occasion of experience. This could well be expressed as, "though our knowledge begins *with* experience, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience." According to Kant, all mathematical proportions are examples of a

priori and we can also trace examples of it in other sciences too. The proposition that "every change must have a cause" For Kant, knowledge of this sort cannot come from experience as we have not experienced every case of change to make such a statement and yet it is true. It can also be similarly thought about regarding *necessary* connections and *universality* of proportions. The synonym for *a priori* will be the *a posteriori* which refers to the knowledge resulting after experience.

Types of Judgments

In order to understand Kant's concern better we need to look at his classification of judgments. The crucial thing about knowledge is that its value of truth and certitude, depends on the judgments. After all, reason merely handles judgments and learns from them. There are two types of judgments, *a priori* and *a posteriori*, and besides these two, Kant also speaks of two other types namely; *synthetic* and *analytic*. We already know the meaning of *a priori* and *a posteriori* and we must look at the other terms.

In *analytic* judgments, the predicate is already contained in the concept of the subject. If I make the judgment, "A circle is round," or "Triangle has three sides", I have an *analytic* judgment. It is so, because by analyzing the subject, by studying it and knowing just what it is, I learn that the predicate used belongs there, since a circle to be a circle must be round. An *analytic* statement is true only because of the logical connection which exists between subject and predicate. In this case, the predicate does not give any new knowledge other than what is present in the subject though it may be implicit. An *analytic* judgment cannot be denied without eventually leading to contradiction because the concept of the "triangle" cannot be thought about leaving out the three angles.

A judgment is rightly called *synthetic* when its predicate is not contained in the subject. If I make the judgment, "Peter is ill," I have a synthetic judgment because the predicate does not necessarily belong to the subject, but I put it with the subject because it is true that he is ill and that it (predicate) just happens to belong there. Thus we see here, the predicate gives a new knowledge regarding the subject and we also see that something is added to the concept of the subject. Though there is a connection between the subject and the predicate, the predicate is not

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inherent in the subject because mere analysis of the subject will not give us any idea about the predicate. This would mean that in order to verify the predicate we require the factual experience whereby the judgment becomes a *synthetic a posteriori*. In the above example "Peter is ill", we cannot elicit the concept 'ill' simply by analyzing the concept 'Peter' and Peter being ill is entirely *a posteriori* or after experience.

The Kantian unique claim: The *synthetic-a priori*

Thus, from the discussions above, it is clear that the *analytic* judgments are generally *a priori* because their meaning is not conditioned by our experience of every case and event as it happens in Mathematics for "necessity and strict Universality are the marks of *a priori* knowledge". And the *Synthetic* judgments are *a posteriori* because they result out of experience. For instance, the statement, "All my friends excel in studies" is a *synthetic a posteriori* judgment as the validity of this statement could be established only after having verified the academic performance of all my friends.

Besides the *analytic a priori* and *synthetic a posteriori*, Kant speaks of an apparently contradictory cluster of propositions which is expressed by his celebrated concept called, *synthetic a priori*. It is this kind of judgments which bothered Kant to a large extend as to the possibility of such judgments. Kant held that only an *a priori* judgment can give us absolute knowledge. But, he upholds that an *a priori* judgment that is analytic marks no progress in knowledge. For the maturity of science, there must be growth, development and advancement. Hence there must be *synthetic* judgments which are also *a priori*. This *synthetic a priori* judgment therefore, certainly adds novelty to the Kantian epistemology and could well be called the heart of Kant's philosophy.

Now let us briefly look into this unique Kantian distinction titled, the *Synthetic a priori* and this could well be understood through an example. 'Everything which happens must have a cause' is synthetic because the predicate 'cause' is not contained in the subject and is not made explicit by the concept of the subject. However, this is certainly an *a priori* judgment because it has the traits of *necessity* and *universality* which are the trademarks of any *a priori* proposition. It definitely means that every event with no exception certainly will have a *cause*. But this

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statement does depend on some form of experience because only after seeing an event being caused by something we know about its cause but the connection between the subject and predicate is given *a priori*. Here we don't arrive at conclusions by induction or mere generalizations of experiences rather we know it *a priori* and at the same time they are *synthetic*.

Again, Kant also demonstrated that in Mathematics, Physics, Ethics and Metaphysics, we do apply judgments that are not only *a priori* but also *synthetic*. In Mathematics for example, the judgment 3+6=12 is surely *a priori* and at the same time *synthetic*. It is an *a priori* judgment because it has the mark of *necessity* and *universality* as the digits 3 and 6 always make 9 but this is a synthetic judgment and not analytic because the digit 9 cannot be brought forth by the mere analysis of the figures 3 and 6 rather it also needs two other elements namely; intuition and a plus. Thus for him, the arithmetic calculation is always *synthetic a priori* and it cannot be a *synthetic a posteriori* judgment because of the marks of *necessity and universality*.

The propositions of Geometry also belong to the same category, and they are both a priori and synthetic at the same time. To pick a Kantian example, "that a straight line between two points is the shortest, is a synthetic proportion. For my concept of *straight* contains no notion of quantity, but only of quality. The concept of *the shortest* is thus wholly an addition and it cannot be derived by any analysis from the concept of a straight line. Intuition must therefore, lend its aid here, by means of which alone is this synthesis possible."

In physics too is possible such synthesis because the statement, "in all changes of the material world the quantity of matter remains unchanged" is *a priori* because this observation is made well before we look into every case of change and it is also *synthetic* because the idea of permanency of the matter is not traceable from the concept of the matter. According to Kant, the judgments we make in metaphysics such as, "man is free to choose" are also of the same nature. It is *synthetic* as the predicate adds a new meaning to the subject and at the same time it is *a priori* because the predicate *free* refers to all men including those who have lived, living and will live, even before we have experienced all of them. Thus Kant proves the co-existence of judgments which are both synthetic and at the same time a priori are possible without contradiction and they are not only possible in Mathematics but also in other sciences including the Metaphysics. And for Kant, if these judgments are substantiated in Mathematics then they

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could also well be substantiated in Metaphysics. Thus, Kant proves that we can have *synthetic a priori* judgments and they are certainly part of our everyday cognitive process.

Kant's rational thought

Kant says that there are two sources of human knowledge, which perhaps evolve from an unknown reality, which are sensibility and understanding. Knowledge is the relationship between the knower and the thing known. According to Kant, though we can distinguish the difference between the knower and the thing known, we can never know that thing as it is in itself, because we only come to know as the structured mind permits to know it. The specific activity of the mind is to synthesize and bring together our experiences. It achieves this synthesis first by imposing on our various experiences in the sensible manifold certain forms of intuition namely space and time. We inevitably perceive things as being in space and time but this space and time are not ideas derived from the things we experience, nor are they concepts. Space and time are encountered immediately in intuition and are, at the same time, *a priori.* The essential element of sensibility is this twofold determination of space and time**.** But this conditioning of phenomena by space and time is man's own contribution to the knowledge. Space and time does not represent things, nor are they things but they are the *a priori* elements of the sensing-power.

One of the major consequences of Kant's critical philosophy was his assertion that human knowledge is limited in its capacity and this limitation catches two forms. Firstly, knowledge is limited to the world of experience and secondly, our knowledge is limited by the manner in which our faculties of perception synthesize the raw data of experience. Kant did not doubt that the world as it appears to us is not the ultimate reality but he certainly distinguished between *phenomenal* reality which we experience it, and the *Noumenal* reality which is purely intelligible or non-sensual. When we experience a thing, we predictably perceive it through the *a priori* categories of thought. But what is a thing like when it is not being perceived? Or, what is a thing-in-itself? All that we know are the sensed objects but we are convinced that the world at our sight is not the production of our minds and the mind only imposes its ideas in the manifold of experience. These experiences evolve from the things in themselves which tells us that there are things which exist outside of us but will be known only as our minds perceive it and as they appear to us. So Kant concludes that the phenomenal reality is all that we can ever know about

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and the *noumenal* reality which is a thing in itself and can't add any new knowledge rather it would only bring to our mind the limitations of knowledge.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) Explain the Kantian distinction of judgments

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 2)   How does Kant arrive at the *Synthetic-a priori* judgments?

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3.4. LET US SUM UP

"Hume Was Right, Almost; and Where He Wasn't, Kant Was', is a kind of statement that summarizes the compliment that these two thinkers jointly deserve for their philosophical investigations. Hume undoubtedly anticipated what had to be later explored by Kant, but Kant certainly went way ahead of Hume. The epistemologies presented by these thinkers had points of convergence in spite of the fact that they belong to different streams of thought. Though not explicit, *Hume's fork* identifies the dichotomies we talk about as *analytic/synthetic*, and a *priori/a posteriori* in Kant. But Kant certainly viewed things beyond Hume. For instance, for Hume, the knowledge of cause and effect is not achieved *a priori* rather arises as a result of experience but for Kant it is an *a priori* knowledge, which, to be specific, falls into the category of synthetic judgments. Thus, against Hume's assertion that the mind was simply a vase for experiences and sensibilities, Kant suggested that there was a sphere of reason inherent to every mind. But, unlike

Plato, Aristotle or Aquinas, who had spoken of this sphere within some sort of metaphysical system, which is natural or theological, Kant, situated it in the self. However, Kant also admits the fact of being influenced by Hume by stating that, the reading of Hume roused him from his "dogmatic slumber." Thus we can conclude saying that, though they may be inadequate in certain areas of their philosophical enquiry, it has become absolutely imperative today to philosophise within the parameters set forth by these two prominent intellectuals.

3.5 KEY WORDS

Hume's Fork: The distinction between 'relations of ideas' and 'matters of fact' which Hume makes is broadly known today as *Hume's Fork.*. Some scholars also expand this distinction to much broader areas of his philosophy and bring them all under the umbrella of Hume's Fork. According to them, the description of his fork corresponds to three separate distinctions which have been important in analytic philosophy. Though not explicit, Hume's fork identifies three dichotomies namely, *analytic/synthetic, necessary/contingent* and a *priori/a posteriori.*

*A*priori knowledge: *A*priori knowledge is *a priori* to all experience and is explicitly present to the mind. It is a kind of knowledge, which is not derived from experience though it corresponds to the knowledge we have at the occasion of experience.

Synthetic Judgment: A judgment is rightly called synthetic when its predicate is not contained in the subject.

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3.7. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1) In his theory of knowledge, the primary concern of Hume has been the origin of *Ideas*. He begins to treat this question of *Ideas* by saying that there is a considerable difference between the perceptions of the mind and its memory in the mind. For instance, it is one thing to feel the pain instantly and quite another to recall it to one's memory or anticipate it by imagination. This might present us with the pale images of the perceptions by the senses but they would never have the vivacity of the original. After all, the portrait is only the representation of the reality. It would mean that even the liveliest thought is still way behind even the vague form of sensation. When we reflect on the past our thought is like a faithful mirror which projects the object on it. Thus it is clear that original is a no match for the reality. His concept of 'Perception' includes the entire contents of the mind.

2) Hume argues that *Impressions* and *Ideas* seem always as corresponding to each other. This would further mean that without impressions there could be no ideas. For if an idea is simply an *Impression* it follows that for every *Idea* there must be a prior Impression. However it is here Hume makes a distinction between simple and complex perception which can be applied to both Idea and Impression. This

distinction becomes extremely significant in understanding the correlation between these both. This could be better understood through some examples. The perception of a gray area on the wall is a simple impression and the very thought of it brings about the simple Idea. But, when I go on to the top of St. Peter's Basilica, I get the complex impression of the entire Vatican City and if I think of that complex Impression at a later time then I get the complex Idea. Here, the complex Idea corresponds to the complex Impression. There could be a similar instance, where what was never seen or heard of, may yet be conceived as our thought appears to possess this boundless freedom. A closer look at this will tell us that this is nothing more than the ingenious power of the mind to compound, transpose and gather the materials provided by the senses. When we think of a "flying horse", our imagination joins two of our ideas, 'wings' and 'horse' which were originally acquired as Impressions through the senses.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1) Hume argues that it is not by chance that these ideas relate to each other. There is a principle of connection, a bond of union at work among them. There is an associating quality which naturally brings them together and they introduce to each other with some amount of regularity and method and anything which splits this chain of ideas is immediately rejected. Hume would further state that what brings these ideas together is not a faculty in the mind rather the pattern of thinking and grouping of our ideas which explains it. He further explains that there are certain qualities in these ideas due to which they are associated to each other. They are basically three in number. They are, *Resemblance, Contiguity* in time or place and *Cause* or *effect.* We can understand them better through the following examples. *Resemblance* is made clear through the example that a picture naturally leads our thoughts to the original; the mention of one apartment in a building naturally introduces an enquiry concerning others which is an example of *Contiguity* and *Cause effect* relation is seen in the example of 'wound and pain', where if we think of a wound, we cannot overlook the pain involved in it.

2) David Hume in his *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section IV Part I, explains what mattered most in his philosophy, where we find the following quoted passage: "All the objects of human reason or enquiry may naturally be divided into two kinds, *Relations of Ideas*, and *Matters of Fact*." Here we see Hume making a distinction between 'relations of ideas' and 'matters of fact' which is broadly known today as *Hume's Fork*. It is a distinction central to Hume's epistemology and one that he exerts with great argumentative effect. It is more rarely a name sometimes given to the dilemma that either our actions are determined, or that they are the results of random events. However in both of these cases we are not responsible for them. Some scholars also expand this distinction to much broader areas of his philosophy and bring them all under the umbrella of Hume's Fork. According to them, the description of his fork corresponds to three separate distinctions which have been important in analytic philosophy. Though not explicit, Hume's fork identifies three dichotomies namely*, analytic/synthetic, necessary/contingent* and a *priori/a posteriori*.

Answers to Check Your Progress III

1) In order to understand Kant's concern better, we need to look at his classification of judgments. The crucial thing about knowledge is that its value of truth and certitude depends on judgments. After all, reason merely handles judgments and learns from them. There are two types of judgments, *a priori* and *a posteriori*, and besides these two, Kant also speaks of two other types namely; *synthetic* and *analytic*. In *analytic* judgments, the predicate is already contained in the concept of the subject. If I make the judgment, "A circle is round," or "Triangle has three sides", I have an *analytic* judgment. It is so, because by analyzing the subject, by studying it and knowing just what it is, I learn that the predicate used belongs there, since a circle to be a circle must be round. An *analytic* statement is true only because of the logical connection which exists between subject and predicate. A judgment is rightly called *synthetic* when its predicate is not contained in the subject. If I make the judgment, "Peter is ill," I have a synthetic judgment because the predicate does not

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necessarily belong to the subject, but I put it with the subject because it is true that he is ill and that it (the predicate) just happens to belong there. Thus we see here, the predicate gives a new knowledge regarding the subject and we also see that something is added to the concept of the subject.

2) Thus, from the discussions above, it is clear that the *analytic* judgments are generally *a priori* because their meaning is not conditioned by our experience of every case and event as it happens in Mathematics for "necessity and strict Universality are the marks of *a priori* knowledge". And the *Synthetic* judgments are *a posteriori* because they result out of experience. For instance, the statement, "All my friends excel in studies" is a *synthetic a posteriori* judgment as the validity of this statement could be established only after having verified the academic performance of all my friends.

Besides the *analytic a priori* and *synthetic a posteriori*, Kant speaks of an apparently contradictory cluster of propositions which is expressed by his celebrated concept called, *synthetic a priori*. It is this kind of judgments which bothered Kant to a large extend as to the possibility of such judgments. Kant held that only an *a priori* judgment can give us absolute knowledge. But, he upholds that an *a priori* judgment that is analytic marks no progress in knowledge. For the maturity of science, there must be growth, development and advancement. Hence there must be *synthetic* judgments which are also *a priori*. This *synthetic a priori* judgment therefore, certainly adds novelty to the Kantian epistemology and could well be called the heart of Kant's philosophy.

UNIT 4 POPPERIAN METHOD AND NATURALIZED EPISTEMOLOGY

Contents

4.0 OBJECTIVES

Having dealt with the methods adopted by classical as well as modern thinkers in the last three units, we have also become aware that the foundationalist method of the moderns is highly problematic. And a purely coherentist method is not satisfactory either. In this unit we shall deal with two new developments, namely the idea of naturalized epistemology and the Hypothetico-Deductive method of Karl Popper. By the end of this unit, you will be familiar with:

- The basic idea of naturalized epistemology

- A preliminary understanding of the hypothetico-deductive (H-D) method

- The distinction between discovery and justification

- Some Implications of Naturalized Epistemology.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Modern Western philosophy is beset with a paradox: the tremendous explosion of scientific knowledge on the one hand, and an unscientific approach to theory of knowledge, on the other. Their approach to theory of knowledge, if not unscientific in the sense of going against science, is unscientific at least in the sense that it was not based on what practicing scientists actually do in acquiring knowledge. Naturalized epistemology as well as the Popperian method can be seen as attempts to overcome this paradox of modern epistemology. Both seek to learn from the actual practice of scientists to see how knowledge –understood as beliefs that have been justified or given reasons for believing to be true— is acquired and suggest that epistemology should be modelled on their practice. Let us see these in more detail.

4.2 THE CRISES OF MODERN EPISTEMOLOGY

The famous philosophical schools of empiricism as well as rationalism are good examples of philosophical reflection that neglects the actual process of coming to knowledge. The empiricists talk of knowledge through the senses and the rationalists proclaim knowledge through reason. But both fail to see that we have very little (if any) knowledge that actually comes to us either from the senses or from reason alone. Most of our knowledge is the result of joint working of the senses as well as reason. Ignoring this, they tried to build their foundationalist epistemologies.

Foundationalism, as we have seen in Unit 2 of this Block, was the attempt to rebuild the whole gigantic ship of our knowledge using only those limited number of beliefs that are absolutely certain, indubitable (i.e., that which cannot be doubted) and which will need no correction. In other words, the vast body of beliefs that we ordinarily take to be true was to be given a go-by until they were shown to be firmly built on these indubitable foundational beliefs. Foundationalism was an attempt to overcome the sceptical challenge to knowledge. Given that both the empiricists and rationalists were foundationalists who attempted to overcome scepticism, the main difference between them consisted in what each took to be foundational: for the one, sense experience was foundational and for the other undeniable truths of reason (like Descartes' *cogito*) were foundational. With the eventual realization that the whole edifice of our knowledge cannot be rebuilt from the beginning, that too on indubitable truths, disillusionment was bound to set in.

Disillusionment with foundationalism was not the only crisis faced by modern epistemology. There was also the sense that it was powerless even to carry out its main task of adjudicating cognitive disputes. Epistemology was seen by the modern thinkers in the role of a judge whose responsibility it was to pass judgements on candidates to truth. Instead, it was seen to engender disputes within its own ranks. For example, how does one adjudicate between empiricism and rationalism? The result of such disputes is that in spite of its professed goals, the fate of modern epistemology became like that of a village *panchayat* (originally set up to resolve the conflicts of others in the village) where the judges, instead of resolving the conflict, themselves come to blows. It is against these and other crises faced by modern epistemology that we must see the emergence of Naturalized Epistemology.

4.3 NATURALIZED EPISTEMOLOGY

One cannot discuss the naturalistic turn of contemporary epistemology without taking the name of W.V. Quine. His 1969 essay, "Epistemology Naturalized" is a landmark. This essay begins with the foundationalist attempts of the empiricists to re-build the ship of scientific knowledge on the firm foundations of sense experience. Given that we are sure of our sense experience, if all other knowledge could be derived from these experiences, then the sceptic would be put in his place. This was the hope. Quine argues that all attempts at rebuilding the body of scientific knowledge in this manner have failed. Given this failure of traditional epistemology, Quine suggests that such attempts be given up. In place of such epistemology we need to re-conceive epistemology in a new way. His suggestion is that in the new setting, epistemology be seen as an examination of how we come to have our understanding of the world from the sensory stimulations we receive. This is a factual question to be investigated by psychology and not a matter for armchair speculation. It is for this reason that he makes the bold claim that "Epistemology, or something like it, simply falls into place as a chapter of psychology and hence of natural science." A "conspicuous difference between old epistemology and the epistemological enterprise in this new psychological setting is that we can now make free use of empirical psychology," says Quine. Obviously such a view of epistemology goes against the view that epistemology provides the foundations for sciences. From this initial suggestion of

Quine, naturalized epistemology has developed in various ways. But we will not discuss them all.

In saying that epistemology simply falls into a chapter of science, Quine would seem to be advocating that we bid farewell to traditional epistemology and replace it with psychology. This view is known as Replacement Naturalism. Replacement Naturalism, however, is beset with difficulties. The most important difficulty was perhaps pointed out by Hilary Putnam: it eliminates the normative or evaluative dimension of epistemology. Notions such as a belief being "justified", being "rationally acceptable" are fundamental to any theory of knowledge. What is important is to notice that these notions are unmistakably normative. Without such normative notions there cannot be any epistemology. The biggest problem with naturalized epistemology, according to Putnam, is that it tends to eliminate such normative notions and focuses exclusively on matters of fact, i.e., of how we come to have the beliefs we have. Without the normative, the notion of truth itself disappears since there is no way of arriving at true beliefs; without the notion of truth the notion of evidence disappears since there is nothing to distinguish "right" kind of evidence from others. For these and other reasons, replacement naturalism is not a popular view today. What is even more remarkable is that in spite of his recommendation to replace epistemology with a branch of natural science, not only has Quine himself never followed his own suggestion. He has always pursued normative investigations in his epistemological carrier. In his later writings, especially in *Pursuit of Truth*, Quine has toned down his earlier view of replacement naturalism.

A more modest and more popular form of naturalism is called Cooperative Naturalism. This view does not seek to replace epistemology with psychology. It holds that while evaluative questions are essential to epistemology, empirical results from sciences are important and useful for addressing evaluative questions. It holds that empirical findings concerning our psychological and biological limitations and abilities cannot fail to be relevant to the study of human knowledge. Moreover, it can be shown and has been argued that a purely *a priori* armchair approach to epistemology is more an aberration of modern philosophy than the norm. Aristotle and Aquinas, for example, begin their epistemology with a psychology of the human knower. In other words, attention to psychology needs to be seen as necessary for epistemology, not as replacing it. The basic difficulty with Cooperative naturalism seem to be that while it rightly acknowledges the role of psychological findings in the study of human knowledge, its relation to

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the traditionally important question of justification of knowledge or the relationship between belief and evidence remains unclear.

It is here that a broader understanding of naturalized epistemology is needed than the views regarding the role of psychology in human knowledge. Such a view can be found in James Maffie's survey article, "Recent Work on Naturalized Epistemology" (1990). Maffie identifies the distinguishing feature of naturalized epistemology to be the affirmation of continuity between science and epistemology. This is a broad characterization that lends itself to further elaborations. It could even be considered as a version of cooperative naturalism, although its concern is with sciences in general than only with psychology. Maffie discusses various kinds of continuity between sciences and epistemology. We shall limit our discussion to two such continuities: the methodological and the contextual. These can be seen as responses to the two crises we have mentioned: methodological continuity as a response to internal conflicts and contextual continuity as a response to the crisis of foundationalism.

4.4 METHODOLOGICAL CONTINUITY BETWEEN SCIENCES AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Continuity of method between sciences and epistemology means that the methods of inquiry followed in the sciences and in epistemology are continuous with each other. This view is opposed to the old idea of epistemology being the foundational discipline for sciences.

At the heart of methodological continuity lies the reflexivity of the knowing process. It begins with the assumption that we already have some knowledge. We examine that knowledge with a view to discovering the cannons and principles through which we have come to acquire it. In other words, by examining what we already know, we come to understand the method of knowing. And by applying that method we can learn more about the world.

But what we have learned about the method of knowing can be applied not only for knowing more about the world; it can also be applied to the process of knowing itself. It is for this reason that Quine's description of naturalized epistemology as "science self-applied" is a good one. The idea of epistemology as self-application of method is very important in the light of the second crisis of epistemology we have discussed, namely the internal conflicts in epistemology. We saw that although modern epistemology aimed at settling disputes regarding truth and knowledge, it ended by creating more disputes within its own ranks, like a

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malfunctioning village *panchayat*. Therefore, if epistemology is to perform its assigned task, it must first of all put its own house in order. It is trying to put its own house in order that epistemology discovers the value of methodological continuity. Since epistemology aims at settling cognitive disputes, to the extent that epistemology itself makes controversial knowledge-claims, the method it applies to others must be applied also to itself. The perennial demand, "Physician heal thyself!" lies at the heart of methodological continuity between sciences and epistemology.

Continuity, of course does not mean sameness. Epistemology being a theory of knowledge of all kinds, we should not expect it to follow exactly the same method that is followed by one kind of knowledge (science). What continuity implies is that there are significant similarities between the methods followed. While there could be differences in the various methods of human knowing there is a core to the whole process that indicates certain uniform dynamics. In order to find this dynamics an examination of the scientific practice can be helpful.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) Discuss the two main forms of Naturalism considered in this unit.

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2) How does James Maffie describe naturalism? What is meant by Methodological continuity?

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The Practice of Science: A Case Study

Our example is a landmark case in the history of medical science: Ignaz Semmelweis, working as a medical doctor in Vienna General Hospital in the 19th century, noticed the large number of women who delivered their babies in one of the Maternity Divisions of the hospital died of "childbed fever" (Puerperal Fever). A number of factors about these deaths puzzled Semmelweis, including the fact that the death rate was far higher in the First Maternity Division where medical students worked than in the Second Division where ordinary midwives took care of the women. The contrast was as follows:

Year	First Division	Second Division
1844	8.2%	2.3%
1845	6.8%	2.0%
1846	11.4%	2.7%

In order to resolve this puzzling happening Semmelweis began by considering various tentative solutions (called "hypotheses") to the problem. These were some of the possibilities he considered for explaining these excessive number of deaths in the First Division.

1. The deaths are due to an epidemic
2. The deaths are due to overcrowding in the First Division
3. The deaths are caused by the rough handling of the patients by the medical students in the course their examination.
4. The deaths are caused by fear generated by the appearance of priests ministering to the dying patients!
1. The deaths were due to the position in which the women in the First Division gave birth. (Women in the first Division delivered babies lying on their backs whereas in the Second division the women delivered lying on their sides).

Now that there are many possibilities for explaining these excessive deaths in the First Division (5 of which are mentioned and others not considered), the question to consider is which one can be considered true. How is one to rationally accept any of these 5 beliefs or any other that is not mentioned? This is the epistemological task that confronted Semmelweis. He sets about patiently examining each hypothesis. Let us examine how he did it.

Consider the first hypothesis that the deaths were due to an epidemic. If this were to be true, he reasoned, how could an epidemic selectively affect the First Division and not the Second? That is not likely! Moreover, the newspapers carried no reports of an epidemic in the city. To compound matters, there were some women who delivered their babies on the way to the hospital and were brought into the First division only for postnatal care. Even among them the death rate was comparatively lower than those who delivered in the First Division. All of these militated against the first hypothesis and Semmelweis abandoned that as a plausible explanation. The second hypothesis is also easy to check for its truth. Semmelweis noticed that the Second Division was even more crowded than the First (partly because news had spread that those entering the First were more likely to die than those entering the Second!). Faced with this data, the second hypothesis also was given up. In a similar fashion, each of these hypotheses had to be abandoned. Semmelweis was completely at a loss.

It is then that a colleague of his began to develop symptoms similar to those of the women suffering from childbed fever and in a few days he died. The major difference was that while the women developed the symptoms after childbirth, his colleague developed the symptoms after getting a small wound in the process of performing an autopsy. This leads him to suspect that the death of his colleague was caused by blood poisoning or what he considered as the introduction of "cadaveric matter" into the blood stream while performing the autopsy. This prompts Semmelweis to make a brilliant guess that the cause of childbed fever was the same. Since the medical students who attended to the women in the First Division, unlike the midwives in the Second Division, often came to their maternity duty after performing autopsy on dead bodies without cleaning their hands properly, they were the carriers of infection. Semmelweis tests out this hypothesis by instructing the medical students to properly disinfect their hands prior to their examination of the women and it produced dramatic results. Thus the last hypothesis was confirmed. Not only did this hypothesis explain the high mortality rates in the First Division, it also explained why the mortality rate among the women who gave birth on the road was lower. Although their hygienic conditions were not very good, they managed to escape being infected by the medical students!

There are a number of things an epistemologist can learn from cases like this. First of all, let us reflect on the method employed.

Hypothetico-Deductive Method

When we examine this case we find that there are three basic steps in the process employed by Semmelweis:

(1) It begins with a problem he confronted, namely, the high death rate due to childbed fever in the First Division of the hospital;

(2) Various tentative solutions (called hypotheses) are suggested as possible solutions to the problem;

(3) Those hypotheses are tested to see which of them, if any, is rationally acceptable; in this case the first five hypotheses were rejected and a sixth one that was discovered by chance came to be accepted.

Since it begins by identifying a problem and tries to find solutions to it, this model of knowing is sometimes referred to as the problem solving model. It is Karl Popper (1902-94), one of the best known philosophers of science of the 20th century, who made this method the corner stone of his philosophy. What is crucial to the method is the third step of testing a hypothesis. No hypothesis is accepted just because it seems to offer a solution. Only the one that can withstand a rational scrutiny is accepted; others are rejected. We have already examined the manner of reasoning done by Semmelweis in rejecting the first two hypotheses (epidemic and overcrowding). Consider now what prompts him to abandon the third hypothesis (that the deaths were caused by rough handling by the medical students). Upon scrutiny, Semmelweis found that the midwives who attended to the patients in the Second Division examined the patients in much the same manner as the medical students did in the First Division. Therefore, prima facie, it could not be the case. Even then he reduced the number of medical students in the First Division by half on an experimental basis. But this measure failed to bring down the death rate. Then this hypothesis is abandoned. Notice that the kind of reasoning involved here is in the form of a hypothetical syllogism. If the hypothesis p (high mortality rate is due to rough handling by medical students) is true, then by doing action A (reducing the number of medical students), an observable consequence q (low mortality rate) would follow. Action A is undertaken but the result does not follow. Therefore, the hypothesis is abandoned as false. The argument has the following form:

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If p then, q; not q; therefore, not p.

Since this procedure involves deriving an observable consequence from a hypothesis and observing whether that consequence really obtains, this method is called the hypothetico-deductive (H-D) method. What needs to be carefully noted is that this procedure only helps us refute a hypothesis, and not to validate it. Leaving out other complexities involved in the actual practice of the method, the logical procedure seems simple enough. If a logically observable consequence of the hypothesis does not obtain, then the hypothesis is to be considered false. For this reason, this method is also called the "falsification method".

One might object: why should it be considered suitable only for refuting a theory? After all, did it not enable Semmelweis to accept the last theory as true? Yes, he did accept the last hypothesis. The hypothesis was that the high mortality rate in the First Division was caused by the "cadaveric matter" unconsciously introduced into the blood stream of the women by the medical students. This happened because the medical students came to examine the women without taking enough care to clean their hands properly after performing autopsy. In order to test this hypothesis he asks the medical students to clean their hands thoroughly before attending to the women. The result was a significant improvement in the situation and based on this observation, Semmelweis accepts this hypothesis as the proper explanation for the high mortality rate in the First Division. While this much is true, let us examine its logic. It has the following logical form:

If p then, q; q; therefore, p.

It does not take long to see that this is NOT a correct form of argument. Rather, it a fallacious argument, known as the fallacy of affirming the consequent. The following example will make the fallacy clear:

If it rains, the ground will be wet;

The ground is wet

Therefore, it has rained!

This, obviously, is not correct argument, as the ground could become wet in other ways than by rain! Somebody could have watered it. The point is that though a hypothesis is accepted as true

for all practical purposes, it cannot be logically proved to be true. Even if numerous experiments have shown that the expected observational results follow, still the hypothesis is not logically proven, and cannot be proven either. At best, those numerous supporting observations can be taken as confirming the hypothesis, which is not the same as logically proving it. For all practical purposes we may accept something to be true and may not want further evidence but that does not mean that it is logically shown to be true.

Another important point to be learned from the given example is that falsification is a method of justification, and not of discovery. How one comes to entertain a hypothesis (discovery or origin of a hypothesis) is of no consequence as far as the Popperian method is concerned. In the case of Semmelweis the hypothesis originated in the accidental death of his colleague and the similarity of the symptoms shown by his colleague and the women who suffered from childbed fever. This can be said of scientific method in general. Scientific method is concerned with the justification of knowledge than with its origins: Origins of a belief may be as lowly as a lucky guess (as in the case of Semmelweis) or a long drawn out empirical study. But that is of no consequence; what matters is that the hypothesis is tested through observational consequences deduced from it.

The fact that acceptability of a hypothesis is a matter of logic is important in as much as much as it eliminates the danger of subjectivity that is involved in the search for certainty. It is for this reason that Popperian epistemology is "epistemology without a knowing subject", to use Popper's own words. It means that in checking whether a belief is true, the individual psychology of the believer is not important. A proposition can be checked for its truth, even if no one believes it.

Although we have considered the H-D method is some detail and tried to say that epistemology can also learn from it, we should not go to the other extreme and say that epistemology is H-D method. In other words, we should not take the "continuity of method" to mean "identity of method". There are also differences. For example, Semmelweis could predict observational consequences of the hypotheses he was testing. In this matter epistemology is different, as it hardly has any place for prediction. How is testing of theories to be done in epistemology, then? Here testing is done by checking whether the theory is able to give a coherent account of the relevant phenomena. When we look closely, this is not completely different in science. In the given example, we see that Semmelweis is attending to the

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phenomena related to the problem of high death rates. Such phenomena include the fact that the death rate in the other Division is lower, there are no reports of epidemic in the town, mortality rates among the "road birth" cases are low and so on. The final solution may be seen as giving a coherent account of all these phenomena. It is this idea of giving a coherent account of the relevant phenomena, rather than prediction that is important in epistemology. Thus, although there is continuity of method, there are also differences.

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) Briefly describe the H-D method.

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2) Why is it impossible to prove a scientific hypothesis?

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4.5 CONTEXTUAL CONTINUITY BETWEEN SCIENCES AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Contextual continuity is the idea that epistemology, like science, does not start with rock bottom foundations that presupposes no other beliefs. On the contrary, both sciences and epistemology are embedded in specific contexts and hence have their presuppositions. This is exactly what we find in the given example from science. We see that Semmelweis is not interested in undoing and rebuilding the whole of medical knowledge of his times, (much less the whole of human

knowledge!!) Rather, as a trained physician he takes for granted the medical science of his times. But then he comes across a problem for which he had no ready made solutions. It is this problem that prompts his experiments.

Contextual continuity claims that this applies not only to the sciences but to all knowledge. Naturalized epistemology, then, does not seek to rebuild the whole of human knowledge from a few absolutely certain beliefs, as the foundationalists attempted to do. Rather it begins by taking for granted a lot of beliefs that are not problematic. Taking all such beliefs for granted, it focuses upon beliefs that are problematic. Popper is such a strong advocate of contextual continuity that he goes to the extent of saying that "any rational theory, no matter whether scientific or metaphysical, is rational only … because it is an attempt to solve certain problems." In as much as contextual continuity points to the starting point of epistemology as the problematic instances of knowledge, it is closely linked to the methodological continuity.

Since naturalized epistemology does not begin with a zero point, it retains some features of coherentist justification. This form of justification is made popular by Otto Neurath. According to him our knowledge is like a ship and the epistemologist is like voyager in the ship in the middle of the sea. Even if he notices that his ship is leaking, he cannot come to shore to repair the boat or get a new one. All that can be done is to repair it even while remaining in it. For that he stands on planks that are relatively healthy and tries to replace other parts that are leaking. So too, with our knowledge: standing on planks of relatively unproblematic knowledge we try to replace the parts that are problematic. On the other hand, it is not purely coherentist either. Notice that there are observable consequences on the basis of which Semmelweis rejects or accepts a hypothesis. Similarly in natrualized epistemology, pure coherence of beliefs is not enough; rather a coherent account of phenomena is required, where phenomena is understood as non-controversial observational data available either through the senses or the mind. While epistemology may not have place for predictions as in the natural sciences, observations are still important, where observation is understood as observation of non-controversial phenomena.

4.6 FURTHER IMPLICATIONS OF NATURALIZED EPISTEMOLOGY

One result of forgoing foundational ambitions is the acceptance of the fallibility of knowledge. What is accepted as true in science today may be replaced by something else tomorrow. Popper

would say that the scientific theories are like a building built on piles erected in a swamp. "if we stop driving the piles deeper, it is not because we have reached firm ground. We simply stop when we are satisfied that the piles are firm enough to carry the structure, at least for the time being." This can be said of other kinds of knowledge too. Fallibility of knowledge, then, is one of the major implications of contextual continuity.

A second implication concerns the goal of epistemology. Having accepted that human condition is like that of Neurath's sailors in the sea, naturalized epistemology cannot hope to rebuild the whole edifice of knowledge anew as the foundationalists hoped. What does it seek to do then? Popper would say that the central problem of epistemology is the growth of knowledge, not that of confronting sceptics. This is related to the reflexive character of epistemology we have mentioned: reflecting upon what we already know we discern the dynamics of knowing and then applying that dynamics to what is not known, we increase our knowledge.

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) Briefly explain contextual continuity between sciences and epistemology.

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2) What are some of the implications of naturalized epistemology?

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4.7 LET US SUM UP

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Naturalized epistemology is best seen as an attempt to deal with the crises faced by modern epistemology. As opposed to the method of *a priori* armchair reflection promoted by the moderns, naturalized epistemology looks at the practice of scientists and seeks to learn lessons from that for knowing in general. Although the initial versions of naturalism focussed almost exclusively on the relationship between cognitive psychology and epistemology, a broader view takes sciences and epistemology as continuous with each other.

4.8 KEY WORDS

Cognitive dispute = a dispute or a difference of opinion regarding the truth of a knowledge claim

Foundationalism = the idea that the whole body of our knowledge can be built up or justified from the beginning without assuming any prior knowledge. This view is opposed to the coherentist view.

Coherentism = the view any justification of beliefs is done by relying on some set of beliefs that are taken for granted as true. It opposes the foundationalist idea that we can get rid of all our beliefs and begin building our knowledge from the beginning.

Phenomena = plural of phenomenon, something that is observable and therefore, non-controversial. Observation may be done either through the senses or the mind.

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4.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check your progress I

1) The two forms of naturalism discussed in this unit are: Replacement Naturalism and Cooperative Naturalism. The main issue between them is whether empirical psychology is to be seen as taking the place of epistemology or as merely contributing to it. Replacement naturalism suffers from an inherent circularity where science is sought to be validate on the basis of the findings of those very sciences. An even more serious problem was pointed out by Hilary Putnam that it eliminates the normative or evaluative dimension of epistemology altogether. Cooperative Naturalism does not seek to replace epistemology with psychology. It holds that while evaluative questions are essential to epistemology, empirical results from sciences are important and useful for making progress in addressing evaluative questions.

2) James Maffie gives a broad characterization of Naturalised Epistemology, according to which the distinguishing feature of naturalized epistemology is the continuity between

epistemology and science. Methodological continuity is the idea that the methods of inquiry followed in the sciences and in epistemology is continuous with each other. This view is opposed to the old idea where epistemology was seen as the foundational discipline for sciences. At the heart of methodological continuity lies the reflexivity of the knowing process. By examining what we already know, we come to understand the method of knowing. This method can, then, be applied to the process of knowing itself. It is for this reason that Quine considered naturalized epistemology as "science self-applied". Such self-application of method is important for overcoming the internal conflicts occurring in epistemology. Continuity, of course, does not mean sameness. Epistemology being the theory of knowledge of all kinds, we should not expect it to follow exactly the same method that is followed by one kind of knowledge (science). What continuity implies is that there are significant similarities between the methods followed.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1) Hypothetico-Deductive (H-D) method is a method employed in scientific inquiry. It involves three steps. (1) It begins with a problem that is identified and then (2) suggests various hypotheses to resolve the problem. (3) These hypotheses are tested on the basis of observations that are deduced from them. If the derived observation is indeed available, then the hypothesis accepted as likely to be true, although it will have to be confirmed by further tests. However, if the derived observation does not occur the hypothesis is rejected as false on the basis of the following valid argument form: If p then q; not q; therefore, not p. (If the hypothesis p is true, then by doing action A an observable consequence q would follow. Action A is undertaken but the result does not follow. Therefore, the hypothesis is abandoned as false. The heart of the H-D method, in other words, is the process of falsification or refutation of a hypothesis rather than verification or proving of it.

2) It is impossible to logically prove a hypothesis such a proof would be based on a fallacy, the fallacy of affirming the consequent. It has the following form: If p then q; q; therefore p. The fallacious nature of this argument form can be seen from the following example:

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> If it rains, the ground will be we;
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> The ground is wet
>
> Therefore, it has rained!

This, obviously, is not correct argument, as the ground could become wet in other ways than by rain! The point is that though a hypothesis is accepted as true for all practical purposes, it cannot be logically proved to be true. Even if numerous experiments have shown that the expected observational results follow, still the hypothesis is not logically proven. At best, those numerous supporting observations can be taken as confirming the hypothesis, which is not the same as logically proving it. We may accept something to be true and may not want further evidence but that does not mean that it is logically shown to be true.

Answers to Check Your Progress III

1) Contextual continuity is the idea that epistemology, like science, does not start with rock bottom foundations that presupposes no other beliefs. On the contrary, both sciences and epistemology are embedded in specific contexts and hence have their presuppositions. Naturalized epistemology, then, does not seek to rebuild the whole of human knowledge from a few absolutely certain beliefs, as the foundationalists attempted to do. Rather it begins by taking for granted a lot of beliefs that are not problematic. Taking all such beliefs for granted, it focuses upon beliefs that are problematic with a view to resolving their problematic character. Since naturalized epistemology does not begin with a zero point, it retains some features of coherentist justification. According to an imagery made popular by Otto Neurath, the epistemologist is like voyager in a ship in the middle of the sea. When he notices that ship is leaking, there is no way in which he can come to shore and repair the whole boat or get a new one. All that can be done is to repair it even while remaining in it. For that he stands on planks that are relatively healthy and try to replace other parts that are leaking. So too, with our knowledge: standing on planks of relatively unproblematic knowledge we try to replace the parts that are problematic.

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2) One of the major implications of naturalizing epistemology is the acceptance of the fallibility of all knowledge. Popper would say that the scientific theories are like a building built on piles erected in a swamp. "if we stop driving the piles deeper, it is not because we have reached firm ground. We simply stop when we are satisfied that the piles are firm enough to carry the structure, at least for the time being." This can be said of other kinds of knowledge too.

Another implication concerns the goal of epistemology. Having accepted that human condition is like that of Neurath's sailors in the sea, naturalized epistemology cannot hope to rebuild the whole edifice of knowledge anew as the foundationalists hoped. Instead, it has a much more limited but tangible goal: the advance human knowledge. This is a Popperian view of epistemology.

BLOCK 4

In all our process of knowing, one of the most important elements is the knowing subject. It is the knowing subject that claims to have knowledge of something. Human is a being who can know oneself and can have knowledge of oneself. Whole discussion of knowledge is centered around this subject who claims to have known something. The task of epistemology is also to formulate certain rules under which this process of knowing takes place successfully. Beginning with Descartes to Hume, Kant, Analytic movement, and Phenomenological movement and even to this day modern discussions are centered on this active subject. They have been trying to formulate and give their views on how natural knowledge can be acquired without the intervention of some of the subjective traits that affect one's process of knowledge.

This block consists of four units. The first three units will deal with the views put forward by various thinkers regarding the knowing subject and the fourth unit will critically summarize our whole discussion on Epistemology.

Unit 1 introduces the theory of the Mirroring Mind held by Descartes, Locke and Hume. The main objective of this unit is to examine the importance of the mind in acquiring knowledge. It introduces the problem of knowledge and then probes into the mirroring mind theory accepted by various philosophers. For both rationalists and empiricists mind is a mirror which provides the representation of reality.

Unit 2 is on the Revolt against the Mirroring Mind raised by Kierkegaard, Postmodern thinkers and Feminists. This mirroring mind theory of the idealists was challenged by the existentialists. Postmodernism and feminism are subsequent forms of such revolts. In this unit we try to study these revolts against the mirroring mind conception of the idealist or subjectivist epistemologists.

Unit 3 deals with a novel view that Mind maps and does not mirror. Jürgen Habermas of the Frankfurt school is the one who opines that knowledge is a social theory. We see a paradigm shift in Habermas' thought from an emphasis on human interests which was founded on the paradigm of a conscious subject to that of a universal pragmatics, in which language becomes the paradigm.

Unit 4 sums up all our discussion on epistemology with critical appraisal and synthesis of all that has gone by. All the major contents of the previous units are critically summarized, then a revision of some of the important issues are taken up and a synthetic perspective on epistemology as it is today is discussed.

We have come to know much about one of the hottest topics of discussion from the ancient times and has continued to this day. The definition, that we studied at the beginning, 'knowledge is justified true belief' has been well substantiated in this course.

UNIT 1 MIRRORING MIND (DESCARTES, LOCKE, HUME)

Contents

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to examine the importance of the mind in acquiring knowledge. Any knowledge presupposes a mind which may be interpreted as a mirror that reflects reality. According to rationalists like Plato and Descartes mind mirrors reality as innate ideas. According to empiricists like Locke and Hume mind mirrors reality through ideas formed by use of sensation and reflection. For both rationalists and empiricists mind is a mirror which provides the representation of reality.

Thus at the end of this unit you will be able:

- to understand the function of the human mind in knowledge;
- to see how subject and object are linked by means of ideas;
- to understand the difference between rationalist and empiricist theory of knowledge;
- to know the inadequacies of rationalist and empiricist theories of knowledge.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Is there a link between thought and reality? Or, can the subject know the object? If there is such a link how does it work? Or, can we know something about how the subject knows the object? Occasionally we discover that what we thought certain is later proved dubious or false. For example, a friend tells me that some news in a particular newspaper is false. In fact, I had believed that it was true. Consequently, now I begin to distrust my friend, the news paper or even myself. And I ask myself: "How can I ever claim that I really know something?"

There is no knowledge without a knowing subject. The subject possesses a mind which functions as the processor of ideas. Some philosophers hold that the nature of its functioning resembles a mirror. A mirror reflects images of objects in front of it or provides their representation. The question is: what does the mirroring mind represent? Are they copies of the Forms or Ideas in another world or copies of the things in this world? According to rationalists the mind mirrors innate ideas. According to empiricism the mind mirrors reality by constructing ideas from the data provided by sensation or reflection. Rationalists and empiricists agree that mind is the knowledge hub and the functioning of the mind resembles mirroring. But they differ as regards the mode of mirroring. According to rationalists like Descartes all the basic ideas are already in the mirroring mind before our birth. According to empiricists like Locke and Hume the mirroring mind is empty at birth; it gathers ideas after our birth.

4.2 THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE

The problem of the theory of knowledge concerns the nature of knowledge in general and conditions under which it is appropriate to speak of knowledge; the scope of knowledge whether it is possible to have knowledge without reference to perception and whether *a priori* knowledge independent of experience is possible.

All the problems of the theory of knowledge arise against the point of view that knowledge is impossible, or at least that we can never be sure that we have attained it. It is based on the belief that knowledge implies certainty and that certainty is impossible and hence knowledge is also

impossible. This thesis is known as philosophical scepticism. Much of the discussion within the theory of knowledge is set against the possibility of scepticism. Both rationalists and empiricists attempted to refute scepticism. Rationalists tended to look to mathematics for their model, so treating the indubitable truths or axioms from which other truths can be derived deductively as theorems. Empiricists adopted the experimental method, treating the indubitable truths as sense data on which a body of theory can be constructed.

4.3 THE MIRRORING MIND

The notion that there is a problem about mind and body originated in the 17th century's attempt to make the mind a self-contained sphere of inquiry. Philosophy tries to understand the foundations of knowledge and finds these foundations in a study of the mental processes or the activity of representation which makes knowledge possible. To know is to represent accurately what is outside the mind. To understand the possibility and nature of knowledge is to understand the way in which the mind is able to receive or construct such representations. If knowledge is not a matter of accuracy of representations, then we need no inner mirror and there is thus no mystery concerning the relation of that mirror to our body.

The idea of a theory of knowledge grew up around the problem of knowing whether our inner representations were correct. The idea of a discipline devoted to the nature, origin and limits of human knowledge required a field of study called the human mind. We owe the notion of the mind as a separate entity in which processes occur to Descartes. We owe the notion of a theory of knowledge based on an understanding of mental processes to Locke. Descartes invention of the mind and Locke's coalescence of beliefs and sensations into ideas gave philosophers new field within which certainty, as opposed to mere opinion, was possible. Though Locke had retained the newly invented Cartesian mind he was unable to hold onto Cartesian certainty.

4.4 RENE DESCARTES

The great French philosopher Rene Descartes (1596-1650) introduced the problem of knowledge in a very striking form. He set out to study the world in an entirely new way. After extended

investigation he came to suspect all accepted views that claimed authority merely because they were ancient and honoured. Most of those who searched for knowledge experienced failure in finding certainty and turned to scepticism. Descartes did not surrender to scepticism. He had an intense desire to be certain, to be so certain that no discovery could ever shake his beliefs again. By inspecting one truth – I think therefore I am – he discovered a rule or criterion about all other truths.

Cartesian Doubt

Descartes wanted to refute the sceptic's thesis that certain knowledge is impossible. He used the sceptic's own method to prove that absolute certainty is possible. He agreed with sceptics that we should doubt our senses and the contents of our mind because they may deceive us. But he insisted that one couldn't doubt the existence of his/her own self as a thinking being. The fact that I doubt or think is beyond doubt. It is possible to doubt that I have a body, but it is impossible to doubt that I am a mind that doubts. The crucial point about 'Cartesian doubt' is that it is essentially a means to an end; it is a method for the production of first principles. According to Descartes only by pushing doubt to its limits can we discover what is incapable of being doubted; and by discovering what survives even the most extreme and exaggerated doubts, we can establish foundations for philosophy that are unshakably firm. He writes: "I realized that it was necessary, once in the course of my lifetime, to demolish everything completely and start again right from the foundations if I wanted to establish anything at all in the sciences that are stable and likely to last."

Cartesian Mind

Descartes introduced a division between mind and body in order to refute scepticism. He analysed the content of his mind and discovered it contained certain innate ideas such as self, God, and substance. Descartes perceived a complete separation between extension and thought. He found in himself certain faculties and activities, such as the power of locomotion, which clearly imply the existence of corporeal substances. In the clear and distinct perception of such activities extension is in some way included, whereas thinking is not. The faculty of sense

perception does not presuppose thought, and it must exist in some substance other than thinker who is an essentially unextended thing.

However, thinking is to be identified not merely with understanding, willing and imagining, but also with sensory awareness. If I say "I am seeing, therefore I exist" and take this as applying not to bodily activities but to the actual sense of awareness of seeing, then the conclusion is quite certain because it relates to the mind, which alone has the sensation or thought that it is seeing. For Descartes mind has evident awareness of all its actions. This he calls the perfect transparency of the mind. A thought in the wide sense is defined as that of which I am immediately aware.

Clear and Distinct Ideas

Descartes claimed that one cannot derive the idea of substance from observation precisely because perception can only generate qualities. Hence he had to posit the idea of substance as an innate idea. "When I examine my ideas I discover that most of them are either unclear or indistinct which come from experience or imagination. But there is another type of ideas called innate ideas which can neither come from experience nor be imagined which are really clear and distinct." Such ideas are called innate which must be implanted in us before our birth.

Clarity and distinctness must be the marks of truth, the distinguishing characteristics by which we can tell the true from the false. Hence whatever is clearly and distinctly conceived is true. "I call that clear which is present and apparent to an attentive mind, just as we say that we see objects clearly, when being present to the perceiving eye, they operate on it with sufficient strength. But the distinct is that which is so precise and different from everything else that it contains nothing within itself but what is clear." An experience or thought is clear and distinct if it is so forceful that we cannot avoid being aware of it.

As regards unclear and indistinct ideas we have no guarantee that what we believe is true. The faculty of judgement functions reliably in relation to the clear and distinct ideas that God has implanted in us. We make mistakes when we misuse our faculties. But we cannot make mistakes

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when we use them as God intends us to do. The human mind can achieve systematic and certain knowledge by starting with the cognition of what is self-evident. He wanted us to direct our thoughts in an orderly manner, beginning with the simplest and most easily known objects and ascend little by little, step by step, to knowledge of the most complex.

Cogito ergo sum

Descartes held that I can be absolutely certain only of me as a mental substance that thinks. I have clear and distinct idea about it. He wrote:

> Considering that the very thoughts we have while awake may also occur while we sleep without any of them being at that time true, I resolved to pretend that all the things that had ever entered my mind were no more true that the illusions of my dreams. But immediately I noticed that while I was trying thus to think everything false, it was necessary that I, who was thinking this, was something. And observing that this truth 'I am thinking, therefore I exist" was so firm and sure that all the most extravagant suppositions of the sceptics were incapable of shaking it. I decided that I could accept it without scruple as the first principle of the philosophy I was seeking.

Descartes finally concluded that the proposition, I am/I exist is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind. I am certain about this because I can clearly and distinctly see or understand what is being said.

Existence of God and World

One of the innate ideas we have is of a perfect being, God. We are merely finite, temporal creatures, and yet we have the idea of a substance that is infinite, eternal, immutable, omniscient and almighty. Descartes concluded that this idea can only be caused by something that possesses these perfections. Hence there must be a God who is perfect has implanted in me the idea of the perfect being.

Now Descartes is certain of two truths: that he exists and God exists. He continued to search for further certainties and realized that if God is a perfect being, then He won't deceive human

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beings because fraud and deception are imperfections and hence cannot be characteristics of a perfect being. If God is not a deceiver, then a great deal of the information that had earlier been considered suspect can now be considered reliable. All that is needed is to find out what God wants us to believe as true. Since he cannot deceive us we can place complete faith in the knowledge He gives us.

God has given us clear and distinct mathematical ideas like two plus two make four. Since God has forced this belief upon us, and since He cannot be a deceiver it must be true. We have divine guarantee here. "Every clear and distinct conception is certainly something, and therefore cannot come from nothing, but must necessarily come from God who is supremely perfect and cannot be the cause of any error." Thus he concludes that the entire realm of mathematical knowledge is true.

But mathematical knowledge only gives me truths about concepts in my mind. Is it possible that I can also be certain that there is an external world? We cannot rely on their existence through our senses for they deceive us. However, in general it is quite clear and distinct to us and we have a strong inclination to believe that there is an external world of material bodies. Since the belief in the external world is a natural one, God would be deceiving us unless it is true. As God is not a deceiver there must be an external physical world. The properties that we can safely attribute it are the primary qualities which are clear and distinct; but we cannot know with certainty the indistinct or unclear features of the world, namely secondary qualities.

Critical Appraisal

Descartes' picture of the world is hopelessly divided into substances that were defined in ways that mutually exclude each other. How could the mental world – a non-spatial, purely spiritual sphere – have any effect on the physical world of crass matter, and vice versa, in this radically dualistic scheme of things? He assigned all perceivable qualities to the mind and left only mathematically measurable quantities to the external world. Descartes replaced the commonsense view of the direct relation between self and the world with a most circuitous route of relating to the world through the mind.

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1) How did Descartes prove the existence of the self?

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2. How can we know for certain about God and the external world?

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4.5 JOHN LOCKE

Descartes claimed that he solved the problem of scepticism by his method of clear and distinct ideas. But the problem of the external world – the problem of knowing whether our inner representations were accurate - continued to haunt philosophers. John Locke (1632-1704) tried to work out an explanation of our knowledge in terms of sense experience. He argued that our knowledge comes to us through our senses and that we have no innate ideas. He attempted to show how various concepts or ideas come from or are built up on experience.

Lockean Mind

According to Locke mind at birth is a *tabula rasa* (clean slate) and all the characters of knowledge are acquired through experience. Experience is found in two forms of sensation and refection. By sensation the mind receives data about the determinations of the external

world and by reflection it acquires information about the operations of its own processes. A sensation arises by the affection of the body by external material things. This bodily affection is conveyed to the mind. As a realist he maintained that a sensation always represents something in the real world. As sensation tells us about the external world, so likewise reflection tells us about the internal world. The mind becomes aware of its own action.

Locke built from this theory an epistemology with a pair of distinctions: one between simple and complex ideas and another between primary and secondary qualities. Primary qualities are characteristics which inhere in them like extension, size and location. Secondary qualities are characteristics like colour, sound and taste which actually exist only in the mind but are caused by real features of external objects and attributed to them. This view of mind has come to be known as representative realism. According to it, the mind represents the external world, but does not duplicate it. The mind is something like a photograph with features that very accurately represent the world. Locke assumed that knowledge is purely receptive and representative. The copy-theory of knowledge is responsible for his rejection of the theory of an active mind. Thus he likens the mind to a mirror. Locke held the passivity of mind to save knowledge from becoming arbitrary and fictitious.

Locke's Ideas

Locke rejected the innate ideas of the rationalists though he was not against innate powers. But the denial of the innate ideas did not mean the denial of the truths of science, morals and religion. Locke wanted to give them a basis sounder than that of the mystical belief in innate ideas. He claimed that much universal knowledge can be explained by his thesis of empiricism. Knowledge like 2+2=4 is not innate but gained by having clear and distinct ideas through experience. The knowledge of the world around comes from actual observation of it and not from any introspective analysis of the furniture of the mind.

All ideas are acquired. But how are they acquired? Locke believed that real knowledge is composed of propositions; these propositions are composed of ideas. Hence we should find the origin of ideas which are the real materials of knowledge. A simple idea is an unanalyzable

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simple datum of knowledge like extension or duration. The mind is passive in the reception of simple ideas and active in making complex ideas. For example, we at once know the color and heat through sensation. The simple ideas enter the mind one by one, though the qualities to which they refer are found together. For instance, we get the ideas of color, smell, taste, touch of the apple one by one.

Locke's Knowledge

Knowledge, according to Locke, consists in "perception of the connection and agreement or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas." First, knowledge depends on the mental power to perceive or apprehend ideas and not in the mere receptivity of ideas. Secondly, knowledge is rational for it consists in seeing the agreement or disagreement between ideas. Further, he confined knowledge to ideas alone without reference to real things.

There are three degrees of knowledge: intuitive, demonstrative and sensitive. Locke writes: "Sometimes the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of two ideas immediately by themselves, without the intervention of any other and this, I think, we may call intuitive knowledge." Here we see the agreement or disagreement as directly as we see the light with our eyes. This knowledge is the most clear and certain and is the highest kind of knowledge which human faculty is capable of achieving. Locke was willing to admit only one case that we can be intuitively certain of, namely, our own existence.

In demonstrative knowledge we perceive the agreement or disagreement between two ideas by the mediation or intervention of other ideas. For example, we see that A and B are equal to one another because each is equal to C. We express the reasoning like this: A=C, C=B, and therefore A=B. The separate steps in the reasoning should be immediately clear. This demonstrative knowledge consists in a series or chain of intuitions. The knowledge gained by demonstrative method is certain but indirect. It is not clear for it passes through different stages. It also requires memory of the previous steps or intuitions. Thus demonstrative knowledge is inferior to intuitive knowledge in the degree of certainty. We can have demonstrative knowledge of God's existence.

Our sensitive knowledge extends to the objects that are present to our senses. Hence any science that man can develop about the world must always fall short of complete certainty. According to Locke anything that comes to acquire the certainty of intuitive or demonstrative knowledge is real knowledge and everything else is mere opinion. Though he did not find the element of certainty in sensitive knowledge, he could not deny the name of knowledge to it.

Critical Appraisal

A basic difficulty that Locke ran into and which has plagued empiricism is that of showing which of our ideas are real or which information conforms to real things. We have great many ideas in our minds that do not relate to anything in the actual world, such as mermaids, unicorns and the like. Secondly, if all our knowledge comes from experience then a good deal of the knowledge that rationalists like Descartes claimed that we have is to be considered illusory and invalid. The claims of innate ideas could not be justified in terms of our experiences and hence they have to be discarded. Thirdly, if knowledge is about the agreement and disagreement of ideas we can never tell that our knowledge is actually about something outside of us?

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

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1) What is the role of ideas in the theory of knowledge of Locke?

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2. Write a short note on the kinds of knowledge according to Locke.

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4.6 DAVID HUME

David Hume (1711-1776) had a deep interest in scepticism with an extreme doubt that philosophers were capable of discovering truth about any matter whatsoever. He was convinced that in order to uncover knowledge we should make an inquiry into human psychology. This science would examine the processes by which we think and try to find out how people form their views and come to believe what they do about the nature of events.

Humean Mind

Hume's greatest philosophical work, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* claims to be the application of the scientific method, that Isaac Newton had successfully employed in solving physical problems, to the mental world. What is to be examined is the mental nature of human beings, their psychology, in order to see the actual processes by which our alleged knowledge develops. By understanding what human beings are like we may find out something important about the nature of the knowledge that human beings possess. He held that we may not be able to discover the ultimate original qualities of human nature, but by examining our experiences, we may be able to find some general hypothesis about human nature that could be of greatest value. Hume inherits the psychological method employed by Locke and Berkeley. According to Hume there are two kinds of contents of the mind, namely, impressions and their ideas. These are the only perceptions which compose the human mind.

Hume's Impressions and Ideas

According to Hume impressions and ideas are divided into simple and complex. Simple ideas or impressions are those which admit of no separation or distinction, like the sensation of red

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or cold or smell. Complex ideas or impressions are those which are composed of simple parts like the idea of an apple, having the parts of colour taste, smell etc. Ideas may appear either in the form of memory or imagination. In imagination we are freer to produce complex ideas, but memory is tied down to their corresponding impressions. And since ideas derive from impressions, it is clear that Hume thinks that there are no innate ideas which precede corresponding impressions.

Simple impressions are the originals of which the simple ideas are the copies. Thus impressions are prior and the ideas are posterior. There can be no simple ideas without their corresponding original impressions. Complex ideas may be compounded in fancy, but their elements do correspond to the impressions. For example, we may fancy a Tajmahal whose pavements are made of gold and whose walls are built of rubies. However, the elements of pavement, gold, wall, and ruby are all derived from simple impressions.

In determining the simple elements of which the mind is composed, Hume takes the help of his famous dogma 'what is distinguishable is separable.' All impressions are distinct and separate with no logical connection between them. This is known as Humean atomism. But knowledge is a unified whole and a connected system. Hence Hume supplements his atomism with the principles of union and cohesion amongst the separate impressions. He points out that there is a gentle force which attracts the separate impressions into union. This gentle force is nothing but the law of association, the principle which binds the separate ideas.

Hume's Scepticism

Hume analysed the furniture of the mind in terms of fleeting impressions. Taking impressions as his touchstone he called in question the validity of the concepts of substance, causality etc. We are left with passing impressions only; there is no necessary connection between the impressions. His science of man (psychology) was the main cause of his scepticism. But he was not a total sceptic because total scepticism is self-contradictory. He was a 'moderate' sceptic. His display of sceptical arguments purports to show that truth lies in the custom, habit, or imagination and not

in reason. True thinking is really sensitive and not cogitative in nature. Hume used scepticism as a powerful weapon of attack against rationalism.

According to Hume we have no reason to believe that there is a material world beyond our perceptions. However, he admits that we have a natural inclination to believe that there are material objects in the world and that those objects cause our perceptions. In the *Enquiry* he argues that there is no evidence that this is the case, and indeed that no evidence could ever be acquired. The belief that material objects cause our perceptions may be instinctive, yet it is not a scientific one. It is mere speculation. Thus, if knowledge is thought of as requiring certainty, then we have real knowledge of very little indeed.

Critical Appraisal

Hume is one of the greatest philosophers of the modern period. He gave importance to experience, habit, custom and social culture. Yet there are some problems with Hume's claim that all ideas are copies of impressions. One is that even if ideas are derived from impression, not all ideas seem to be literally copies of the corresponding impressions. When you remember an event, for example, it is not like rerunning a movie in your mind. Or when you remember a person, your memory need not be like a photograph of him. It is not at all clear that the idea you have when you remember something differs from the original impression by only a degree of vivacity.

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 Hume describe his theory of knowledge?
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2. Why did Hume embrace scepticism?

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4.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have been trying to examine the role of the mind in acquiring knowledge in the opinion of rationalists and empiricists. We have been trying to make a short survey of the theory of knowledge of Descartes, Locke and Hume. All of them base their theory on a picture of mind that works like a mirror in representing the world and itself. According to Descartes mind mirrors the innate ideas of self, God, mathematical and logical concepts and primary qualities of objects in the external world. All ideas are innate; no new ideas are received even though new ideas may be composed using the already present innate ideas. Reality is reflected in the mind. According to Locke and Hume mind is empty at birth and hence all ideas are received into the mind and then composed by it. The mind mirror pictures the world through the senses. For Hume mind forms ideas by copying the sense impression or by memory or imagination. The mind mirror roughly constructs a picture of the world using fleeting impressions from the world under the influence of custom and imagination.

4.8 KEY WORDS

Innate ideas: Ideas in the mind prior to and independent of sense experience.

Impression: Mark made upon the mind by objects of experience through the senses.

Sense data: Sense datum is that which is perceived immediately by any one of the senses, prior to interpretation by the mind.

Copy theory: The theory that the mind copies the image of the objects by which we can compare the copy of the object in the mind and the real object outside.

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Representation: The mind does not have direct acquaintance with its objects but it apprehends them through the medium of ideas that are supposed to those objects.

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4.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to check your progress I

1. To discover a firm foundation of absolute certainty upon which to build his objective system of knowledge, Descartes chose a method of radical doubt. He began with doubting everything that could be doubted beginning with senses until he could discover a proposition that was logically indubitable. He found that in the very act of doubting his essence was manifest. He could not extend the application of doubt to his own existence. Doubt is a kind of thinking. So he arrived at an indubitable truth to found his philosophy: "I think, therefore I exist". Anybody is certain about this because he/she can clearly and distinctly see or understand what is being said.

2. When we look into our mind we find the innate idea of a perfect being. Though we are finite, temporal creatures, we have the idea of a substance that is infinite, eternal, immutable, omniscient and almighty. For Descartes this idea can only be caused by

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something that possesses such perfections. Hence there must be a God who is perfect. Is it possible that I can also be certain that there is an external world? We cannot rely on their existence through our senses for they deceive us. However, it is quite clear and distinct to us and we have a strong inclination to believe that there is an external world of material bodies. Since the belief in the external world is a natural one, God would be deceiving us unless it is true. As God is not a deceiver there must be an external physical world.

Answers to check your progress II

1. Locke denied the existence of innate ideas. The knowledge of the world around is gained through ideas formed from sense data. According to Locke real knowledge is composed of propositions; these propositions are composed of ideas. Hence we should find the origin of ideas which are the real materials of knowledge. A simple idea is an unanalyzable simple datum of knowledge. The mind is passive in the reception of simple ideas and active in making complex ideas. For example, we at once know the color and heat through sensation. The simple ideas enter the mind one by one, though the qualities to which they refer are found together. For instance, we get the ideas of color, smell, taste, touch of the apple one by one.

2. Knowledge, according to Locke, consists in "perception of the connection and agreement or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas." There are three degrees of knowledge: intuitive, demonstrative and sensitive. Intuitive knowledge is a direct intellectual perception. It is the most clear, certain and highest kind of knowledge. We get intuitively certain knowledge of our own existence. In demonstrative knowledge we perceive the agreement or disagreement between two ideas by the mediation or intervention of other ideas. For example, we see that A and B are equal to one another because each is equal to C. We express the reasoning like this: A=C, C=B, and therefore A=B. Demonstrative knowledge is inferior to intuitive knowledge in the degree of certainty. We can have demonstrative knowledge of God's existence. Our sensitive knowledge extends to the objects that are present to our senses. Any science about the

world lacks complete certainty; it is mere opinion, though we can call it by the name knowledge.

Answers to check your progress III

1. According to Hume by understanding the nature of human beings we may understand the nature of human knowledge. Knowledge is gained through impressions and ideas. Simple ideas or impressions are those which admit of no separation or distinction, like the sensation of red or cold or smell. Complex ideas or impressions are composed of simple parts of an apple like colour, taste, smell etc. Knowledge is a unified whole and a connected system. So Hume introduces the principles of union and cohesion amongst the separate impressions. There is a gentle force which attracts the impressions into union. It is the law of association, the principle which binds the separate ideas. Ideas may appear either in the form of memory or imagination. In imagination we are freer to produce complex ideas, but memory is tied down to their corresponding impressions.

2. Hume analysed the furniture of the mind in terms of fleeting impressions. There is no necessary connection between the impressions. His display of sceptical arguments purports to show that truth lies in the custom, habit, or imagination and not in reason. True thinking is really sensitive and not cogitative in nature. Hume used scepticism as a powerful weapon of attack against rationalism. According to him we have no reason to believe that there is a material world beyond our perceptions. In the *Enquiry* he argues that no scientific evidence could ever be acquired to prove our belief in material objects; it is mere speculation. Thus, if knowledge requires certainty, then we have very little real knowledge indeed.

UNIT 2 REVOLT AGAINST MIRRORING MIND (KIERKEGAARD, POSTMODERN TRENDS, FEMINISTS)

Contents

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2.2 Revolt against the Mirroring Mind

2.3 Kierkegaard and the Existentialistic Revolt

2.4 Postmodernism

2.5 Feminist Epistemology

2.6 Let Us Sum up

2.7 Key Words

2.8 Further Readings and References

2.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we study different epistemological trends emerged as reactions against the subject oriented epistemology of the modern philosophy, particularly of the idealist tradition.

The first systematic revolt against the aforementioned idealistic conception of knowledge came from the existentialistic corners, with Kierkegaard to pioneer it. Postmodernism and feminism are subsequent forms of such revolts.

In this unit we try to study these revolts against the mirroring mind conception of the idealist or subjectivist epistemologists.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

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Epistemology can be generally divided into two broad schools; realistic epistemology and idealistic epistemology. The realist epistemologists, like realists in general, share the view that the mind is capable of knowing external realities as they independently exist. But, as in the case of idealism, idealistic epistemology offers the view that the knower is unable to know anything objectively of the external realities and the object of his knowledge is only the mental representation of them. The mind represents external realities inasmuch they are present before the mind; mind mirrors them. Idealist epistemology generally assumes that mind, by the speculative and dialectical use of reason, is capable of mirroring the world, the phenomena.

The idealistic epistemology opens up a subjectivist version of epistemology. The rationale of the subjectivist approach to knowledge is that the source and foundation of knowledge is something internal to the subject, namely the self-conscious of the subject. A subject knows something only when he/she is conscious of himself/herself. The foundation of knowledge is thus reduced to the subjectivity of the knower. This subjectivist turn in epistemology was the salient features of almost all philosophers since Descartes, who is the father of modern epistemology. Ever since Descartes, there had been a tendency to conceive knowledge and its acquisition as an enterprise of the subject alone.

This tendency was at its height in the philosophy of Hegel. We find in the history of philosophy that Hegel has an extreme idealist view of knowledge. According to Hegel, perfect knowledge is possible only in the self-knowledge or in the consciousness of the individual that there is no distinction between him (the subject) and the object of his knowledge. This self-knowledge can be attained only by the mind through the use of reason. This use of reason is a dialectical process, i.e. a procedure of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. However, the Hegelian dialectical activity of the mind was considered to be a passive conceptual activity that mind passively reflects the world not demanding any existential involvement of the individual knower and his interactions with different historical or material situations.

2.2 REVOLT AGAINST THE MIRRORING MIND

The first systematic revolt against the aforementioned idealistic conception of knowledge came from the existentialistic corners, with Kierkegaard to pioneer it. Postmodernism and feminism are subsequent forms of such revolts. While Kierkegaard's revolt is against pure rational,

speculative and impersonal account of the subject as the knower, postmodernists and feminists rejects the metaphysical conception of knower as a self-present or conscious subject. For Kierkegaard, the subject is the very existing individual, who does not depend on the rational objectivities and proof, rather is open to the manifold uncertain possibilities that his existence brings forth and the world presents before him. For postmodernists and feminists, on the other hand, the knower is no more any self-present subject, rather he is a product of various factors, such, culture, power, society, history etc. In what follows we examine these revolts against the subjectivist conception of knowledge held by idealistic traditions.

2.3 KIERKEGAARD AND THE EXISTENTIALISTIC REVOLT

Sören Aabey Kierkegaard (1813-1855) was a Danish philosopher. Kierkegaard's style (of philosophy) is highly personal. He thought that philosophy at his time tended to misconstrue the relation of thought to reality; this was largely due to the influence of Hegelian idealism. Philosophy was trying to assimilate reality to thought, which for the idealist is the product of mind. Such a philosophy, for Kierkegaard, was merely an exercise of abstract reflection. According to him habits of abstract reflection and passive response had blinded people to their true concerns as self-determining agents ultimately accountable for their own decisions and destinies. He sought to counter such trends, exploring different approaches to life with a view to opening his reader's eyes both to where they themselves stood and to possibilities of opting for radical change. Thus, individual was the sole criterion for Kierkegaard. He implied that decisions of the individual lay beyond the scope of general rules, each being essentially a problem for the individual alone. However, his account of the individual's passionate search for the meaning of his life was set within a psychological perspective that laid stress upon freedom as an inescapable condition of action and experience.

Kierkegaard sharply contrasts his existentialist philosophy with abstract speculation. Abstract philosophy is concerned with logical possibilities and hypothetical knowledge, whereas genuine philosophy's concern should be to achieve truth about actual, concrete individual. Unlike the idealism's cold and impersonal conception of truth, the existentialist philosophy of Kierkegaard sees truth as the passionate inner commitment of the individual to something which is objectively and theoretically uncertain, but at the same time which should be the highest truth attainable by

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an existing individual. Kierkegaard is philosopher of subjectivity. Unlike the subjective idealists whose subject is a passive and impersonal knower, Kierkegaard's subject is the existing individual who is capable of going beyond the certainties of objective and speculative reasoning.

The limits of objectivity: Kierkegaard's Epistemology

Kierkegaard felt dissatisfaction at the prospect of a life purely devoted to the dispassionate pursuit of knowledge and understanding. 'What good would it do me', he then asked himself, 'if truth stood before me, cold and naked, not caring whether I recognized her or not?' He was not interested in impersonal or disinterested thinking in studies comprising scholarly research or the scientific investigation of nature; although such an approach was quite in order when adopted within the limits set by determinate fields of enquiry. Kierkegaard considered Hegel to be the foremost contemporary representative of such an ambition.

According to Kierkegaard, Hegel's philosophy ultimately rested upon a central error of identifying essence with existence: thought with reality. Hegel had endeavored to exhibit the world, and the place of humanity within the world, in terms of logical categories that rendered its overall structure fully intelligible from the impersonal standpoint of pure reason. Kierkegaard, on the other hand, insisted that thought was not the same as reality. In raising such objections Kierkegaard was evaluating Hegel's treatment of specifically human existence. The Hegelian dialectics presupposed the possibility of adopting an absolute from which everything was seen as contributing to an interlocking and rationally determined totality. Thus, a particular person's life and actions were immersed into an all-encompassing and impersonal historical process that overshadowed and transcended them.

Questioning such philosophies, Kierkegaard suggested that the notion of an impersonal 'knowing subject' was symptomatic of a corresponding inclination to forget that the speculative philosopher was himself an 'existing human being' whose status and situation imposed necessary limits upon his outlook and cognitive credentials. Kierkegaard convinces us that even a philosopher who holds such an impersonal view about the knowing subject, inescapably belongs to the world of concrete realities and not to one of abstract thoughts and reasons. He does so in his capacity as a finite empirical individual who 'sleeps, eats, blows his nose' and who has 'to face the future.'

Kierkegaard termed this state of philosophy 'illusions of objectivity' which exercised a pervasive and corrupting influence. He considered his age to be one wherein people had lost a clear sense

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of their identity as individuals who are ultimately responsible for their own characters, outlooks and modes of living. Kierkegaard's argument is that the individual, fallible as he is, can never claim any sort of objective knowledge whatsoever, because his existence is not grounded on the so-called logical categories and possibilities which are closed in themselves, rather on the undetermined existential potentialities, which each individual has to actualize as far as he can. Kierkegaard, therefore, felt that it was necessary to 'make people aware' of the limitations of their present condition and to awaken them of the possibility of subjective self-determination and change. This awareness and awakening was a matter of religious faith; of Christian faith.

The religious consciousness

Central to Kierkegaard's account of religion is his treatment of the concept of faith. Faith in the religious sense pertains to what exceeds the limits of human rationality and understanding recurs. This theme is dealt with in two writings of Kierkegaard, namely, *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. In these books Kierkegaard rejects the feasibility of trying to provide religious tenets with an objective foundation. He held on the contrary that it was not to the spheres of impersonal judgment and dispassionate assent that the religious consciousness rightfully belonged, but to those of individual choice and inner commitment, similar to that of Abraham in the Old Testament.

Faith and subjectivity

Kierkegaard seemed to suggest that writers who tried to justify religious belief on cognitive grounds were more confused about its true nature than some of their sceptically minded critics and to that extent posed a greater threat to it. The religion that crucially concerned him was Christianity. Unlike other thinkers who were skeptical about Christianity, Kierkegaard believed that both its official representatives and its academic apologists might have entertained the hope of making it rationally acceptable to a believer, but in doing so they showed themselves to be the victims of a fundamental misapprehension. He held that neither knowledge nor even understanding was possible here, the proper path of the Christian follower lying in the direction, not of objectivity, but of its opposite, of subjectivity. It was only by 'becoming subjective' that the import of Christianity could be grasped and meaningfully appropriated by the individual. Faith 'inheres in subjectivity' and it, as such, was in essence a matter of single-minded resolve and inward dedication rather than of intellectual contemplation; it should be result of passion

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rather than of reflection. Faith in this sense could only be achieved in the course of a person's life at great cost and with the utmost difficulty.

Faith essentially involves personal venture or risk, because one who believes is at the pain of embracing objective uncertainty. Objective uncertainty derives from the absence of rational support, which the so-called religious thinkers hold in the hope of making faith rationally acceptable. Kierkegaard thought that to hold fast to one's faith in the absence of objective justifications was not the same as giving assent to something that appeared to be intrinsically contrary to reason. It is rather risking one's thought in order to embrace its reality. it was in the light of such a requirement that the level of faith could be said to constitute 'the highest passion in the sphere of human subjectivity.'

Although Kierkegaard discusses subjectivity in relation to Christian faith, his concern was to affirm the importance of the subject as an individual; and not as abstract thinking faculty or as an impersonal knower. Kierkegaard calls this process a "crucifixion of the understanding."

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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 are the major revolts against the idealist epistemology, i.e., the mirroring mind.

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   2   Briefly elucidate Kierkegaard's attack on the objectivity of knowledge.

2.4 POSTMODERNISM

Postmodern thoughts make a thorough critique of the subject as a knowing agent. This critique is associated primarily with the work of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan and Gilles Deleuze. These thinkers question the subject's ability to declare itself self-evidently

independent of the external conditions of its own possibility, such as the language in which it expresses clear and distinct ideas, the body whose deceptions it fears, and the historical or cultural conditions in which it perceives. For their critique of the subject as self-evident they draw inspirations from two sources:

1. Their philosophy primarily draws upon Marxist, Freudian and Nietzschean insights that consciousness of the subject depends upon its material conditions and some unconscious roots or constituting 'outside'.

2. They have, however, a common fidelity to Kant's search for the 'conditions of possibility' underlying subjective experience, as well as his scepticism regarding our capacity to know the self as an "objects in itself."

Drawing on these two philosophical traditions, philosophers in the postmodern tradition portray the subject differently as there are different ways of postmodern thinking. We are, however, not examining all the postmodern portrayal of the subject; we limit our analysis only to Foucault and Derrida.

Michel Foucault

Foucauldian critique of the subject explores the historical conditions making possible various conceptions of subjectivity. He questions the ontological unity and the identity of the subject, which was the very central to both classical and modern thinkers. Cartesian "cogito" is the classical example for the assertion of the ontological unity and identity of the subject as the cognitive agent. But for Foucault what makes the subject aware of himself as a thinker, artist, speaker etc., is not his self-consciousness as an ontologically independent self, rather it is the social conventions that renders subject aware of his identity as a thinker, knower, artist etc. In sum, man as knower becomes aware of his identity not as a self-subsisting individual, but he achieves the consciousness of his identity through every day social impact of institutions such as the school (intellectual), prison (ethical), social welfare systems (social) etc.

Jacques Derrida

Like Foucault, Derrida is best known for his critique of the notion of self-as self-present in the language of its thought. (cogito ergo sum). He is suspicious of any metaphysical claim that an epistemological analysis of the subject's thought can "bring thought back to some sort of 'original' position. Derrida seems to hold that there can be no original positions from which thinking begins and to which it could return.

Traditional metaphysics affirm self-presence as the paradigm of truth. At the heart of this tradition is the definition of 'man' as that being who can signal his self-presence to himself through language. Against this pretension Derrida argues that no thought, not even that of an 'I think', can ever be immediately present to itself.

Derrida thinks that the traditional philosophical claim about the self-presence of the subject would be proved to be baseless if we deconstruct such claims. He charges that in order to maintain the value of self-presence, traditional philosophy tended to ignore the degree to which thinking is dependent on language. Traditional philosophers make their claim about the self-presence of the subject on the basis of the putative distinction between spoken words and written words. Spoken words, since they exist only in the disappearing moment in which they are spoken and they can be heard 'in the head' of the speaker, would seem to be directly expressive of thought. Written words whereas do no express thought, because they can function even in the absence of their producer. Thus spoken word presupposes a producer, the speaker or the subject: a kind of self-evident presence of the subject. This presumed distinction between "phonocentrism" (spoken words) and "logocentrism" (written word) is refuted by Derrida.

Derrida's argument is that it seems impossible to say what counts as spoken (phonetic writing) and what counts as written (non-phonetic) words. More significantly, Derrida argues, it is impossible to make sense of an ideal language (spoken word) which is expressive of the self-presence of the subject, without presupposing that very non-expressive element which has traditionally been ascribed to written words. Thus, Derrida seems to conclude that there is simply no basis for drawing a rigorous distinction between 'speech' and 'writing'.

Derrida's deconstruction results in the rejection of the traditional conception of the subject as metaphysically self-present. The traditional concept of the subject as self-present rests fundamentally on the phonocentric language, i.e. the spoken words. But if we cannot individuate any clear distinction between spoken words and written words, then the assumption that spoken words de facto presupposes the self-presence of the subject is at stake.

The hierarchical privilege that spoken words supposed to enjoy over written words thus turns out to be but one of an indefinite series of hierarchical oppositions, i.e., the spoken word is in opposition to the written words. Derrida's conclusion is that the spoken words which would function as the basis for the pretension to self-presence is excluded by being accorded the same

'fallen' status that non-phonetic writing is said to have. Derridean deconstruction thus envisages the eclipse of subject as the self-present.

Derrida's deconstruction purports that thinking is like writing, which does not presupposes a subject. Thus, Derrida seems to introduce a new way of conceiving thought as having no origin whatsoever. Thus, the thinking subject becomes an insignificant notion for philosophy.

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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 Foucault critique of the subject?

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2   Describe briefly Derrida's critique of the subject.---

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2.5 FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY: ATTACK AGAINST EPISTEMOLOGIES OF PRIVILEGES

Feminism is a complex movement. Although it is generally based on the belief that women are oppressed, it is a mistake to think of feminism as a single philosophical doctrine or as implying an agreed political programme. From the philosophical point of view, feminism is an attempt to liberate philosophy from the male dominance in the western history of philosophy. When we come to the question of epistemology, it tries to emancipate the use of knowledge and its construction from the same dominance.

Feminist epistemologies have grown out of critical interrogations of the universalistic presumptions of the theories of knowledge. While rejecting the very possibility of developing a theory of knowledge universal in nature, feminist epistemologists have insisted on the constitutive role that epistemic contexts plays in the making and evaluating of knowledge claims.

Their argument is that many of the best-established theories of knowledge, with their conceptions of reason, epistemic agency, objectivity, experience and knowledge, tacitly draw their conceptual and theoretical foundation from an idealized view of the knowledge produced and validated by a male dominant social, political and economic situations. Feminist argue that male dominant western epistemological tradition's portrayal of the subject's self-presentation tended to be male, though the specificity of their identity and circumstances are usually effaced in their self-presentation as 'representative' human subjects.

In such situations women and other 'others' occupy the least authoritative positions. Genevieve Lloyd charges that although ideals of reason have been consistent even across centuries of historical variation in yielding a regulative conception of rationality, the traits, values and activities commonly associated with 'the feminine' are systematically suppressed. Evelyn Fox Keller and Susan Bordo also share the same view. Avoiding these traditional approaches, feminists are producing critical and even self-critical analyses of what variously embodied and contextually 'situated' knowers actually do.

Feminist epistemologists consider that the question 'Whose knowledge are we talking about?' should occupy the central position in any epistemological inquiry. As a result, they are producing conceptions of knowledge that are quite specifically contextualized and situated. The subject or the knower is no more the self-existing individual as conceived by the male dominated metaphysics of western philosophy; rather he/she is a socially responsible epistemic agent. Feminists epistemologist have elaborated epistemic methods from a neutral position. As a part of their neutral positions they have advocated reconstructions of empiricism and have articulated different epistemological standpoints. The principal argument of feminist epistemology is that the cognitive status and circumstances of the knower(s) are central among conditions for the possibility of knowledge.

However, there is no exact classification of feminist epistemologies which present an accurate picture of these projects. Yet there are some strands running run some epistemological projects which share some common features. Among many feminists epistemological strands, empiricist strand, stand point position, and genealogical and interpretative practices are a few important ones.

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Feminist epistemology and Empiricism

The relationship between feminism and empiricism has been uneasy. It is with the abstract individualism of empiricist orthodoxy and its residues within everyday conceptions of knowledge that many feminists take issue. Feminists argue that according to such empiricism, the konwers are not concrete individual, rather it gives a picture of knowers as interchangeable in every epistemic projects. Such knowers as 'individuals' have only the status of place-holders in epistemic analysis; they are not individuated and concrete individual. Consequence of such an empiricism in epistemology is that knowledge is objective, universally valid, available impartially and indiscriminately to everyone in identical observation conditions. Knowledge is simply reduced to discrete propositions of the form 'S knows that p'. This naturally leads to the assumption that propositional knowledge alone merits the title 'knowledge'.

For feminist empiricists the goal of inquiry is to produce knowledge that is neither androcentric nor marked by sexist, racist, classist or other biases. They contend that a contextualized yet rigorous empiricism can yield more adequate knowledge than any traditional empiricism in which the knower is an abstract individual. Knowers are not anonymous, isolated and silent spectators. They become answerable for their interventions and epistemic negotiations. All the more the details about an inquirer's epistemic location and interests are likewise subject to empirical scrutiny. The central idea of feminist empiricism is that contextually-informed inquiry fosters a better empiricism.

According to Lynn Nelson, a leading feminist empiricist, one of the salient features of feminists empiricism is that it is communities, not individuals, who are knowers and knowledge claims are entangled in and shaped by webs of belief, testable always against communal experience. It amounts to a contention that there could be no knowledge, no appropriately justified beliefs, without communal standards of justification and critique. In this contextual empiricism evidential or empirical reasoning is context-dependent, and knowledge construction is a thoroughly social practice.

Feminists epistemologists apply empiricism even in psychological analysis about the knowing subject. This empirical study of the knowing subject is proposed by Lorraine Code. Here the monologic individualism of orthodox empiricism as well as that of post-positivist theories gives way to a picture of contextualized , socially embedded knowers conducting epistemic negotiations across multiple spaces of the social-political world. Thus, knowing other people is

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exactly the epistemic activity as knowing medium-sized physical objects. Code even goes for an an ecologically modelled epistemology that draws on narrative analyses to position human knowing within interconnected systems of social, natural and other environmental relations.

Standpoint theory

Another stream in feminists epistemology is standpoint theories. Such theories are advocated by Patricia Hill Collins, Sandra Harding, Nancy Hartsock and Hilary Rose. They contend that neither orthodox nor feminist empiricists can adequately address the historical and material conditions that produce both epistemic agency and knowledge itself.

A stand point is more than merely a perspective. It is an achieved intellectual and embodied political position, forged out of painstaking analyses of the systems that legitimate oppressive practices, and firmly located in the main stream. It can be described as follows. Almost all modern cultural as well as intellectual movements are characterized by some kind of oppression; less privileged classes such as women and non-whites are oppressed and marginalized by the so-called privileged class of whites and intellectuals. Such oppression is prevalent not only in social set up, but also present in knowledge acquisition and scientific inquiries. Stand point theorists consider oppression as an opportunity: it is possible to transform oppression into epistemic advantage. The oppressed class (of women) can resonate with the epistemologies of subordinate groups in a multitude of disparate locations. It values wisdom over knowledge more propositionally conceived.

Interpretive and Genealogical inquiries

Feminist epistemology adopts yet another method, namely the interpretive method. Main proponents of this project are Linda Alcoff and Susan Hekman. Taking origins in Gadamerian hermeneutics they contest any claim to the effect that experience, evidence or texts speak for themselves. Along with Gadamer they hold that it is philosophy's task to interpret the cultural-historical experiences, events, texts etc. out of which knowledge necessarily comes into being.

With genealogical inquiry feminist epistemologists situate knowledge acquisition within historically changing structures. They maintain that the traditional hegemonic modes of understanding, legitimating, and establishing knowledge claims is radically contingent on historically changing structures. Consequently they claim that there cannot be any universal claim with regard to knowledge.

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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 briefly feminist epistemology and empiricism. --------------------------------------
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2 What is Standpoint theory? ---

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4 What is interpretive and Genealogical approach to knowledge? -----------------------------
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2.6 LET US SUM UP

Idealist epistemology generally assumes that mind, by the speculative and dialectical use of reason, is capable of mirroring the world, the phenomena. The mind represents external realities inasmuch they are present before the mind; mind mirrors them. This subjectivist turn in epistemology was the salient features of almost all philosophers since Descartes, who is the father of modern epistemology. Ever since Descartes, there had been a tendency to conceive knowledge and its acquisition as an enterprise of the subject alone. This tendency was at its height in the philosophy of Hegel.

The first systematic revolt against the aforementioned idealistic conception of knowledge came from the existentialistic corners, with Kierkegaard to pioneer it. Postmodernism and feminism are subsequent forms of such revolts. While Kierkegaard's revolt is against pure rational, speculative and impersonal account of the subject as the knower, postmodernists and feminists rejects the metaphysical conception of knower as a self-present or conscious subject. For Kierkegaard, the subject is the very existing individual, who does not depend on the rational

objectivities and proof, rather is open to the manifold uncertain possibilities that his existence brings forth and the world presents before him. For postmodernists and feminists, on the other hand, the knower is no more any self-present subject, rather he is a product of various factors, such as, culture, power, society, history etc. In what follows we examine these revolts against the subjectivist conception of knowledge held by idealistic traditions.

In this unit we have tried to study these revolts against the mirroring mind conception of the idealist or subjectivist epistemologists.

2.7 KEY WORDS

Postmodernism: Postmodern thoughts make a thorough critique of the subject as a knowing agent. This critique is associated primarily with the work of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan and Gilles Deleuze. These thinkers question the subject's ability to declare itself self-evidently independent of the external conditions of its own possibility, such as the language in which it expresses clear and distinct ideas, the body whose deceptions it fears, and the historical or cultural conditions in which it perceives.

Feminism: Feminism is a complex movement. Although it is generally based on the belief that women are oppressed, it is a mistake to think of feminism as a single philosophical doctrine or as implying an agreed political programme. From the philosophical point of view, feminism is an attempt to liberate philosophy from the male dominance in the western history of philosophy.

2.8 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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2.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1   The first systematic revolt against the aforementioned idealistic conception of knowledge came from the existentialistic corners, with Kierkegaard to pioneer it. Postmodernism and feminism are subsequent forms of such revolts. While Kierkegaard's revolt is against pure rational, speculative and impersonal account of the subject as the knower, postmodernists and feminists rejects the metaphysical conception of knower as a self-present or conscious subject. For Kierkegaard, the subject is the very existing individual, who does not depend on the rational objectivities and proof, rather is open to the manifold uncertain possibilities that his existence brings forth and the world presents before him. For postmodernists and feminists, on the other hand, the knower is no more any self-present subject, rather he is a product of various factors, such as, culture, power, society, history etc. In what follows we examine these revolts against the subjectivist conception of knowledge held by idealistic traditions.

2   Kierkegaard's Epistemology

Kierkegaard felt dissatisfaction at the prospect of a life purely devoted to the dispassionate pursuit of knowledge and understanding. 'What good would it do me', he then asked himself, 'if truth stood before me, cold and naked, not caring whether I recognized her or not?' He was not interested in impersonal or disinterested thinking in studies comprising scholarly research or the scientific investigation of nature; although such an approach was quite in order when adopted within the limits set by determinate fields of enquiry. Kierkegaard considered Hegel to be the foremost contemporary representative of such an ambition.

According to Kierkegaard, Hegel's philosophy ultimately rested upon a central error of identifying essence with existence: thought with reality. Hegel had endeavored to exhibit the world, and the place of humanity within the world, in terms of logical categories that rendered its overall structure fully intelligible from the impersonal standpoint of pure reason. Kierkegaard, on the other hand, insisted that thought was not the same as reality. In raising such objections Kierkegaard was evaluating Hegel's treatment of specifically human existence. The Hegelian dialectics presupposed the possibility of adopting an absolute from which everything was seen as

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contributing to an interlocking and rationally determined totality. Thus, a particular person's life and actions were immersed into an all-encompassing and impersonal historical process that overshadowed and transcended them.

Questioning such philosophies, Kierkegaard suggested that the notion of an impersonal 'knowing subject' was symptomatic of a corresponding inclination to forget that the speculative philosopher was himself an 'existing human being' whose status and situation imposed necessary limits upon his outlook and cognitive credentials. Kierkegaard convinces us that even a philosopher who holds such an impersonal view about the knowing subject, inescapably belongs to the world of concrete realities and not to one of abstract thoughts and reasons. He does so in his capacity as a finite empirical individual who 'sleeps, eats, blows his nose' and who has 'to face the future.'

Kierkegaard termed this state of philosophy 'illusions of objectivity' which exercised a pervasive and corrupting influence. He considered his age to be one wherein people had lost a clear sense of their identity as individuals who are ultimately responsible for their own characters, outlooks and modes of living. Kierkegaard's argument is that the individual, fallible as he is, can never claim any sort of objective knowledge whatsoever, because his existence is not grounded on the so-called logical categories and possibilities which are closed in themselves, rather on the undetermined existential potentialities, which each individual has to actualize as far as he can. Kierkegaard, therefore, felt that it was necessary to 'make people aware' of the limitations of their present condition and to awaken them of the possibility of subjective self-determination and change. This awareness and awakening was a matter of religious faith; of Christian faith.

The religious consciousness

Central to Kierkegaard's account of religion is his treatment of the concept of faith. Faith in the religious sense pertains to what exceeds the limits of human rationality and understanding recurs. This theme is dealt with in two writings of Kierkegaard, namely, *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. In these books Kierkegaard rejects the feasibility of trying to provide religious tenets with an objective foundation. He held on the contrary that it was not to the spheres of impersonal judgment and dispassionate assent that the religious consciousness rightfully belonged, but to those of individual choice and inner commitment, similar to that of Abraham in the Old Testament.

Faith and subjectivity

Kierkegaard seemed to suggest that writers who tried to justify religious belief on cognitive grounds were more confused about its true nature than some of their sceptically minded critics and to that extent posed a greater threat to it. The religion that crucially concerned him was Christianity. Unlike other thinkers who were skeptical about Christianity, Kierkegaard believed that both its official representatives and its academic apologists might have entertained the hope of making it rationally acceptable to a believer, but in doing so they showed themselves to be the victims of a fundamental misapprehension. He held that neither knowledge nor even understanding was possible here, the proper path of the Christian follower lying in the direction, not of objectivity, but of its opposite, of subjectivity. It was only by 'becoming subjective' that the import of Christianity could be grasped and meaningfully appropriated by the individual. Faith 'inheres in subjectivity' and it, as such, was in essence a matter of single-minded resolve and inward dedication rather than of intellectual contemplation; it should be result of passion rather than of reflection. Faith in this sense could only be achieved in the course of a person's life at great cost and with the utmost difficulty.

Faith essentially involves personal venture or risk, because one who believes is at the pain of embracing objective uncertainty. Objective uncertainty derives from the absence of rational support, which the so-called religious thinkers hold in the hope of making faith rationally acceptable. Kierkegaard thought that to hold fast to one's faith in the absence of objective justifications was not the same as giving assent to something that appeared to be intrinsically contrary to reason. It is rather risking one's thought in order to embrace its reality. it was in the light of such a requirement that the level of faith could be said to constitute 'the highest passion in the sphere of human subjectivity.'

Although Kierkegaard discusses subjectivity in relation Christian faith, his concern was to affirm the importance of the subject as an individual; and not as abstract thinking faculty or as an impersonal knower. Kierkegaard calls this process a "crucifixion of the understanding."

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1   Foucauldian critique of the subject explores the historical conditions making possible various conceptions of subjectivity. He questions the ontological unity and the identity of the subject, which was the very central to both classical and modern thinkers. Cartesian "cogito" is the classical example for the assertion of the ontological unity and identity of the subject as the

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cognitive agent. But for Foucault what makes the subject aware of himself as a thinker, artist, speaker etc., is not his self-consciousness as an ontologically independent self, rather it is the social conventions that renders subject aware of his identity as a thinker, knower, artist etc. In sum, man as knower becomes aware of his identity not as a self-subisting individual, but he achieves the consciousness of his identity through every day social impact of institutions such as the school (intellectual), prison (ethical), social welfare systems (social) etc.

2   Derrida is best known for his critique of the notion of self-as self-present in the language of its thought. (cogito ergo sum). He is suspicious of any metaphysical claim that an epistemological analysis of the subject's thought can "bring thought back to some sort of 'original' position. Derrida seems to hold that there can be no original positions from which thinking begins and to which it could return.

Traditional metaphysics affirm self-presence as the paradigm of truth. At the heart of this tradition is the definition of 'man' as that being who can signal his self-presence to himself through language. Against this pretension Derrida argues that no thought, not even that of an 'I think', can ever be immediately present to itself.

Derrida thinks that the traditional philosophical claim about the self-presence of the subject would be proved to be baseless if we deconstruct such claims. He charges that in order to maintain the value of self-presence, traditional philosophy tended to ignore the degree to which thinking is dependent on language. Traditional philosophers make their claim about the self-presence of the subject on the basis of the putative distinction between spoken words and written words. Spoken words, since they exist only in the disappearing moment in which they are spoken and they can be heard 'in the head' of the speaker, would seem to be directly expressive of thought. Written words whereas do not express thought, because they can function even in the absence of their producer. Thus spoken word presupposes a producer, the speaker or the subject: a kind of self-evident presence of the subject. This presumed distinction between "phonocentrism" (spoken words) and "logocentrism" (written word) is refuted by Derrida.

Derrida's argument is that it seems impossible to say what counts as spoken (phonetic writing) and what counts as written (non-phonetic) words. More significantly, Derrida argues, it is impossible to make sense of an ideal language (spoken word) which is expressive of the self-presence of the subject, without presupposing that very non-expressive element which has

traditionally been ascribed to written words. Thus, Derrida seems to conclude that there is simply no basis for drawing a rigorous distinction between 'speech' and 'writing'.

Derrida's deconstruction results in the rejection of the traditional conception of the subject as metaphysically self-present. The traditional concept of the subject as self-present rests fundamentally on the phonocentric language, i.e. the spoken words. But if we cannot individuate any clear distinction between spoken words and written words, then the assumption that spoken words de facto presupposes the self-presence of the subject is at stake.

The hierarchical privilege that spoken words supposed to enjoy over written words thus turns out to be but one of an indefinite series of hierarchical oppositions, i.e., the spoken word is in opposition to the written words. Derrida's conclusion is that the spoken words which would function as the basis for the pretension to self-presence is excluded by being accorded the same 'fallen' status that non-phonetic writing is said to have. Derridean deconstruction thus envisages the eclipse of subject as the self-present.

Derrida's deconstruction purports that thinking is like writing, which does not presupposes a subject. Thus, Derrida seems to introduce a new way of conceiving thought as having no origin whatsoever. Thus, the thinking subject becomes an insignificant notion for philosophy.

Answers to Check Your Progress III

1   The relationship between feminism and empiricism has been uneasy. It is with the abstract individualism of empiricist orthodoxy and its residues within everyday conceptions of knowledge that many feminists take issue. Feminists argue that according to such empiricism, the konwers are not concrete individual, rather it gives a picture of knowers as interchangeable in every epistemic projects. Such knowers as 'individuals' have only the status of place-holders in epistemic analysis; they are not individuated and concrete individual. Consequence of such an empiricism in epistemology is that knowledge is objective, universally valid, available impartially and indiscriminately to everyone in identical observation conditions. Knowledge is simply reduced to discrete propositions of the form 'S knows that p'. This naturally leads to the assumption that propositional knowledge alone merits the title 'knowledge'.

For feminist empiricists the goal of inquiry is to produce knowledge that is neither androcentric nor marked by sexist, racist, classist or other biases. They contend that a contextualized yet

rigorous empiricism can yield more adequate knowledge than any traditional empiricism in which the knower is an abstract individual. Knowers are not anonymous, isolated and silent spectators. They become answerable for their interventions and epistemic negotiations. All the more the details about an inquirer's epistemic location and interests are likewise subject to empirical scrutiny. The central idea of feminist empiricism is that contextually-informed inquiry fosters a better empiricism.

According to Lynn Nelson, a leading feminist empiricist, one of the salient features of feminists empiricism is that it is communities, not individuals, who are knowers and knowledge claims are entangled in and shaped by webs of belief, testable always against communal experience. It amounts to a contention that there could be no knowledge, no appropriately justified beliefs, without communal standards of justification and critique. In this contextual empiricism evidential or empirical reasoning is context-dependent, and knowledge construction is a thoroughly social practice.

Feminists epistemologists apply empiricism even in psychological analysis about the knowing subject. This empirical study of the knowing subject is proposed by Lorraine Code. Here the monologic individualism of orthodox empiricism as well as that of post-positivist theories gives way to a picture of contextualized , socially embedded knowers conducting epistemic negotiations across multiple spaces of the social-political world. Thus, knowing other people is exactly the epistemic activity as knowing medium-sized physical objects. Code even goes for an an ecologically modelled epistemology that draws on narrative analyses to position human knowing within interconnected systems of social, natural and other environmental relations.

2   It can be described as follows. Almost all modern cultural as well as intellectual movements are characterized by some kind of oppression; less privileged classes such women and non-whites are oppressed and marginalized by the so-called privileged class of whites and intellectuals. Such oppression is prevalent not only in social set up, but also present in knowledge acquisition and scientific inquiries. Standpoint theorists consider oppression as an opportunity: it is possible to transform oppression into epistemic advantage. The oppressed class (of women) can resonate with the epistemologies of subordinate groups in a multitude of disparate locations. It values wisdom over knowledge more propositionally conceived.

3   Main proponents of this project are Linda Alcoff and Susan Hekman. Taking origins in Gadamerian hermeneutics they contest any claim to the effect that experience, evidence or texts

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speak for themselves. Along with Gadamer they hold that it is philosophy's task to interpret the cultural-historical experiences, events, texts etc. out of which knowledge necessarily comes into being.

With genealogical inquiry feminist epistemologists situate knowledge acquisition within historically changing structures. They maintain that the traditional hegemonic modes of understanding, legitimating, and establishing knowledge claims is radically contingent on historically changing structures. Consequently they claim that there cannot be any universal claim with regard to knowledge.

UNIT 3 NOT MIRRORS BUT MAPS (KNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN INTERESTS-HABERMAS, MESOCOSM)

Contents

3.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit explores the contributions of Jürgen Habermas, a second generation critical theorist and one of the most distinguished contemporary social and political philosopher, whose influence spans the fields of philosophy, political science, law, literature, communication, religion and international relations. The main emphasis of this module would be on the epistemological foundations of Habermas' theory of communicative action. Knowledge and Human Interests (1968; 1987) is one of Habermas' seminal works that contains a very strong argument for a theory of knowledge as social theory. Habermas also emphasizes emancipatory intent in *Knowledge and Human Interests*. In his most famous work, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984; 1987), the emphasis shifts to consensus through a process of rational argumentation among communicatively competent social actors. From this module, you would be able to evaluate the paradigm shift in Habermas' thought from an emphasis on human

interests which was founded on the paradigm of a conscious subject to that of a universal pragmatics, in which language becomes the paradigm.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Jürgen Habermas, a German philosopher, is a leading second generation critical theorist and a well known philosopher in the contemporary scene. He has inherited the philosophical lineage from the pioneers of the Frankfurt school like Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, and Erich Fromm who were instrumental in bringing critical theory into prominence. Critical social theory or Critical theory is the name of the philosophical doctrine of the Frankfurt school otherwise known as Institute for Social Research (Institut fur Sozialforschung), a movement founded in 1932 by Max Horkheimer, Karl Wittfogel, Friedrich Pollock, and Leo Lowenthal, and funded by Felix Weil, which later included Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, Karl Korsch and Frank Borkenau. Officially, the Frankfurt school was attached to the Frankfurt University. The abundant academic and publicistic output of the school covered multifarious domains of humanities, science, philosophy, empirical sociology, musicology, social psychology, history of the Far East, the soviet economy, psychoanalysis, theory of literature and law. Habermas took critical theory in a positive direction from that of a sheer social critique to that of a theory of ransformation of public sphere, discourse ethics, and communicative action oriented towards achieving a rationally motivated consensus. Habermas' attempt to reorient critical theory is based on strong epistemological foundations given by Kant, Hegel and Marx.

3.2 CHARACTERISTIC TRAITS OF THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL

Though the origins of critical social theory/critical theory were Marxian, the Frankfurt theorists did not treat Marxism as the sole contender for the role of a critique of the society. They incorporated many non-Marxist strands of thought like that of Kant, Hegel, Freud, Mead, Durkheim, and Austin. The Frankfurt School was critical of politics. The critical theory was in agreement with Lukacs and Korsch regarding reification as the `epitome of the problems of the modern world.' The critical theorists took a broader view as affecting all strata of the society.

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Dialectic of Enlightenment (1947; 2002) written jointly by Horkheimer and Adorno dwelt upon the travails of the period after Enlightenment which was expected to bring about drastic changes in the entire fabric of the society. But, reason which ascended the throne of arbiter during the Enlightenment, became more and more instrumental and great political and social renaissance expected of it failed to fructify. This was a crushing disappointment for the staunch supporters of the Enlightenment. Adorno and Horkheimer also lamented the rapid increase in industrialization with less and less emphasis on values. The society which was envisioned as free and fair with the reason at the helm gave way to a society ruled by science and technology which called itself value-neutral. Horkheimer was particularly critical of viewing social sciences from a scientific angle because he felt that natural sciences aimed only at the end-result, whereas social sciences were highly conscious of the means of observation as historical. The point of variance with Marxism stemmed from Horkheimer's acceptance of the functional value of theory and its autonomy. In order to avoid reductionism, Horkheimer was against the traditional pairing of concepts like `phenomena' and `essence', `subject' and `object', `base' and `superstructure'. Hence, he emphasized the need for constant mediation.

The Frankfurt theorists were apprehensive about over-emphasis on logical necessity and technological rigour because both can abet authoritarian tendencies as was the case with religious authority till the dawn of the Enlightenment. Horkheimer foresaw totalitarian symptoms in the scientific-instrumental approach of the epoch sans any humane face. Critical theorists indicted the mass media for its destructive influence on culture, art, and the society. They followed Nietzsche in criticizing *sensus communis*. They also bitterly criticized the social apathy, which allowed professional bureaucracy to manipulate the masses. This applied equally to both Fascist and Communist totalitarian regimes and Western democracies. Aesthetic and nomological disciplines accommodate varied interpretations whereas science aims at structured explanations without any room for any preponderance. The Frankfurt theorists were not in favour of stringent scientistic framework in social sciences, which emphasized the methodology of the sciences and treated human activity as observable phenomena. Critical theorists argued that excessive objectivation of human activities could lead to a controlled environment which could be manipulated to suit the needs of a chosen few. At one stage, science became the measuring frame for even social activities as the only form of legitimation. Science abstracted knowledge

from society and created an idea that it was independent of any social grounding. Lezsek Kolakowski cites Horkheimer:

> Perception cannot be isolated from its social genesis; both it and its objects are social and historical products. The individual observer is passive vis-a-vis the object, but the society as a whole is an active element in the process, unconsciously so. The facts ascertained are partly determined by the collective praxis of human beings who have devised the methods used to observe the facts. Objects are partly the product of concepts and of collective praxis.

Critical theory viewed society not as a natural necessity thrust upon the people. Rather, it viewed society as a mosaic of subjective, objective, and inter-subjective modes of understanding. The dynamic social processes are not irrevocable and can be altered. Critical theory scrutinized social categories. In the words of Horkheimer:

> Critical thought is motivated today by the endeavour genuinely to transcend the situation of tension, to remove the opposition between the purposiveness, spontaneity, and rationality of the individual and the labour conditions on which the society is based. It implies that man is in conflict with himself until he recovers this identity.

Unlike other theories, critical theory acknowledged the possibility of its own judgements being coloured by established beliefs of the society in which it is housed. But it also emphasizes the power of reason to critically reflect upon the customs, manners, and beliefs prevalent in the society. Habermas applies this trait in the debate aimed at norm formation. Critical theory views social progress as the end of the intellectual progress. This would strip the social life of its quasi-natural `external' character and makes it an inalienable part of the lifeworld. For this to become a reality, subject-object-society relationship must be redefined.

Critical theory is a critique of the existing society in the Marxian sense, a tirade against market-oriented capitalistic political system which was perpetrated in the name of democracy. Even in democracies which hold the best hopes for human freedom and expression, monetary

considerations are synonymous with success. People seek external sources to quench their thirst for recognition and affirmation of identity. The Frankfurt School accepts the need for material resources. But its critique is about the institutionalization of the purposive rational action as the most coveted form of social action in liberal democracies. Frankfurt school opposes the manipulating tendencies of the market, which are rampant in liberal democracies.

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 are the characteristic traits of the Frankfurt school?

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2) What is the significance of the term critical in critical theory ?

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3.3 CRITICAL THEORY: INFLUENCE OF GERMAN IDEALISM

The critical theorists were strongly influenced by the German idealists thinkers such as Kant, Hegel, and Marx are discussed. Kant's philosophical program was to crown philosophy as the

Emperor of sciences and so he ventured into an analysis of the cognitive faculty. He sought to make philosophy the highest arbiter, by mapping the limits of reason. By laying down the rules governing the most fundamental function of understanding Kant superseded other disciplines, at least in his ingenuity, by making philosophy ontologically prior. Habermas, who labelled Kant *maitre pensieur*, i.e., the magician of the false paradigm, criticized Kant for arrogating authority to philosophy, as if only philosophy had the sole right to probe into the operations of the mental faculty and draw the limits of knowledge. Habermas conceded Richard Rorty's claim that the role of philosophy could only be that of a stand-in interpreter and social critique. The Kantian enterprise of defining the limits of pure and practical reason and aesthetic judgment redefined the subject-object relation.

What Kant did was undoubtedly a critical analysis of the traits of the cognitive faculty with the intention of revamping the whole system. Kant's critical inquiry into the structures of understanding benefitted all disciplines. But, philosophy became more speculative. Kant's own schemata became a double-edged weapon in turning philosophy against itself. In this light, Hegel's critique is centred upon the monological primacy accorded to the subject, by Kant, even though the object was not relegated to the sidelines. Hegel felt that this would restrict the creativity of the faculty of reason. Kant's emphasis on the subject led to transcendental philosophy. Instead, Hegel suggested "immanent critique" which involves constant revision of concepts with emphasis on continuous refinement. 'This path of alternating criticism and amendment is the `dialectical' way of the Phenomenology of Spirit, where each position establishes itself as superior to its predecessor purely through the force of argument.' Marx criticized Hegel for neglecting the social factors in the conception of the subject, experience, and knowledge in which errors are viewed as merely intellectual. The maladies afflicting a society have to be eliminated successively and each stage has its residue of contradictions. Marx's contention was that the prognosis and diagnosis of the problem should be found in social reality. Habermas writes as follows:

> The theory gives an account both of the content in which it itself arises (its *Entstehungseusammenhang*), along with all the inadequacies of existing conceptions and reality, and of its context of effective application (its *Vervendungszusammenhang*) as a guide for changing what exists.

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Habermas appreciated the importance of Kant's critical philosophy, categorical imperative, practical reason and an understanding of the role played by the external world in the knowledge episode. For Hegel, the transition of consciousness which includes the social is from a lesser to a more advanced stage. `Philosophy only arrives at a retrospective understanding'. In the famous image of the preface to the Philosophy of Right, Hegel writes: "The Owl of Minerva flies only at the dusk." Thus, Hegel subsumed social critique in his dialectic. The reason would finally deliver the society from all contradictions. For Marx, unmasking of the irrationality imbedded in the society was the prime task and transformation ensued only in its aftermath. For Hegel, thought must be reconciled with a rational reality. For Marx, thought should unmask existent irrationality and guide its transformation.' Marxism has to evaluate both levels of contradictions; in the historical realm in the society as well as the conceptual framework of the individuals. Kortian says:

> If it tries to abandon the first level and to develop a `science' of society which would make no reference to conceptions and aspirations as integral to or partially constitutive of our institutions, then it just becomes just another would be positive science...

Habermas disagrees with Marx on setting aside theories after a critique and espouses an approach, which is reflective and evaluative. Thus, he turns to Kant and Hegel. Habermas charts a divergent course by advocating plurality of interests, which prompts knowledge claims. His transcendental inquiry leads to a theory of communicative competence, which underlies an unadulterated urge to communicate. Hence, language becomes the paradigm.

Garbis Kortian calls critical theory a metacritique because of its critique of presuppositions, even its own. The `meta' is valid only if the critique does not fasten itself to any absolute standpoints. Hegel's enterprise was to deconstruct the structure of presuppositions. Kortian says, `positive concepts which take over words from ordinary language epitomize these presuppositions which, according to Hegel, are so `well-known' precisely because they are not `known'.' This knowledge is `phenomenal knowledge' (*erscheinendes Wissen*), which is the object of Phenomenology. Hegel, in stressing the speculative experience as the experience of absolute knowledge, criticized

Kant for treating knowledge as the tool for arriving at the truth. Hegel claimed that the medium or instrument of knowing incorporated into the process could not be abstracted from it. Hegel wrote, "... Or if, representing knowledge as a medium, we learn the law of its refraction, it is likewise of no avail to substract the refraction from the result..." In Hegel's critique of Kant, a distinct metacritical moment is palpable and his speculative experience is far more incisive though culminating in the cul de sac of the absolute knowledge. `In speculative thinking, the negative moment of reflection belongs to the content itself, and is the positive, both as its immanent movement and determination and as the whole of this moment and determination.' While the phenomenal understanding processes external data, the speculative experience internally scrutinizes the content and the passive subject-object relationship is abandoned for a dynamic interface in the historical manifestation of reason. The *Aufhebung* of the difference between the phenomenal and the truth produces speculative experience. Truth is the philosophical knowledge, which is the self-reflective reconstruction of the phenomenal knowledge objectified by the transcendental-absolute concept. This is the absolute knowledge. But Marx's polemic against Hegel led to the dissociation of the whole project and also the project of the whole; i.e. `the moment of recognition and appropriation of (*anerkunnung* and *annignung*) the phenomenalized totality of the absolute concept in its otherness.'

The Frankfurt school gladly accepted the metacritique. Horkheimer added the social dimension to the Hegelian dialectics. Adorno especially employed metacritique ruthlessly to denounce any attempt at foundational enterprise in philosophy. He was unsparing of Hegel for capitulating his dialectic in the Absolute. For Adorno, the dialectic is unending and its function is to continue unearthing falsity which alone is the unprevaricated truth. Horkheimer and Adorno called such a process materialism, which denotes the nexus between the dialectic and the socio-historic relationships. These relationships serve as millstones around the neck and prevent emancipation as envisioned in the Enlightenment. Hegel attributes this `pre-supposition of the unachieved end' to Kantian `ought to be' or duty (*Sollen*).

Critical theory envisages emancipation as a product of both socio-historical reality and the subjective perseverance of the human understanding. The introspection, the retrospection, and the deintellectualization of the theory and the deobjectivization of the praxis were at the top of the agenda for the Frankfurt theorists. The method recommended by Habermas was practical

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discourse, which propagates dialogical-dialectical understanding. Habermas also introduces the concept of interest into the process of rationalization. This interest is the one, which furthers the appetite for emancipation. Enlightenment confronts the problems of reason, dogmatism, and decision. The will to decide reasonably sets in motion the interest in emancipation.

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 the contributions of Kant, Hegel and Marx to the epistemological foundations of critical theory and how they are related to each other.

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2) Elucidate Habermas' critique of Kant, Hegel and Marx.

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3.4 KNOWLEDGE AS SOCIAL PRAXIS

Habermas accepted, in principle, Horkheimer's and Adorno's critique of the Enlightenment reason for fostering technical interests intent on domination. Reason, which was considered to be the acme of emancipatory power, lost its supremacy to the methodology of the sciences. Reason and science became increasingly identified with each other. For Marx, any social critique could only be practical with the intent of abolishing false consciousness thereby facilitating social

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emancipation. Reason, being the bedrock of communication, performs a meaning generating function. A consensus on mutually accepted conventions is imperative to understand meanings attributed to actions. Habermas accepts the idea of praxis bereft of technical stigma fastened to it but comprising of social aims not infused extrinsically but gained by virtue of its own rationality. In this context, Richard Rorty says, "Either all justifications, whether in matters of knowledge or morals, appeals to social practices or to illusory foundations."

Social practice, for Habermas, is the starting point of any inquiry. It is classified into labour (purposive rational action) and interaction (communicative action). While technical and practical interests drive both natural sciences as well as the historical-hermeneutical sciences, respectively, the reason which operates can never be termed neutral because of the guiding aims of their activity. While the former is identified with activity that involves domination and achieving the desired ends, the latter is linked to preserving and enlarging the domain of understanding. Habermas argues that interests drive all cognitive activities. This interest operates in three spheres of 'media' – work, language, and authority corresponding to the natural, historical-hermeneutical, and social sciences respectively. In self-reflection, interest and cognition coincide and 'emancipative reason' takes shape.

The irony of how science has become the paradigm for all knowledge claims in a stark reversal of the Kantian project led Habermas to distinguish between scientific temper and scientific method. The emphasis on purposive activity in a capitalistic society leads to an understanding of social practice as a system of commercial exchange and not human interaction. Politics becomes a pawn in the hands of the market aided by technological forms of control. Thus, science and technology becomes an ideology wedded to the technical model of social control. Human activity loses the element of moral autonomy. Habermas argues that only a return to 'praxis' in the form of communicative action could lead to lessened social control.

3.5 COMMUNICATIVE RATIONALITY

Scientific-technical or purposive-instrumental rationality revels in discovering the secrets of the external world and helps humans establish a mastery over it. Thus, it becomes a purpose-oriented

and goal-directed rationality. Communicative rationality is concerned with transactions in the sphere of exchange of thoughts, ideas, and meaning-forming activity, which is the bedrock of any learning process, which instrumental rationality does not take cognizance of. Communicative rationality aims at social rationalization, social integration, and socialization. These are protracted discursive, justificatory and redeemable processes in which arriving at a conclusion is not the culmination. Purposive rationality is concerned with truth claims. Though the reflective element in the scientific-technical activity cannot be doubted it is affirmed only in the success or the efficiency of the action performed. In the case of communicative action, success or failure of the action is immaterial if the process of communication is authored under the canopy of reflection. What is coveted is the potential for unconstrained consensus purely based on the force of rational argumentation. Communicative rationality is situated upon the reflective competence of the interacting subjects to justify and defend a thesis through the force of reason. This presupposes a common-shared lifeworld of meanings, which acts as the transcendental binding force. Purposive rationality takes the lifeworld for granted ignoring its historical situatedness while communicative rationality derives its strength from intersubjective communicative action.

Habermas criticizes Kant for dividing the domain of knowledge into science, morality, and art and anointing pure reason, practical reason, and judgment to govern respective domains. Though Habermas accepts the inherent relation between various concepts of reason, ironically, he had to resort to demarcating reason into purposive rational and communicative rational. It becomes imperative for Habermas to separate them because science applies a different standard of rationality and it would condemn moral-ethical and aesthetic to the irrational. Since social sciences have to explain social processes that are invariably associated with human activity, the method of validation of claims is possible only through argumentation, which Habermas describes as the systematic way of adducing reasons and grounds for the justification of validity claims. Habermas, in order to distinguish the domains of science and social sciences recommends theoretical discourse in the case of the former and practical discourse in the case of the latter. As Habermas reiterates, his idea of practical discourse is not identical to moral discourse but the validation of normative validity claims, i.e. not only what is right but also what makes it right. This is where justification, discursivity, and redeemability of the validity claims

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surface. This makes the process of argumentation rational. Another reason for Habermas to choose argumentative technique for expounding his theory of communicative action is its pragmatic character. A formal linguistic framework is required in an `ideal speech situation', which presupposes linguistic competence of the interlocutors.

Habermas distinguishes the archaic from modern world-views and forms of understanding associated with them. The modern interpreters are prejudiced when analyzing the archaic world-views. Habermas claims that though the archaic world-views cannot be completely divested of any rationality, the claims were not always rationally articulated. He says that the modern understanding is far more dialogical and accommodative. There is little or no separation between culture, religion, science and various symbolic practices in the archaic understanding. There is a need for demythologization and denaturalization of the society and only then would socialization be possible. The concept of validity claims and their justification is possible only in a society with shared meanings with common linguistic framework. The problems of truth and morality have to be released from the narrow perspective of justification on survival instinct and self-preservation. Dialogue or argumentation is not possible in an atmosphere foreboding violence or anarchy. The term society itself symbolizes a rational community with mutually agreed upon laws to be administered for various social acts and conventions to be adhered. The transition to language from symbolism must have been prompted by a need to communicate. The natural expressive impulse that manifested in various pictorial and other symbolic artefacts must have been a substitute for the undeveloped linguistic apparatus.

3.6 HABERMAS' EMPHASIS ON ARGUMENTATION

Habermas classifies social action into four types. They are: 1) Teleological action 2) Dramaturgical action 3) Normatively regulated action and 4) communicative action. Teleological action is result-oriented. Dramaturgical action is expressive in nature. Normatively regulated action is governed by norms. Communicative action leads to consensus through a rational discourse. Communicative action stresses the need for asserting validity claims concerning subjective, objective and intersubjective spheres. Validity claims typically involve truthfulness for the subjective, truth for the objective and rightness for the intersubjective spheres. In order to strengthen communicative action, Habermas stipulates comprehensibility, discursivity,

redeemability and justifiability as the constituent elements of a debate aimed at achieving understanding and consensus. Habermas' method of argumentation for norm formation presupposes:

1) a competence on the part of the participants

2) a will to engage in a fair discourse

3) receptive to others views and welcoming criticism

4) readiness to alter one's views when proved untenable

5) conscious reflective discursive enterprise

This in nutshell is an "ideal speech situation". The justication for any argumentation lies in the discursivity and redeemability of validity claims. Habermas, after proceeding from the communicative action, which establishes understanding, aims at providing emancipatory thrust with the help of a communicative ethics, which is the boundary condition of a practical discourse. Moral-ethical aspects are problematized only in a practical discourse.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) Explain how knowledge could be equated with social praxis.
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2) Describe communicative rationality.
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3.7 LET US SUM UP

- This unit attempts to provide an understanding of how Habermas' was influenced by the German idealists such as Kant, Hegel and Marx in constructing epistemological scaffolding for his vast philosophical enterprise.
- In this unit, Habermas' major contributions in the form of communicative reason, communicative action, rational argumentation, metacritique and consensus are analyzed.

3.8 KEY WORDS

Critical Social Theory/Critical Theory: a critique of existing social and political structures
Praxis: socio-cultural practices
Consensus: agreement
Communicative Rationality: reason aimed at achieving understanding and consensus
Purposive-Instrumental Rationality: reason aimed at achieving success
Lifeworld: the world that we live, understand through language and experience

3.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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3.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check your Progress I

1. Critical theory was para-Marxist in its outlook but freely incorporated ideas of Kant, Hegel, Freud, Nietzsche, Weber, and others. The Frankfurt school was critical of the politics of hatred and conformity. Critical theory identified reification as the `epitome of the problems of the modern world.' Critical theory is also a critique of the existing society in the Marxian sense, a tirade against market-oriented capitalistic political system which was perpetrated in the name of democracy.

2. Critical theory viewed society not as a natural necessity thrust upon the people. Rather, it viewed society as a lifeworld, a mosaic of subjective, objective, and intersubjective social processes. The social processes are not irrevocable and can be altered. Critical theory critically evaluated society by analyzing its categories. Unlike other theories, critical theory acknowledged the possibility of its own judgements being coloured by established beliefs of the society in which it is housed. But it also believes in the critical power of reason to rise above and scrutinize the customs, manners, and beliefs prevalent in the society.

Answers to Check your Progress II

1. Kant performed a critical analysis of the limits of the cognitive faculty with the intention

of revamping the whole system of philosophy. What Kant did benefitted all disciplines because his inquiry was critical. Kant reconciled empiricism and rationanalism in his critical philosophy. Hegel's critique of Kant is centred upon Kant's emphasis on the primacy of the subject. This severely restricted the creativity of the mind. Kant's emphasis on the subject led to a transcendental philosophy. Instead, Hegel suggested "immanent critique" which involves constant revision of concepts with emphasis on continuous refinement through a dialectical process of history. Marx criticized Hegel for neglecting the social factors in the conception of the subject, experience, and knowledge in which errors are viewed as merely intellectual. The maladies afflicting a society have to be eliminated successively and each stage has its residue of contradictions. Marx's contention was that the prognosis and diagnosis of the problem should be found in social reality.

2. Habermas criticizes Kant for unilaterally dividing the domain of knowledge into science, morality, and art and anointing pure reason, practical reason, and judgment to govern their respective domains. Habermas differs from Hegel who subsumes social critique in his dialectic in which reason finally delivers the society from all contradictions. Social praxis cannot be a purely speculative metaphysical enterprise. According to Habermas, Marxism fails to evaluate both levels of contradictions; in the historical realm in the society as well as the conceptual framework of the individuals.

Answers to Check your Progress III

1.   Social practice, for Habermas, is the starting point of any inquiry. He divides social practice into labour (purposive rational action) and interaction (communicative action). While technical and practical interests drive both natural sciences as well as the historical-hermeneutical sciences, respectively, the reason which operates can never be termed neutral because of the guiding aims of their activity. While the former indulges in activity that involves domination and achieving the desired ends, the latter engages in preserving and enlarging the domain of understanding among the humans to improve communication. Habermas argues that interests drive all cognitive activities. This interest operates in three spheres of 'media' – work,

language, and authority corresponding to the natural, historical-hermeneutical, and social sciences respectively. In self-reflection, interest and cognition coincide and it is in this realm that 'emancipative reason' takes shape.

2. Communicative rationality is concerned with transactions in the sphere of exchange of thoughts, ideas, and meaning-forming activity, which is the bedrock of any learning process, which instrumental rationality does not take cognizance of. The aim of communicative rationality is social rationalization, social integration, and socialization. These are protracted discursive, justificatory and redeemable processes in which arriving at a conclusion is not the culmination. Communicative rationality is situated upon the reflective competence of the interacting subjects to justify and defend a thesis through the force of reason.

UNIT 4   CRITICAL APPRAISAL AND SYNTHESIS

Contents

4.0 OBJECTIVES

Having made the journey of epistemology through the last 15 units, it is time to take stock. In this unit we shall try to get a summary view of the places we have visited in this journey. At the end of this unit you will be able to do the following:

- Briefly summarize the major contents each of the four blocks
- refresh yourselves on the important issues covered
- attain a synthetic perspective on epistemology today

4.1 ORIENTING ISSUES

The four units of the first block introduced you to the discipline of epistemology, beginning with its definition. One of the crucial issues in the definition of epistemology is the distinction between knowledge and knowledge of knowledge; it is only the latter that is epistemology. Since all knowledge involves awareness, epistemology involves an awareness of awareness. My seeing of a tree in front of me is knowledge; it is awareness. The object that is known (the tree) is outside me. But when I become aware of the nature of my awareness of the tree (for example, was the tree the focus of my attention or was it just a peripheral vision?) the object of knowledge is not something outside of me. Similarly, science is an important part of the knowledge we possess; reflecting upon scientific knowledge (which comes in

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philosophy of science) is an important part of epistemology. Such is the crucial distinction between knowledge and epistemology.

This distinction is important because it determines the kind of questions that are raised in epistemology and how they come to be answered. In order to know what a *zebra* is I need to find out from reliable external sources such as an encyclopaedia; but do I need to do the same when I am trying to find out what *knowledge* is? That would be a very odd procedure. If I claim that I *know* what a zebra is, then I must be having some understanding of what knowledge is. Unearthing that understanding is reflective task than a matter of gathering information. Similarly, we get scientific knowledge from outside of ourselves; but reflecting on the nature of science (philosophy of science) is not a matter of getting further information from outside. Epistemology, as knowledge of knowledge, has this reflexive character.

From the realization that epistemology is a reflective enterprise we proceeded to reflect on the nature of knowledge. As a result we arrived at the conclusion that knowledge has three characteristics: it is a *belief* that is *true* and there is *reason for believing* that to be true. The activity of giving reasons for believing is called justification. Knowledge, in short, is justified true belief. This tripartite analysis is the second issue that gave an orientation to our course on epistemology. Although questioned by Edmund Gettier, this analysis is intuitively taken to be a correct way of understanding knowledge. Of the three parts that make up knowledge, justification has a special place in epistemology because of scepticism or the denial of knowledge. If epistemology is a matter of truth seeking, scepticism tells us that truth is a chimera; it cannot be had. This is one of the issues that epistemology deals with.

The very fact that we seek to justify a belief to anyone who might doubt its truth demonstrates some unwritten assumptions about truth and knowledge. The first assumption is that the other person can be brought to see the truth; if we did not believe that the contending sides can be brought to agree on truth justification would be a pointless exercise. When we reflect on this we come to see an even more fundamental assumption of all epistemology, namely, the universality of truth. If what is true for one were to be different from that of another, there would be no point in trying to convince anyone that a given proposition is true or not true. The very fact that when a wrong statement is made we disagree with it and try to give the correct version is proof enough for our ordinary everyday assumption that what is true is universally so. Truth, in other words, is not relative to persons or cultures.

Universality of truth, as opposed to relativism, is the third orienting issue we studied in the first block.

Relativism is the philosophical view that holds that one thing (A) is relative to another (B). This one thing (A) may be truth, values, meaning, etc; and the something else (B) may be personal interests, cultural biases, conceptual frameworks, and so on. Relativism of truth is the idea that what is true is true only in relation to the personal interests and biases of an individual, the cultural biases of a society and so on. Negatively, it is the idea that there are no absolute truths, i.e., no truths are independent of such biases. Relativism is not just a matter of fact claim that what one considers true is often influenced by one's personal interests or cultural biases or conceptual frameworks. For example, if a person acknowledges the *possibility* of one's belief being biased and expresses a willingness to correct it, if it is shown to be biased, that person is not a relativist because willingness to be corrected presupposes a standard that is independent of one's bias. Relativism, rather, is the denial that there are any external or absolute standards that are free from biases. Positively, it is the claim that all our standards of truth are immanent to the individual, culture, conceptual framework, etc.

Another important issue that was seen in the first block was truth. The word "true" is one of the most commonly used words. We say things like "It is true that the Taj Mahal is in Agra", "It is not true that Char Minar is in Agra". But what is meant by saying that a proposition is true or not true? This is the question that is dealt with in the unit on truth. Intuitively we tend to think of truth as a correspondence between what is affirmed or denied in a proposition and what the case is really. But this theory runs into the problem of having to compare what is captured in the proposition (or mind) with reality. The difficulty arises because whatever is captured in a proposition is no longer reality-in-itself and therefore there can be no real comparison. All such attempts will only lead to an infinite regress, argue the critics of correspondence theory.

Supporters of correspondence theory say that other theories like coherence theory and pragmatic theory run into even more serious problems than correspondence. Nicholas Rescher's distinction between a theory (or definition) of truth on the one hand and a criterion of truth on the other, help us realize that there are at least two different questions that are often confused. According to him correspondence is a theory of truth, coherence is the criterion. If there is clarity as to

the problem that one is concerned with, then much of the difficulties of the different theories may also be resolved. While Rescher has a point here, it remains an open question as to whether the criteria and theory can go in their separate ways. If correspondence is accepted as the definition of truth, it would seem to fit most of our uses of the word "true"; but some uses like "being true to oneself" or "God is truth" do not seem to be matters of correspondence at all. In spite of these difficulties correspondence could be considered as an appropriate definition.

4.2 SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

The second block of our program dealt with the sources of our knowledge. Although as individuals most of our knowledge comes to us from testimony (of parents, teachers, scholarly books, newspapers, and so on), this is not our only or even the most primary source of knowledge. Ultimately all such indirect knowledge must have come from some direct source. For example, I know quite a lot about polar bears. And the source of my knowledge is the BBC documentary on them. This is testimony because it is based on the knowledge someone else has. But how did BBC gather information about polar bears? They could have collected some of it from other sources, but no amount of such second hand information would suffice to make the kind of magnificent documentary they have made. Someone has to go to the poles and film these bears in action. That is direct knowledge, knowledge by perception.

Perception is ordinarily defined as sense knowledge or immediate knowledge in western philosophy. Defining it in terms of the five senses can be quite problematic if you believe that there is something like Extra Sensory Perception or (ESP) whereby one can know events happening at a distance, or something that happened in the past and so on. It is for this reason that many prefer to define perception as immediate knowledge and divide this kind of immediate knowledge into sense knowledge and intuition. This is similar to some schools of Indian philosophy that would not restrict perception to sense experience but consider sense experience as ordinary perception (*laukika pratyak a*). Apart from ordinary perception, they would also acknowledge extra-ordinary perception (*alaukika pratyak a*). Those who rule out even the possibility of such knowledge, of course, would not face any such problem in defining perception in terms of sense knowledge. Without ruling out the possibility of extra-sensory perception, we limited our considerations to ordinary perception.

After such preliminary considerations we proceeded to examine the different theories of perception found in Western Philosophy. They can be broadly divided into realist and constructivist theories.

Western theories of perception, for the most part, have been realist theories. Realism, in this context means that (1) the object of perception or reality exists independently of the perceiver; (2) perception is caused by that perceiver independent reality; (3) truth of perception consists in correspondence between what is perceived and the outside object. Realist theory, in this form, faces some serious difficulties. An important difficulty is this: If our perceptual knowledge is caused by the object, how could we ever mis-perceive objects, as we doubtlessly do on occasions? In order to avoid such difficulties, some thinkers made some modifications to this view. They suggested that we do not perceive the objects directly. What we directly perceive are not the objects; objects have the capacity to produce some effects on us which are called variously as "sensations", "ideas" and the like. It is these effects that we directly perceive and on the basis of these we infer to the object. This view is called indirect realism.

This view has the advantage that perceptual errors can be attributed to the second stage of perception, the process of inferring. As far as the sensations or ideas are concerned, they cannot be mistaken. But the difficulty is that these ideas are in us; what we are said to perceive are objects outside our mind. So how can we ever know that these sensations or ideas really represent the objects? There comes about an unbridgeable gap between the mind and the object. This is called the problem of the bridge. This is the starting point for such philosophical theories as phenomenalism and solipsism.

Constructivist theories can be said to originate in Kant. It arises from the realization that perceptual knowledge is not simply a matter of receiving sensations from the objects outside. Rather, perceptual knowledge is conceptualized knowledge. As such, concepts in the mind are as important as sensations from the objects outside. This Kantian insight is developed further and contemporary hermeneutics insists that all knowledge (including perceptual knowledge) is a matter of interpretation. John Hick, for example, would say that all our conscious experiencing is an "experiencing-as". He gives the following example. When we see a fork we recognize the cutlery for what it is and say "It is a fork" whereas a primitive who has no familiarity with forks might see the same object, but instead of recognizing it as cutlery might consider it a

weapon. The point is that all our perception involves an interpretation; this interpretation is done in terms of some prior knowledge that we already possess.

This difference between realist and constructivist theories of perception might seem confusing at first sight because when we look at them individually, both seem reasonable. On the one hand we know that there is an interpretative element in our perception and our prior conceptions do influence what we perceive; on the other hand our perception would be true only if it is linked in some manner to the world outside. Both the constructivist and realist theories tell us something true about perception. To put it differently, although our perception involves an interpretation, it is not only a matter of interpretation: there must be some information that is gained in the process of perception. W.V. Quine holds these two together by talking about "degrees of observationality" where some observations are relatively free of interpretations than others. These relatively "pure" observations are "directly keyed to the world" according to him.

The second most important source of knowledge is inference. Inference is also studied in logic. But the perspective of the study of inference in epistemology is not the same. Formal logic is concerned with the form of arguments to see if the arguments are valid; in epistemology the concern is with the truth of the statements involved in inference, not only with validity. When the concern is with truth there arises the difficulty as to how we can come to know the truth of universal statements. This is known as the problem of induction. Universal statements are important because every inference (whether inductive or deductive) contains at least one universal statement. Therefore if truth of universal statements is problematic then all knowledge we have from inference is also problematic.

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 explain the four orienting issues that guided our course in epistemology?

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2) What are the respective insights of the constructivist and realist theories of perception? How does Quine hold them together?

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4.3 METHODS AND JUSTIFICATION OF KNOWLEDGE - I

We noted that justification has a special place in epistemology because of the sceptical context of this discipline. But not all theory of knowledge begins with scepticism. The epistemology of metaphysical thinkers (like Aristotle and Aquinas) differs in this respect from the epistemology of modern thinkers like Descartes, Hume or Kant. Whether or not one takes scepticism as the starting point of epistemology plays a major role in how justification is done and the shape epistemology takes. In the third block of our course we dealt with this.

The metaphysical thinkers did not, as a rule, begin with scepticism. Rather, they begin with the assumption that we possess knowledge and on that basis ask the question: "Given that we do have knowledge, what should we (the knowers) and the world (the known) be like if this is to happen?" When the question is posed in this manner, it calls for an answer in the form of descriptions: description of the knower as well as the knowable world. And this is what the metaphysical thinkers do: they describe both in a manner that coheres with each other. For example, the knowers have senses and the knowable world has sensible qualities. The knowable, however, is not exhausted by its sensible qualities: it has also a structure that cannot be grasped by the senses. In a corresponding manner, the knowers possess not only the senses but also an intellect that can go beyond sensations to grasp the intelligible structure of the world.

The metaphysical method can be used only as long as there are no serious questions about our capacity for knowing the world or ourselves. And this is what comes to be questioned during the modern period. Descartes, the father of modern

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Western Philosophy, took scepticism very seriously and could not begin with any descriptions. He refused to accept as knowledge anything that comes from the senses or even the testimony of his teachers or parents. Thus all descriptions become questionable for him. But it is in and through that very process of doubting that he arrives at the *cogito*, one thing that he found he could not doubt. Using this indubitable truth as the foundation he attempts to build up the rest of his beliefs.

This method or the manner of justifying beliefs has come to be called foundationalism. Foundationalism holds that all our knowledge is made up of two kinds of beliefs: (1) basic or foundational and (2) non-basic or non-foundational. Having divided all our beliefs into these two classes, foundationalism says further that there is an asymmetrical relationship between the two classes. The relationship is asymmetrical because it is always the basic beliefs that support the non-basic beliefs and not *vice versa*. Both empiricists and rationalists, in fact the whole of modern epistemology, follow the foundationalist method in justifying knowledge. The only difference consisted in what is counted as basic. If rationalists like Descartes took truths of reason (like the *cogito*) as foundational, the empiricists took the truths of the senses (perception) as foundational. Apart from a few indubitable truths like the *cogito* or sense experience, the vast body of our knowledge is called into question until they are shown to be supported by these self-evident basic beliefs.

Whether empiricist or rationalist, foundationalist standards of justification were found to be too stringent to be viable. Is it possible for us to justify any of our beliefs without relying on a lot of the other beliefs we possess? Even if we have some beliefs that are held to be self evident, it has been found to be impossible to build the whole world of our knowledge on such meagre foundations. We only have to think of the problem of induction to realize that we cannot be completely sure of even simple universal statement like "All crows are black", much less of more complicated scientific theories!

From the realization that the foundationalist standards are too stringent comes an alternative method of justification called coherentism. The classic imagery used to convey a sense of this method comes to us from Otto Neurath. The imagery is that of sailors in the open sea who find that their boat has developed leaks. They cannot discard the boat or go to the shore to repair the leak. All they can do is to repair or replace the damaged beams by standing on beams that are in relatively good condition. The idea is that the ship of our knowledge cannot be rebuilt from the start

as the foundationalists wanted. We can always replace beliefs that are problematic, but not replace all beliefs at once. In other words the strategy of putting all our knowledge in doubt and starting from the beginning is not a viable option, say the coherentists.

These three methods can be summarised in this way: scepticism is not the starting point of the metaphysical method, as it is for foundationalism. Accordingly the metaphysical method can begin with descriptions, but the foundationalists cannot. The metaphysicians aim at coherent descriptions but the foundationalists aim at justifying non-basic beliefs on the basis of non-basic beliefs. This kind of one way relationship between beliefs is repudiated by the coherentists. They hold that there are no privileged beliefs that can be considered basic. All beliefs mutually support one another.

4.4 METHODS AND JUSTIFICATION OF KNOWLEDGE - II

Wittgenstein's "language games" is not primarily about justification of knowledge. Primarily, it is about the rule governed nature of language. It is a corrective to the early philosophy of Wittgenstein that took the meaning of language to be dependent on the world. As opposed to that early view, "language games" is the view that meaning depends, not on linguistic referents, but on the rules that govern its use. In this respect, it is similar to games. What makes a given game a game of "football" or "cricket" or "chess" is not anything outside the game but the rules by which the game is played. To know a game is to know these rules that constitute the game. We know something to be a "king" in chess when we know the rules whereby that piece is moved or affected by the moves of other pieces. Similarly we know what is said in language, not by looking for its referent outside the language but by the rules that constitute the given use.

Secondly, just as there is a variety of rules that constitute different games, each independent of the others, so too, there is a variety of language games, each of which is autonomous. To ignore this autonomy and to use the rules that are applicable in one language game in another would lead to linguistic muddles and confusion. To use one of Wittgenstein's own example, when we talk about human eyes, it makes good sense to talk of someone's eyebrows being "thick" or "bushy". But just because religious believers often talk about God seeing us, it would not make sense to ask how

thick God's eyebrows are! The rules that govern the use of "seeing" or "eyes" in the one context is very different from the other.

Thirdly, language games are rooted in "forms of life". Meaning may not be fixed by how the world is; it might change from one language game to another. But it does not mean that meaning is arbitrary. Not only is the use of language governed by rules, but they are also linked to certain ways of living our lives ("forms of life"). Wittgenstein often used "forms of life" in the plural to indicate that there are different language games and different forms of life. But he also uses this in the singular as "form of life", the "common behaviour of mankind".

These two ways of talking about "forms of life" reflects exactly the kind of differences we saw in connection with perception. On the one hand, the realist theories of perception tell us that what we perceive is somehow "directly keyed to the world" or caused by the world, and on the other hand, the constructivist theory makes us aware that our perceptions involve also an interpretative dimension. Just as there are some relatively "pure" cases of observation that are common to the human species, so too, there is a certain "common behavior of mankind" which is "the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language" (*PI* 206). But neither our language nor our "forms of life" are limited to this common heritage. The best human achievements –that which make human behaviour different from the instinctual behaviour of animals— may consist in these different and distinctly human forms of life.

The idea of "language games" and the related concept of "forms of life" have wide ranging application, including the method of epistemic justification. It tells us that justification of beliefs must take into account the particular language game in which it occurs. In this respect, the implication of language games for justification is similar to the coherentist method of Neurath. But it differs from the boat metaphor of Neurath in two respects. First, there is an explicit acknowledgement in Wittgenstein that there are different language games, and the rules of one language game do not apply in another; such misapplication comes from a "craving for generality" that refuses to look at how our language actually functions. Second, our language games (as well as epistemic justification) are rooted in forms of life. Our knowledge can be said to be existentially rooted. It is not made up of free floating theoretical balloons that are unrelated to concrete human ways of living.

The fact that language games and forms of life are used in the plural, and coherentist method in general, would seem to have relativistic implications. It is here that naturalized epistemology, in the form in which James Maffie has explained, come into the picture. There we saw that naturalised epistemology retains some of the coherentist features of justification without making justification merely a matter of coherence with already accepted beliefs. Non-controversial observational data play a critical role in justification. In this respect it is similar to the metaphysical method. Applying it to language games we can say that just as observation has a special role in naturalized epistemology, so too, the fact that we have not only different language games and forms of life, but also some kind of a universal form of life, prevents the different autonomous language games from being completely cut off from one another. It tells us that there are continuities between different language games. No language game, therefore, is identical with another; nor are they completely cut of from one another. There are continuities and discontinuities between them. Only detailed examination of each language game would reveal what these continuities and discontinuities are.

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 do the metaphysical, foundationalist and coherentist methods differ from one another?

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2) Understood as methods of justification, what are the similarities and differences between Neurath's coherentism and Wittgenstein's language games?

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4.5 THE KNOWING SUBJECT

The last block of this course was about the human knower. Western epistemology, at least modern epistemology, conceived the human knower as a transparent entity who can know itself merely by looking within. For example, we saw Descartes, after his discovery of the *cogito* coming to the conclusion that he is thinking thing for whose "existence there is no need of any place, nor does it depend on any material thing …" And he knows it just by looking within himself and meditating over it. The empiricists follow suit. For John Locke the knower is a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate until it receives impressions from the objects outside. Thus, whether empiricists or rationalists, modern philosophers thought of the human knower as transparent to itself. Richard Rorty graphically called this kind of knower as a "glassy essence".

There is another idea that is related to the idea of the transparent knower. It is the idea that truth is an achievement of a neutral, disembodied mind, "devoid of passions, committed solely to truth". Some would trace this tendency all the way back to Plato, and not merely to modern philosophy. Irrespective of when it began, it is clear that Western philosophy thought of the knower as self-lucent and truth as the reflection of unchanging, eternal entities that are mirrored in the neutral medium of the knowing mind.

Both of these assumptions have come to be questioned. Nietzsche was most forceful in questioning the transparency of knower. According to him, "We remain of necessity strangers to ourselves, we do not understand ourselves, we must mistake ourselves, for us the maxim reads to all eternity: 'each is furthest from himself,' - with respect to ourselves we are not 'knowers'." Regarding the neutral character of truth, we saw how Kierkegaard insisted on the passionate inwardness of the knower. The postmoderns and the feminist trends in epistemology, in a special way, raise serious doubts about the dispassionate, neutral character of the knower as well as of knowledge. They insist that that neutrality of truth is only a façade for unconcealed passion. This, of course, has led to some extreme positions that deny all objectivity to truth. It is said that a matter of parochial interests, social domination, money and power. As Richard Rorty put it, truth is "what society lets us say". Once this character

of "truth" is recognised, there is a need to repudiate it and other "truths" to be brought to prominence: truth as seen by the feminists and the subalterns, for example.

Such relativism of truth, of course, is destructive of epistemology. While dealing with the orienting issues in epistemology we noted that the assumption regarding the universality of truth is its driving force. Thus we are in another relativistic quandary. On the one hand, there is enough evidence to show that truth is much more than the result of dispassionate contemplation; the interests of the knower do play a role in the attainment of knowledge. On the other hand, if truth is the product of parochial interests of different sections of society, it would undermine epistemology itself.

It is in this context that Habermas's theory of cognitive interests offers a viable way out of the morass. We saw his contention that no knowledge is neutral. All knowledge is informed by certain interests. But these are not parochial interests that set one group of people against another, but universal interests that we share as human beings. He has identified three such interests and accordingly three kinds of knowledge. First, there are the natural sciences that are guided by the technical interest that is oriented to the control nature. Second, there is the practical interest in communicating with our fellow human beings that guides the hermeneutic sciences, and third, there is the emancipatory interest that guides the critical sciences. If the technical interest is tied to instrumental action and practical interest guided by communicative action, emancipatory interest is built on the activity of reflection. The first two interests of Habermas could be understood in terms of the human need for being in nature and being with others. The third is a little more difficult to characterize as it is something that enables us to recognize the limits and to go beyond. It is the emancipatory interest that enables us to recognise the power games and narrow interests operative in knowledge production and go beyond them in a dialogical, inter-subjective manner.

4.6 LET US SUM UP

Epistemology, we saw, is knowledge of knowledge. The realization that the human knower is not a glassy essence or truth a mirror image of reality in the mind enables us to conceive of knowledge in a more realistic manner. We begin to realize that human knowledge is more like maps than mirrors. Maps are limited models of a given

area. Not everything found in a geographical area gets into a map. What gets into a map and what gets omitted depends on the interests of the map maker. Moreover, we can have different maps of the same geographical area –say a political map, an industrial map, an agricultural map, and so on. In a similar manner we can say that not everything that is there in reality becomes a matter of human knowledge. What comes to be known are only those dimensions of reality that are linked to the human interests of being with nature, of being with others, or the emancipatory interest of wanting to overcome the limits we encounter.

This way of understanding human knowledge is especially true of our perceptual knowledge. Evolutionary theorists have come to the realization that each kind of creature comes to possess knowledge of their surroundings in a manner that is appropriate to them. There are animals who can sense the electro-magnetic waves, but we cannot; things that we can sense which other creatures cannot. In other words, different kinds of creatures have their own cognitive niche. The cognitive niche of human perception is known as mesocosm. Although the idea of mesocosm is primarily about our perceptual knowledge and we can go beyond our perceptual knowledge in various ways, it does bring to our attention that our knowledge remains basically human. We are neither divine beings who can see everything, nor animals led by their instincts, but human beings who can know their surrounding world in a typically human way, that is appropriate to who we are.

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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) How does Habermas help us overcome the destructive kind of relativism that makes truth into a matter of power and money?

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2) Explain the difference between old and new ways (as mirrors and maps) of understanding human knowledge.

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4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check your progress I

1) The four orienting issues are:

i) The reflective character of epistemology: epistemology as knowledge of knowledge is a not a matter of gaining further information from outside, but of reflecting upon and making explicit what we already know.

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ii) The tripartite analysis of knowledge: When we reflect upon knowledge we find that our understanding of knowledge has three dimensions. They are believed by us; they are true and we must be able to justify them as and when needed.

iii) Universality of truth: The very fact that when a wrong statement is made we disagree with it and try to give the correct version shows our ordinary everyday assumption that what is true is universally so. Truth, in other words, is not relative to persons or cultures.

iv) Theory of truth: Although there are various theories of truth that have been proposed by philosophers, correspondence theory seems to be what most people intuitively understand when they speak of truth. Moreover, Rescher's distinction between definition and criterion shows that most objections to correspondence theory comes from confusing definition with criterion.

2) The insight of the cosnstructivist theories is that there is an interpretative element in our perception and our prior conceptions influence what we perceive. The insight of the realist theories is that our perception would be true only if it is linked in some manner to the world outside. Both tell us something true about perception. Together they make us aware that although our perception involves an interpretation, we indeed perceive something in the world. Otherwise it could not be called a perception at all. To put it still differently, although our perception involves an interpretation, it is not only a matter of interpretation: there must be some information that is gained in the process of perception. W.V. Quine holds these two together by talking about "degrees of observationality" where some observations are relatively free of interpretations than others. These relatively "pure" observations are "directly keyed to the world" according to him.

Answers to Check your progress II

1) How do the metaphysical, foundationalist and coherentist methods differ from one another?

The difference between these three methods can be summarised in this way: scepticism is not the starting point of the metaphysical method, whereas it is the starting point for foundationalism. Accordingly the metaphysical method

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can begin with descriptions, but the foundationalist method cannot. The metaphysicians aim at coherent descriptions but the foundationalists aim at justifying non-basic beliefs on the basis of non-basic beliefs. This kind of one-way relationship between beliefs is repudiated by the coherentists. Coherentists hold that there are no privileged beliefs that can be considered basic. All beliefs mutually support one another.

2) Understood as methods of justification, what are the similarities and differences between Neurath's coherentism and Wittgenstein's language games?

The implication of language games for justification is similar to the coherentist method of Neurath. Both tell us that justification of beliefs must take into account the particular context in which a belief occurs. Wittgenstein's analogy differs from the boat metaphor of Neurath in two respects. First, there is an explicit acknowledgement in Wittgenstein that there are different language games, and the rules of one language game do not apply in another; such misapplication comes from a "craving for generality" that refuses to look at how our language actually functions. Second, our language games (as well as epistemic justification) are rooted in forms of life. Our knowledge can be said to be existentially rooted. It is not made up of free floating theoretical balloons that are unrelated to concrete human ways of living.

Answers to Check your progress III

1) How does Habermas help us overcome the destructive kind of relativism that makes truth into a matter of power and money?

Habermas acknowledges that all knowledge is informed by certain human interests. But these are not parochial interests that set one group of people against another, but universal interests that we share as human beings. He has identified three such interests and accordingly three kinds of knowledge. First, there are the natural sciences that are guided by the technical interest that is oriented to the control nature. Second, there is the practical interest in communicating with our fellow human beings that guides the hermeneutic sciences, and third, there is the emancipatory interest that guides the critical sciences. The first two interests of Habermas could be understood in terms of

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the human need for being in nature and being with others. The third is a little more difficult to characterize as it is something that enables us to recognize the limits and to go beyond. This emancipatory interest enables us to recognise the power games and narrow interests operative in knowledge production and go beyond them in a dialogical, inter-subjective manner.

2) Explain the difference between old and new ways (as mirrors and maps) of understanding human knowledge.

Earlier human knowledge was understood more as a mirror image of reality. But now we have come to realize that human knowledge is more like maps than mirrors. Maps are limited models of a given area. Not everything found in a geographical area gets into a map. What gets into a map and what gets omitted depends on the interests of the map maker. Moreover, we can have different maps of the same geographical area –say a political map, an industrial map, an agricultural map, and so on. In a similar manner we can say that not everything that is there in reality becomes a matter of human knowledge. What comes to be known are only those dimensions of reality that are linked to the human interests of being with nature, of being with others, or the emancipatory interest wanting to overcome the limits we encounter.