

## BLOCK-1 INTRODUCTION

It is certain that everyone has an experience of 'something.' This experience of 'something' is an inescapable experience. One may escape from a particular experience, but one cannot escape from experiencing something. The most fundamental and radical question one can raise is this: 'Is there anything at all?' The answer can either be a negation or an affirmation. If it is a negation it should be so: 'There is nothing.' Such an answer is self-contradictory as the answer affirms a negation which is again 'something'. Hence absolute negation is impossible. For, paradoxically, every absolute negation presupposes an absolute affirmation upon which the negation rests. An affirmative experience of 'something' is not 'that which is not' but 'that which is' or 'Being', which is the specific subject-matter of metaphysics investigated in this block. This block, with 5 units, explores into the etymology of metaphysics, its definition, scope, starting point, fundamental notions and principles, method, and history (both Western and Indian).

Unit 1, "Etymology, Definition and Scope," considers General Metaphysics or Fundamental Ontology as inquiry into *being as being*. It means that metaphysics does not restrict itself to any particular being or part of that being, but rather treats of what is *common to all beings*, namely, Being which is the ground of beings since all beings are in Being. Being is not a particular thing though it embraces everything in itself.

Unit 2, "Starting Point, Fundamental Notions and Principles," explains how the *experience of something* is the starting point of metaphysics as it manifests itself in judgment, question and pure desire to know. These manifestations always remain in conformity with the fundamental notions and principles.

Unit 3, "Methods," inquires into the methods used in metaphysics. Metaphysics starts from experience, rests on experience and uses reflection which accompanies it. Though metaphysics uses logical analysis, logical deduction and advances to logical syntheses, its specificity is the use of transcendental method: transcendental analysis and transcendental deduction rooted in the necessary experience of 'something' or Being itself.

Unit 4 is on "Brief History of Western Metaphysics." The Unit distinguishes two important characteristics of the History of Western metaphysics. The first is concerned with the starting point of metaphysics; in general, the Greek and medieval metaphysics start with object, whereas modern and contemporary metaphysics begin with the subject. Second, there is the metaphysics of being and the metaphysics of becoming. The former interprets reality as static, whereas the latter understands it as dynamic.

Unit 5, "Brief History of Indian Metaphysics," surveys briefly the metaphysical teachings of the Indian philosophical tradition, despite its approval of the general belief that the question of Being assigned to a specific philosophical discipline such as Ontology (General Metaphysics) is a symptomatically Western phenomenon. Yet Being (*Sat*) is

thematic in the *Vedic* and *Upanishadic* texts, and it remains a recurrent topic in later traditions too.

These five 5 units teach us that since the time the ancient Indian and Greek philosophers began to speculate about the nature of things by seeking their underlying principle, *Being*, the human quest has been guided and regulated by metaphysics, which is the ground and core of all sciences: logic, psychology, physics, chemistry, biology, political science, sociology, and even poetics. These departments of knowledge continue to draw nourishment from the spirit of curiosity, reasoning, critical analysis, and synthesis, the characteristics of metaphysics evident in their most profound questions about ultimate meanings and values, truth, criteria and limits of knowledge. In this sense, philosophy is essentially metaphysics as 'metaphysics is concerned not with facts but with the illumination of them' in and through the very act of thinking about Being which is the absolute presupposition of all experience.



Block

1

# **DEFINITION AND NATURE OF METAPHYSICS**

## **UNIT 1**

**Etymology, Definition and Scope**

## **UNIT 2**

**Starting Point, Fundamental Notions and Principles**

## **UNIT 3**

**Methods**

## **UNIT 4**

**Brief History of Western Metaphysics**

## **UNIT 5**

**Brief History of Indian Metaphysics**

### **Expert Committee**

Prof. Renu Bharadwaj Director, School of Humanities IGNOU	Dr. N. Sreekumar IIT Madras Chennai	Dr. Sudha Gopinath Koramangala Bangalore
Prof. Gracious Thomas Director, School of Social Work IGNOU	Dr. Kalipada Mohanta St. Anthony's College Shillong	Dr. Johnson Puthenpurackal Vijnananilayam Eluru
Dr. Priyedarshi Jetli University of Mumbai Mumbai	Dr. Alok Nagims Vishwa Jyoti Gurukul Varanasi	Dr. Keith D'Souza St. Pius College Mumbai
Dr. Victor Ferrao Rachol Goa	Dr. Pushparajan Vr Japalaya Bangalore	Dr. Kurian Kachappilly DVK Bangalore
Dr Babu Joseph CBCI Centre New Delhi	Dr. George Karuvelil J D V Pune	Dr. Pushpa J University of Madras Chennai
	Dr. Kamladevi R Kunkolieuker Pes'srsn College of Arts & Science, Goa	Prof. George Panthanmackel, Senior Consultant, IGNOU

### **Block Preparation Team**

Unit 1	Dr. Wilson Edattukaran Darsana Institute of Philosophy, Wardha
Unit 2	Dr. George Panthanmackel IGNOU, New Delhi
Unit 3	Dr Gigi Purayidathil Institute of Philosophy and Religion, Aluva
Unit 4	Dr. Joseph Mathew Vidyabhavan, Kottayam
Unit 5	Dr Swami Vikrant Don Bosco, Chennai

### **Content Editor**

Prof. George Panthanmackel  
IGNOU, New Delhi

### **Format Editor**

Prof. Gracious Thomas

IGNOU, New Delhi

**Programme Coordinator**

Prof. Gracious Thomas

IGNOU, New Delhi

Indira Gandhi National Open University



BPY - 006  
Metaphysics

Block

2

## **METAPHYSICAL STRUCTURE OF FINITE BEING**

### **UNIT 1**

**Being and Essence**

### **UNIT 2**

**Substance and Accidents**

### **UNIT 3**

**Matter and Form**

### **UNIT 4**

**Act and Potency**



### **Expert Committee**

Prof. Renu Bharadwaj Director, School of Humanities IGNOU	Dr. N. Sreekumar IIT Madras Chennai	Dr. Sudha Gopinath Koramangala Bangalore
Prof. Gracious Thomas Director, School of Social Work IGNOU	Dr. Kalipada Mohanta St. Anthony's College Shillong	Dr. Johnson Puthenpurackal Vijnananilayam Eluru
Dr. Priyedarshi Jetli University of Mumbai Mumbai	Dr. Alok Nagims Vishwa Jyoti Gurukul Varanasi	Dr. Keith D'Souza St. Pius College Mumbai
Dr. Victor Ferrao Rachol Goa	Dr. Pushparajan Vr Japalaya Bangalore	Dr. Kurian Kachappilly DVK Bangalore
Dr. Babu Joseph CBCI Centre New Delhi	Dr. George Karuvelil J D V Pune	Dr. Pushpa J University of Madras Chennai
	Dr. Kamladevi R Kunkolieuker Pes'srsn College of Arts & Science, Goa	Prof. George Panthanmackel, Senior Consultant, IGNOU

### **Block Preparation Team**

Unit 1	Dr. Ivo Coelho Divyadaan, Nashik
Unit 2	Dr. Joseph Martis St Joseph's College, Mangalore
Unit 3	Dr. Francis Arackal Gyandhara Institute of Philosophy, Goa
Unit 4	Prof. Paul D'Souza Pushpashrama College, Mysore

### **Content Editor**

Prof. George Panthanmackel  
IGNOU, New Delhi

### **Format Editor**

Prof. Gracious Thomas  
IGNOU, New Delhi

**Programme Coordinator**

Prof. Gracious Thomas  
IGNOU, New Delhi

Indira Gandhi National Open University





BPY - 006  
Metaphysics

Block

3

## **METAPHYSICAL NATURE OF FINITE BEING**

### **UNIT 1**

**Entity**

### **UNIT 2**

**Person**

### **UNIT 3**

**Knowledge**

### **UNIT 4**

**Freedom**



### **Expert Committee**

Prof. Renu Bharadwaj Director, School of Humanities IGNOU	Dr. N. Sreekumar IIT Madras Chennai	Dr. Sudha Gopinath Koramangala Bangalore
Prof. Gracious Thomas Director, School of Social Work IGNOU	Dr. Kalipada Mohanta St. Anthony's College Shillong	Dr. Johnson Puthenpurackal Vijnananilayam Eluru
Dr. Priyedarshi Jetli University of Mumbai Mumbai	Dr. Alok Nagims Vishwa Jyoti Gurukul Varanasi	Dr. Keith D'Souza St. Pius College Mumbai
Dr. Victor Ferrao Rachol Goa	Dr. Pushparajan Vr Japalaya Bangalore	Dr. Kurian Kachappilly DVK Bangalore
Dr. Babu Joseph CBCI Centre New Delhi	Dr. George Karuvelil J D V Pune	Dr. Pushpa J University of Madras Chennai
	Dr. Kamladevi R Kunkolieker Pes'srsn College of Arts & Science, Goa	Prof. George Panthanmackel, Senior Consultant, IGNOU

### **Block Preparation Team**

Unit 1	Dr. Bosco Correya Jyotir Bhavan, Kalamassery
Unit 2	Dr. Shaji Parayankuzhy Ruhalya, Ujjain
Unit 3	Dr. Harold Mathias Pilar Niketan, Nagpur
Unit 4	Prof. Mathew Vengaloor Carmel Vidya Niketan College, Faridabad

### **Content Editor**

Prof. George Panthanmackel  
IGNOU, New Delhi

### **Format Editor**

Prof. Gracious Thomas  
IGNOU, New Delhi

**Programme Coordinator**

Prof. Gracious Thomas  
IGNOU, New Delhi

Indira Gandhi National Open University



BPY - 006  
Metaphysics

Block

4

## **NOTION OF BEING**

### **UNIT 1**

**Being as Analogous**

### **UNIT 2**

**Being as One**

### **UNIT 3**

**Being as True**

### **UNIT 4**

**Being as Good**

### **UNIT 5**

**Being as Beautiful**



## **Expert Committee**

Prof. Renu Bharadwaj  
Director, School of  
Humanities  
IGNOU

Prof. Gracious Thomas  
Director, School of  
Social Work  
IGNOU

Dr. Priyedarshi Jetli  
University of Mumbai  
Mumbai

Dr. Victor Ferrao  
Rachol  
Goa

Dr Babu Joseph  
CBCI Centre  
New Delhi

Dr. N. Sreekumar  
IIT Madras  
Chennai

Dr. Kalipada Mohanta  
St. Anthony's College  
Shillong

Dr. Alok Nagims  
Vishwa Jyoti Gurukul  
Varanasi

Dr. Pushparajan  
Vr Japalaya  
Bangalore

Dr. George Karuvelil  
J D V  
Pune

Dr. Kamladevi R  
Kunkolieuker  
Pes'srsn College of  
Arts & Science, Goa

Dr. Sudha Gopinath  
Koramangala  
Bangalore

Dr. Johnson  
Puthenpurackal  
Vijnananilayam  
Eluru

Dr. Keith D'Souza  
St. Pius College  
Mumbai

Dr. Kurian Kachappilly  
DVK  
Bangalore

Dr. Pushpa J  
University of Madras  
Chennai

Prof. George  
Panthanmackel, Senior  
Consultant, IGNOU

### **Block Preparation Team**

Unit 1	Dr. Thomas Padiyath Good Shepherd College, Kunnoth
Unit 2	Bins Sebastian IGNOU, New Delhi
Unit 3	Dr. Alex Tharamangalam Paurastya Vidyapeeth, Kottayam
Unit 4	Dr. George Kulangara Darsana Institute of Philosophy, Wardha
Unit 5	Dr. Jose Martis St Joseph's College, Mangalore

### **Content Editor**

Prof. George Panthanmackel  
IGNOU, New Delhi

### **Format Editor**

Prof. Gracious Thomas  
IGNOU, New Delhi

### **Programme Coordinator**

Prof. Gracious Thomas  
IGNOU, New Delhi

## **METAPHYSICS (4 credits)**

### **COURSE INTRODUCTION**

Metaphysics, a discipline with a long history, has been conceived in different ways. A widely held view is that it is the most general and most fundamental of all the disciplines. Its aim is to identify the nature and structure of all that there is. Central to this project is the interpretation of the relation between Being and beings, between one and many. The problem of Being and being (one and many) can be said to be the most fundamental metaphysical problem under which anything that exists falls. On this problem of metaphysics, what the metaphysician is supposed to do is to identify the relevant kinds, to specify the characteristics or features peculiar to each, and to indicate the ways those very general kinds are related to each other. It turns out, however, that metaphysicians have disagreed about this problem. For example, Aristotle and the medievals give us two different accounts of it. Sometimes, they characterize it as the attempt to identify the first causes, in particular, God or the Unmoved Mover, and at times, as the very general science of being *qua* being. They believed, however, that these two characterizations identify the same discipline. The modern and contemporary rationalists, by contrast, expanded the scope of metaphysics. They have taken it to be concerned not merely with the existence and nature of God, but also with mind and body, the immortality of the soul, and free-will. The empiricists and Kant were critical of both Aristotelian and rationalist conceptions of metaphysics, arguing that they seek to transcend the limits of human knowledge. Hence, it is not easy to say what metaphysics is. If one looks to works in metaphysics, one finds quite different perspectives of the discipline. Sometimes these perspectives seek to be descriptive, to provide us with an account of what philosophers who have been called metaphysicians do. Sometimes, they are normative. They represent attempts to identify what philosophers ought to be doing when they do metaphysics. But descriptive or normative, these perspectives give such different accounts of the subject matter and methodology appropriate to metaphysics that the neutral observer is likely to think that they must be characterizing different disciplines. Disagreement about the nature of metaphysics is tied to its long history. Philosophers have been doing or trying to do something they have called metaphysics for more than 2,500 years. The results of their efforts have been accounts with a wide variety of subject matters and approaches. These various subject matters and approaches are implicit in this course on “Metaphysics.”

In this course of the second year BA we have presented 4 blocks comprising 18 units.

Block 1 is on Definition and Nature of Metaphysics. In this block we explain etymology, definition and scope, starting point, fundamental notions and principles, methods, and history of metaphysics: Western and Indian.

Block 2 deals with Metaphysical Structure of Finite Being. The Block begins with an introduction to Being and essence and then proceeds to study in detail substance and accidents, matter and form, and act and potency.

Block 3 studies the metaphysical nature of finite being, which is either mere entities or entities that are persons. The persons are fundamentally both intellectual, capable of understanding and

knowing things, and free beings who can choose and decide things despite being limited in their exercise of freedom.

Block 4 studies the notion of Being in its relation to beings, in their transcendental properties: Being as analogous, Being as one, Being as true, Being as good, and Being as beautiful.

All these Blocks as a whole introduce you to the fundamentals of metaphysics.





---

**UNIT 1****ETYMOLOGY, DEFINITION AND SCOPE**

---

**Contents**

- 1.0.Objectives
- 1.1.Introduction
- 1.2.Etymology of Metaphysics
- 1.3.Definition of Metaphysics
- 1.4. Scope of Metaphysics: Material and Formal Object
- 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**

---

As a beginner for the course on “Metaphysics,” you may start considering it as the study of the ultimate causes and of the first and most universal of all principles (Being). Ultimate causes extend their influence to all the effects within a given sphere. Metaphysics considers the absolutely ultimate cause of all beings. It strives to identify that cause and know more about its nature and activity. In this Unit you will have to pay attention to:

- Etymology of Metaphysics
- Definition of Metaphysics
- Scope of Metaphysics

---

**1.1. INTRODUCTION**

---

The universe has always spurred humans to wonder. They have laboured continuously, seeking an explanation for the universe – an explanation that can be considered ultimate and universal or all-encompassing. In this effort, various schools of thought arose throughout the course of history, each offering one’s own explanation. Some identified the most radical basis of reality with one particular element intrinsic to it, such as matter, spirit, thought or motion; this would imply that everything in the universe is just an offshoot or derivative of that element. On the other hand, some maintained the existence of a transcendent Principle which made the universe without being part of it. Some thinkers proposed the existence of one origin of the universe,

while others held that the universe came to be from two or more sources. These views are not purely speculative; on the contrary, they exert a deep influence on human psyche. It does make a difference for a human to believe that everything – including oneself – originated from inert matter and will go back to it, or to believe that one was created by God, who brought one's being out of nothing. To regard human beings as beings subject to the whims of blind destiny, or absolute masters of their own existence, or as creatures capable of freely knowing and loving a personal God – all these are doctrinal options that mark out completely the divergent paths for human life. Initially, the study formed only one undifferentiated body of knowledge called philosophy, wisdom or science. Soon after, however, studies of different aspects of reality (e.g., mathematics, medicine and grammar) gave rise to special or particular sciences, which became distinct from philosophy proper which dealt with the more fundamental questions about reality. In turn, as the body of philosophical knowledge grew, there appeared branches of philosophy dealing with specific objects of study, such as nature, human and morals. One discovers among these branches, a core of philosophical knowledge that influences all other branches, for it seeks the ultimate structure of the universe, which necessarily leads to the study of its first and radical cause. This science is called metaphysics.

---

## 1.2. ETYMOLOGY OF METAPHYSICS

---

In the West, Aristotle can be called the beginner of the science of *being as being* or metaphysics. But the name 'metaphysics' attributed to this science of '*being as being*' is something accidental. It was Andronicus of Rhodes, around 60 AD, while editing the manuscripts of Aristotle, labeled the books which happened to be placed after Aristotle's works on 'physics' as '*meta ta physika*,' meaning 'after physics'. Just as the Upanishads, being placed at the end of the Vedas, came to be called as Vedanta, metaphysics derives its name from being placed after physics in the writings of Aristotle. But in fact, metaphysics denotes the science of what is beyond (*meta*) nature (*physika*) of an object above the mere material. Many of the early Greek philosophical writings bore the title 'Concerning Nature' (the Greek term for nature was *physika*). These words usually dealt with what we would now consider physical science, but there were also speculations about the meaning and nature of the universe - that is, with questions which arise *after* the physical problems have been resolved, or which are concerned with what lies after or beyond the physical world of sensory experience. Thus, metaphysics denotes the science of what is beyond (*meta*) the nature (*physika*) of an object. In the medieval and modern philosophy, metaphysics has been taken to mean the study of things transcending nature, i.e., existing separately from nature and having more intrinsic reality and value than the things of nature, giving *meta* a philosophical meaning it did not have in classical Greek. Since Immanuel Kant, metaphysics has often meant *apriori* speculation on question that cannot be answered by scientific observation and experiment. The term has also been popularly associated with the spiritual or religious. In modern philosophical usage, metaphysics refers generally to the field of philosophy, dealing with questions about the kinds of things there are and their modes of being.

Various names have been given to Metaphysics which, in fact, emphasizes the different aspects and attributes of one and the same science. Aristotle's name for metaphysics was 'First

Philosophy' as it is dealing with the first causes and principles of reality. Metaphysics enjoyed a primacy of excellence or dignity over all the other sciences. The name 'First Philosophy' clearly explains the central place that metaphysics occupies in the whole of philosophy. It also distinguishes metaphysics from all other branches of philosophy which Aristotle called as 'secondary philosophies'. Aristotle also called it the divine science because it treats of the most divine beings, that is, substances which are separated from matter and above them, Pure Act or Prime Mover.

In the seventeenth century, Christian Wolff called it "Ontology", theory of being, a name deriving from the Greek *on* = being, and *logos* = theory or doctrine. This is evidently the most simple and the most exact term. Many of the modern philosophers prefer the name 'ontology' instead of 'metaphysics.' Yet, some have rejected it giving as a reason that the term ontology has been used sometimes in an idealistic sense to mean the science of the idea of being, or an a priori knowledge without relation to experience. But the term metaphysics can cause just as much equivocation as the term ontology itself.

---

### 1.3. DEFINITION OF METAPHYSICS

---

Metaphysics may be considered as the study of the ultimate causes and of the first and most universal principles of Being. Ultimate causes are differentiated from proximate causes which produce, in an immediate manner, some specific effects. Ultimate causes or the supreme causes, in contrast, extend their influence, to all the effects within a given sphere. Metaphysics considers the absolutely ultimate cause of the universe. It strives to identify that cause and know more about its nature and its activity.

Metaphysics studies the first and most universal principles of all things, Being. Aside from causes that exert their influence on their effects from outside, there exists internal elements in the effect themselves that constitute them and affect their manner of being and acting. These are usually called principles. (Thus atoms are certain principles of molecules which determine the nature and properties of the latter; in living beings, cells act like the principles of the organism). Metaphysics seeks the first and most universal principles, that is, those principles which radically constitute all things. Thus philosophers consider some particular aspect of reality as the most basic, and as such the origin of everything else (for example, change or becoming, quantity, the essence etc.).

Whenever someone considers something as the first intrinsic principle of everything, one is already talking at the metaphysical level. At this level, metaphysics includes everything real within its field of study because it seeks the ultimate cause and fundamental principles of things; in contrast, particular sciences study only a limited aspect of the world. These sciences advance in their own field thanks to a body of permanent knowledge which serves as their basis, and which is always assumed or taken for granted in every scientific research. For example, the notions of plant life, of life in general, the material body, quantity and the like. Scientists ordinarily do not conduct further studies regarding these, but if they ask, "what is life?", "What is quantity?", "What is to know, to see and to feel?", then they are already posing philosophical

questions. These are actual questions which are more radical and basic than the questions generally posed by the scientists, and which are in turn presupposed by them: “What does it mean to be?”, “What is causality?”, “What is the meaning of the universe?”, “What is truth?”, “What is good?” etc. In all these questions, one is looking for the core and ground of all knowledge.

Thus, Bernard Lonergan (1904 – 1984) would describe metaphysics as ‘the core and ground of human knowledge as it underlies, penetrates, transforms and unifies all other departments of knowledge.’ First, *it underlies all other departments*: It underlies all other departments since its principles are the detached and disinterested drive of the pure desire to know. The unfolding of the pure desire to know takes place in the empirical, intellectual and rational consciousness of the self-affirming subject. All questions, all insights, all formulations, all reflections and all judgments proceed from the unfolding of that drive. Hence, metaphysics underlies logic, mathematics and all other sciences. Second, *it penetrates all other departments*: For other departments are constituted of the same principles as that of metaphysics. They are particular departments related to particular viewpoints. Yet, all departments spring from a common source and seek a common compatibility and coherence. Hence, they are penetrated by metaphysics. Third, *it transforms all other departments*: Metaphysics originates from the ‘experience of something’. It is free from the realization of particular viewpoints. It distinguishes positions from counter-positions in the whole of knowledge. It is a transforming principle that urges positions to fuller development. By reversing counter-positions, it liberates discoveries from the shackles in which they were formulated. Fourth, *it unifies all other departments*: For other departments respond to particular ranges of questions; whereas metaphysics deals with the original, total question, and in this way, it moves to the total answer transforming and putting together all other answers. Hence, we may define metaphysics as *the core and ground of all knowledge, which is the science of being as being*.

### 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 etymological meaning of metaphysics?

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

2) How does Bernard Lonergan explain metaphysics?

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

## 1.4. SCOPE OF METAPHYSICS: MATERIAL AND FORMAL OBJECT



---

Generally, matter, in philosophy, indicates the indeterminate but determinable element, and 'form' the determining element. These relative meaning of 'material' and 'formal' are also found in the theoretical sciences especially when there is questions of the 'material object' and the 'formal object' of a science. *Material Object* is the definite realm or definite subject matter which a science deals with. For instance, man, inanimate matter, the stars, the earth, language, religion, law etc. *Formal Object* is that special aspect of the material object which is under consideration or study. A definite material object that is taken as the general matter to be studied will have too many knowable aspects to be grasped fully in a single intellectual consideration. To arrive at a well-founded total view, one will have to approach it in quasi-partial studies, i.e., through formal and analytic abstraction, the various aspects of the object. The material object so considered in a definite aspect, is thus called formal object. *The material object of metaphysics* includes all things which fall under the notion of being, 'such as actual or possible, abstract or concrete, material or immaterial, finite or infinite. *The formal object of metaphysics* is the study of 'being as being,' *ens in quantum ens*. That is to say, metaphysics does not restrict itself to any particular being or part of that being, but rather treats of what is *common to all beings*, namely, Being which is the ground of beings since all beings are in Being. Being is not a particular thing though it embraces everything in it. That which is not particular is still *something or in some way*. Hence, *Being is that which is in some way or something*. All of us know that everyone has always and everywhere an experience of 'something.' This experience of 'something' is an inescapable experience. One may escape from a particular experience, but one cannot escape from experiencing something. The most fundamental and radical question one can raise is this: 'Is there anything at all?' The answer can either be a negation or an affirmation. If it is a negation it should be so: 'There is nothing.' Such an answer is self-contradictory as the answer affirms a negation which is again 'something.' Hence, an absolute negation is impossible. For, paradoxically every absolute negation presupposes an absolute affirmation upon which the negation rests. This affirmative experience of 'something' is not 'that which is not' but 'that which is' or 'Being' which is in some way or something.

Of course, our *knowledge of Being is an act of intuition*, because of the indubitable, inseparable, and immediate self-presence of being as being to my knowing in a pre-predicative certainty which precedes the formation of all explicit concepts and judgments. But this intuition is so imperfect that it does not yet say anything explicit about identity or participation, unity or plurality, etc. Because of this imperfection of our intuition we are forced to express the knowledge of *Being* by means of a *judgment*. Now that the problem facing us is no longer that of being as being, but the problem of one and many, i.e., we will have to investigate more accurately the nature of the predicate which is common to all and ask ourselves how a predicate that does not express any plurality, finiteness, imperfection, or indetermination can be predicated of distinct, manifold, finite, imperfect, and determinable subjects. This investigation will have to show how the most universal concept expresses everything at the same time, but simultaneously falls short because of its inadequacy. Taken in an absolute sense, *Being pertains to everything*: the necessary, the real, and even the possible, the object known and the knowing subject, the concept and what is conceived, what is perceived and what is purely proposed in imagination or thought, and even the purely apparent. Therefore, Being or 'something' is the absolutely all-embracing notion. It is a general notion. By 'general' is meant one which refers to many. Thus it means here that 'Being' is predicated of each of many beings distributively as multiplied in

these many. *Being is the absolutely general notion*, because it is predicated not merely of a group of beings but absolutely of all. If Being is the absolute general notion, *it cannot be defined*; for a definition places the concept defined under a more general thought content or genus (higher class) and indicates how it differs from other concepts falling under the same genus by means of a specific difference. But the notion of Being does not fall under a higher, more general concept and therefore it is not a species. It is the first known in which everything else that is known, thought or proposed is already present and presupposed. We can describe the notion of Being only if we recognize a certain structure in it. Like all our concepts, it is not perfectly simple, but shows a certain dichotomy of bearer and form. Being is that which is, that which has 'Being', that which has a reference to 'Being', and through which 'Being' is. If Being is considered as a predicate, it is a participle and emphasizes the participation in 'Being'. If it is used as a subject, it is a noun and stresses that which participates in 'Being', the bearer or the subject of 'Being'. Now a question arises: Is Being known by abstraction?

*Abstraction* is the operation by which the mind leaves aside, abstracts *from* certain aspects of a being. When the intellect abstracts it *out* of the whole complex of a being, it does so as it discovers that other beings also exhibit this same feature. The more the content of a thought is abstract and leaves aside more particular contents, the more does its extension become general, universal and predicable of a large number. The opposite of abstraction is contraction which is a process by which the mind adds again to the central characteristic of a being the aspects which were left behind through abstraction. Since this central feature was universal, contraction will limit a concept from the more universal to the more particular. Accordingly, an increase in comprehension is accompanied by a decrease in extension. The abstraction in question is generalizing abstraction, called '*total*' abstraction. It is a logical process in which one and the same concrete whole, e.g., John, is considered under an increasingly more general aspect, for instance, as human, sentient being, living being, corporeal being. It means that the being from which the concept is abstracted is not expressed as to one of its parts only but as a whole: the totality is expressed but not totally. For this reason the concept obtained through total abstraction can be predicated of more particular concepts and of the individual being, e.g., John is a human, or a human is a sentient being. If we suppose that the concept of a being is the most abstract in the sense of total abstraction, it would retain only that in which the many beings agree, but leave aside that in which they differ. The differences would be expressed in differentiating concepts that stand independently alongside the notion of Being. They would have to be added to it through contraction as positive enrichments of its content if one wanted to arrive at knowledge of the various beings. Thus there would be a plurality of concepts. Nevertheless, these many thought contents would have to constitute a certain unity, no matter how imperfect it is. Hence the notion of Being and the differentiating concepts would have to show a certain similarity with one another. But then this similarity itself through a process of abstraction could be isolated in a higher and more general concept and so on to infinity, without ever allowing us to reach the absolutely supreme and first notion. However, because of the unity of thinking as well as that of the thinkable, there has to be a supreme and all-embracing concept. Hence the most general concept cannot be obtained through abstraction which leaves aside the differences. Therefore, this concept is of another nature than abstract concepts. It has to include also the differentiating concepts, not merely potentially as in concepts that are obtained through total abstraction, but *actually*. Thus it is not possible to perform a perfect conceptual separation of that in which beings are similar and that in which they differ. Otherwise, since they are

similar in this that they all *are*, their dissimilarity would have to lie in something that is beyond *Being* i.e., in non-Being. But non-Being cannot be the foundation of a difference; for to differ is *to be* different, to be in a different way. Therefore, the various beings differ in *Being* itself. Accordingly, the differentiating concepts, which express the distinct modes of *Being* of the various beings, such as subsistent, accidental, material, or spiritual, do not contain absolutely anything. But in that case they are not additions to the notion of Being. Consequently, they must lie within the content itself of Being as its *immanent precisions*. Thus it follows that the notion of Being is not abstract in the proper sense of the term 'total abstraction.' The notion of 'Being' extends to all beings not only insofar as they are similar but also insofar as they are dissimilar, and contains them in all aspects. For this reason we call the notion of Being '*transcendental*'. It is not only the absolutely general concept, transcending all other concepts in extension, but it is at the same time absolutely all-embracing inasmuch as it somehow includes all other possible thought contents. Being transcends every genus and all differences: it contains in an eminent way not only the highest abstract concepts or general, but also the differentiating concepts and therefore also the concepts of species. Everything in every concept is permeated with the notion of Being. The term 'transcendental' is opposed to "categorical." A concept is 'categorical' insofar as it falls under one of the categories or predicaments which are the fundamental concepts. These are positively distinct and thus opposed to one another and do not agree in a higher general concept obtained through proper abstraction. It is to these categories that univocal concepts of genus and species are reduced. 'Transcendental' belongs first of all to 'Being'. For this reason we give the name 'transcendental properties of being' to the properties which flow from being as being. Such characteristics, flowing from the identity of Being with itself, are the following: unity, truth, goodness, and beauty. In a somewhat *broader* sense one may consider as transcendental properties those which pertain not to all beings but to beings having a higher mode of *Being*, inasmuch as they do not include any imperfection in themselves. 'Transcendental' in the Kantian sense is opposed to 'empirical' and applies to *knowledge* insofar as this knowledge is not concerned with objects but with the subjective *a priori* possibility of knowing objects 'Transcendental' should also be distinguished from 'transcendent,' i.e., what transcends a given order of *being* and is independent of it. With reference to the cognitive object, 'transcendent' means that which is above the cognitive immanence of the object. With respect to the world of experience, it indicates what lies beyond the world of experience. And with regard to the finite, it applies to what transcends everything finite. Accordingly, the difference between the transcendental notion of Being and abstract general concepts lie in this: 'Being' belongs to a being not only because of its similarity but also because of its dissimilarity with the other beings; whereas the unity of the abstract-general concept results from its abstraction.

True, the notion of Being actually contains anything whatsoever that in any way has a reference to 'Being' and includes even the differences through which the various beings are in their own way. But as a concept or intermediary representation of our thinking, it is unable to give us adequate knowledge of the universal interconnection uniting 'everything that is.' This imperfectness consists in the fact that, although this idea contains the different modes of *Being* actually, it contains them only implicitly and confusedly. Despite their being contained in this notion, they are not yet known explicitly and distinctly. For this reason sometimes the term 'improper' abstraction is used with respect to the notion of Being, for it does not leave anything behind but it does not yet say everything explicitly. Thus there is need for other concepts.

However, these concepts are not wholly and entirely different, but only more explicit renderings of what is already contained in the notion of Being. Accordingly, the development of thought consists in an immanent explicitation of the notion of Being, so that in an increasingly more adequate way everything which through *Being* is possible and all its realizations are brought to explicit knowledge in more determined concepts. It is only in this way that the full richness of the notion of 'Being' reveals itself. The transition from the confused notion to the explicit grasp of 'that which is' depends on experience and the insight contained in it. It is only through experience that we are placed in the presence of the various modes of *Being*, which we cannot immediately deduce from the general notion of Being itself. If Being is the absolutely general notion, it belongs to everything. But if at the same time it is transcendental and thus contains not merely potentially but actually the differentiating concepts, how can it be predicated of the various beings and aspects of *Being* in the same undifferentiated sense? In other words, the notion of Being is predicated of many in a sense that is neither absolutely the same nor entirely different. It has a unity of meaning because its sense reveals not an absolute but a *relative similarity* in the judgments we make about different beings commonly called '*analogy*'.

---

## 1.5. LET US SUM UP

---

Metaphysics has constantly aspired to say what there is in the world and to determine the real nature of things. It has been preoccupied with the questions of existence and reality. Metaphysics has been commonly presented as the most fundamental and also the most comprehensive of inquiries. It claims to be fundamental because questions about what there is or about the ultimate nature of things underlie all particular inquiries. The questions about existence and reality, along with those about potential and actual being and about causation cut across the boundaries of particular sciences and arise in connection with every sort of subject matter. Thus Metaphysics is comprehensive just because of its extreme generality. Again, whereas sciences like physics and mathematics are departmental studies each of which deals with a part or particular aspect of reality, metaphysics, by contrast, is concerned with the world as a whole. Often inquiries in the individual sciences are carried out under assumptions which it is the business of Metaphysics to make explicit and either to justify or to correct. Metaphysics, by contrast, proceeds without assumptions and is thus fully self-critical. Metaphysical propositions derive their unique certainty from their being the products of reason when that faculty is put to work in the fullest and freest way. The result will be that metaphysics is not only the most fundamental of studies, but it is also one which relies for its results on the efforts of reason alone.

### 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 formal object of metaphysics

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

2) What do you understand by “Being”?

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

---

### 1.6. KEY WORDS

---

#### KEY WORDS

**Material Object:** Material object is the general subject matter of a science which is the common subject-matter of several sciences.

**Formal Object:** Formal object is the specific aspect of the subject matter of a science which belongs to the science under consideration only.

---

### 1.7. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

---

- Alvira, Thomas/ Clavell Luis/ Melendo Tomas. *Metaphysics*. Manila: Sinac Tala Publishers, 1982.
- Bogliolo, Luigi. *Metaphysics*. Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1987.
- Edwards, Paul, ed. *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Vol. 5&6. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. & The Free Press, 1972.
- Hiriyanna M. *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994.
- Kim, Jaegwon & Sosa, Ernest. *A Companion to Metaphysics*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1995.
- Lonergan, Bernard. *Insight*. New York: Longmans, 1965.
- P. T. Raju. *Structural Depths of Indian Thought*. New Delhi: South Asia Publishers, 1985.
- Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives*. Bangalore: ATC, 1999.
- Sinha, Jadunath. *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*. Calcutta: New Central Books Agency Ltd, 1996.
- Van Inwagen, Peter. *Metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

---

## 1.8. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

---

### Answers to Check your Progress I

1. It was Andronicus of Rhodes, around 60 AD, while editing the manuscripts of Aristotle, labeled the books which happened to be placed after Aristotle's works on 'physics' as '*meta ta physika*,' meaning 'after physics'. But in fact, metaphysics denotes the science of what is beyond (*meta*) nature (*physika*) of an object above the mere material. Many of the early Greek philosophical writings bore the title 'Concerning Nature' (the Greek term for nature was *physika*). These words usually dealt with what we would now consider physical science, but there were also speculations about the meaning and nature of the universe – that is, with questions which arise *after* the physical problems have been resolved, or which are concerned with what lies after or beyond the physical world of sensory experience. Thus, etymologically metaphysics denotes the science of what is beyond (*meta*) the physical nature (*physika*) of an object.

2. Bernard Lonergan (1904 – 1984) would describe metaphysics as 'the core and ground of human knowledge as it underlies, penetrates, transforms and unifies all other departments of knowledge.' First, *it underlies all other departments*: It underlies all other departments since its principles are the detached and disinterested drive of the pure desire to know. The unfolding of the pure desire to know takes place in the empirical, intellectual and rational consciousness of the self-affirming subject. All questions, all insights, all formulations, all reflections and all judgments proceed from the unfolding of that drive. Hence, metaphysics underlies logic, mathematics and all other sciences. Second, *it penetrates all other departments*: For other departments are constituted of the same principles as that of metaphysics. They are particular departments related to particular viewpoints. Yet, all departments spring from a common source and seek a common compatibility and coherence. Hence, they are penetrated by metaphysics. Third, *it transforms all other departments*: Metaphysics originates from the 'experience of something'. It is free from the realization of particular viewpoints. It distinguishes positions from counter-positions in the whole of knowledge. It is a transforming principle that urges positions to fuller development. By reversing counter-positions, it liberates discoveries from the shackles in which they were formulated. Fourth, *it unifies all other departments*: For other departments respond to particular ranges of questions; whereas metaphysics deals with the original, total question, and in this way, it moves to the total answer transforming and putting together all other answers. Hence, we may define metaphysics as *the core and ground of all knowledge, which is the science of being as being*.

### Answers to Check your Progress II

1. *The formal object of metaphysics* is the study of '*being as being*,' *ens in quantum ens*. That is to say, metaphysics does not restrict itself to any particular being or part of that being, but rather treats

of what is *common to all beings*, namely, Being which is the ground of beings since all beings are in Being. Being is not a particular thing though it embraces everything in it.

2. *Being is that which is in some way or something.* All of us know that everyone has always and everywhere an experience of 'something.' This experience of 'something' is an inescapable experience. One may escape from a particular experience, but one cannot escape from experiencing something. The most fundamental and radical question one can raise is this: 'Is there anything at all?' The answer can either be a negation or an affirmation. If it is a negation it should be so: 'There is nothing.' Such an answer is self-contradictory as the answer affirms a negation which is again 'something.' Hence, an absolute negation is impossible. For, paradoxically every absolute negation presupposes an absolute affirmation upon which the negation rests. This affirmative experience of 'something' is not 'that which is not' but 'that which is' or 'Being' which is in some way or something.



## **UNIT 2: STARTING POINT, FUNDAMENTAL NOTIONS AND PRINCIPLES**

- 2.0. Objectives
- 2.1. Introduction
- 2.2. Starting Point of Metaphysics
- 2.3. Fundamental Notions and Principles
- 2.4. Let Us Sum Up
- 2.5. Key Words
- 2.6. Further Readings and References
- 2.7. Answers to Check Your Progress

### **2.0. OBJECTIVES**

Metaphysics is a science in so far as science provides us with sure and evident knowledge of things from their causes. Every science has its own starting point, and fundamental notions and principles. Metaphysics, as a science, has also its own starting point, fundamental notions and principles. In this Unit you are expected to understand:

- The meaning of the starting point of metaphysics
- The most fundamental notions
- The most fundamental principles and their complementarity

### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

A science is always a logically ordered system, i.e., the various parts of a science are logically coherent. One part is justified by another. Scientific statements are deduced from another. However, this process cannot go on to infinity. Ultimately one must arrive at premises that no longer are conclusions of a reasoning process within the limits of a given science, but have their truth established through direct observation by the senses or their foundation in another science. Somehow every science is bound to have fundamental data that can serve as the starting point. In other words, the function of the starting point is to supply the basic data concerning the object considered in the science. The physical sciences have their starting point in the concrete data of the senses obtained through observation or experimentation. The starting point of metaphysics is the sensitive-rational experience of something as it manifests itself in judgment, question and pure desire to know. These manifestations always remain in conformity with the fundamental notions and principles.

### **2.2. STARTING POINT OF METAPHYSICS**

The question about the starting point of metaphysics comes at the beginning of metaphysics itself. The starting point must be that which comes first before everything else, and from which we begin. There are as many starting points for metaphysics as there are metaphysicians. Here, we restrict our discussion to three important positions with regard to the starting point before we make a concluding synthesis: judgment, question and the pure desire to know.

*Judgement as the Starting Point of Metaphysics* (Adv: Joseph Mar`echal). Every particular act of knowledge reveals a characteristic duality when it is expressed in a judgment: *reference and assertion*. Knowledge always refers to something or someone and makes an assertion about this something or someone in either an affirmative or a negative way. To know something or someone always means to know it or one as being this way or that way or not this way or that way, i.e., as *judgment*. *Judgement* is an act of the intellect in which we say something of an object by way of affirmation or denial. Every particular judgment may be considered as a reply to the question: Is the being in question as it is asserted to be in the proposition?

*Question as the Starting Point of Metaphysics* ( Adv: Martin Heidegger, Karl Rahner, Emerich Coreth, Otto Muck). "Man Questions". Question is something final and irreducible. Every attempt to question the question is itself another question. For, one can ask oneself whether the question concerning the starting point of metaphysics is itself a starting point which does not make any further logical and critical presuppositions. This turns the question back upon itself and discloses that the question in the beginning is unavoidable and that at least questioning in itself is given as an unavoidable and non-arbitrary beginning, for if the question concerning the starting point were itself improper or meaningless, then questioning the meaninglessness of the question concerning the starting point of metaphysics would be another question.

*Pure Desire to Know as the Starting Point of Metaphysics* (Adv: Bernard Lonergan). *Being* is the objective of the pure desire to know. *Desire to know* is the dynamic orientation manifested in question for intelligence and for reflection. It is the inquiring and critical spirit of man. *Pure Desire to Know* differs from other desires. This pure desire is to be known by giving free rein to intelligent and rational consciousness and not by comparing with other desires. It compels assent to the unconditioned. *This pure desire has an objective*. The objective of the pure desire to know is the content of knowing and not merely the act of knowing, i. e., *what* is to be known (that which is to be known). The fact of asking or questioning results from the pure desire. (Pure desire is prior to questioning and judging- the starting point of metaphysics). Hence, Being is all that is known and all that remains to be known. It is at the root of all that can be affirmed or conceived. It underlies all judgement and formulation, all questioning and the desire to question. In this way it is all-inclusive.

To conclude: *Experience of Something as the Starting Point of Metaphysics*. The starting point of metaphysics is the experience of `something' as it manifests itself in various forms, especially in judgment, question and pure desire to know. For instance, it is certain that everyone has an experience of `something'. This experience of `something' is an inescapable experience. One may escape from a particular experience, but one cannot escape from experiencing something. The most fundamental and radical question one can ask is this: `Is there anything at all?' The answer can either be a negation or an affirmation. If it is a negation it should be so: `There is nothing'. Such an answer is self-contradictory as the answer affirms a negation which is again `something'. Hence absolute negation is impossible. For, paradoxically, every absolute negation presupposes an absolute affirmation upon which the negation rests. An affirmative experience of `something' is not `that which is not', but `that which is' or `Being'. Thus, experience of `something' or Being is the ultimate starting point of metaphysics manifest in various forms of it such as judgment, question and pure desire to know.



### 2. 3. FUNDAMENTAL NOTIONS AND PRINCIPLES

*Notion* is vague and imperfect concept. *Notions are of simple mental content*. Principles are of complex mental contents. *Simplicity* is the absence of complexity and *complexity* is the union of distinct parts. Notions and principles are also the basic evidences to which thought must conform. *Principle is that from which something proceeds in any way whatsoever*. The definition implies two things: that the principle is *prior* to that which proceeds from it; that there is a *special connection* between what is called the principle and that which proceeds from it, in virtue of which the former is the principle of the latter.

There are three basic notions: Notion of Being, Notion of Action or Operation, and Notion of Self. *Notion of Being*: Being is that which is in some way or something. That which is in some way or something, is always and immediately present in human experience. This experience of Being is as undeniable as the fact of the affirmation. Experience of Being signifies immediate knowledge, the immediate presence of the known to the knower. It is the original form of knowledge. An experience which is not an experience of Being would be an experience of nothing which is an impossibility. Nothing is clearer or simpler or more evident than Being pre-apprehended in my consciousness. Hence we cannot ask what is the essence or nature of Being. For essence and nature are already 'ways of Being'. It is the 'essence' of Being not to have any essence as it surpasses and includes all essences. Thus it is impossible to construct, derive, reduce, or define Being in terms of anything other than itself. *Notion of Action*: In my experience of something I know that I *experience* the experience. I am implicitly and immediately conscious of the activity of experience itself. *Notion of Self*: In my experience of something I know that I I experience the experience. I am implicitly and immediately conscious of my own self. The self is a fact of conscious experience which is both undeniable and inexplicable. When I awake in the morning, I have to admit that my remembrance of previous knowledge or of my past belong to the very same self that I am now. This identity of the self is the reason why I can synthesize the past and present. But in itself it remains an unexplained fact, a simple datum of my personal experience. Furthermore, this identity did not always exist, because forty-two years ago I did not exist.

<p><b>Check Your Progress I</b></p> <p>Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit</p> <p>1) What is the starting point of metaphysics?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>2) Explain the three fundamental notions.</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
---

### PRINCIPLES OF TRUTH AND AFFIRMATION

The principle of truth states that *'there is truth'*. Truth is conformity (correspondence) between the mind and the object. It is self-evident that truth exists; for even denying it would admit it. Affirmation is the assent of the mind to that which is. Affirmation is the primary form in which the principle of truth manifests itself to us in judgement. This affirmation can be expressed in several ways: 'there is something', 'something is', 'something exists'. The fact of such affirmation is undeniable. I cannot sincerely doubt the fact that I formulate judgments, or that I affirm. The opposite of affirmation is negation which ultimately rests on affirmation. Negation, as we know, is the absence of positive assent (dissent). Every negation implies four elements: *A positive foundation*: A positive foundation is an affirmation. In the example that Benson is not an angel, the positive foundation is that he is a man. *Proposal to the mind*: When we say that Benson is not an angel there is a proposal or question to the mind: Is he an angel? *Comparison*: There is always a comparison of the proposal "Is he an angel?" with our previous knowledge that he is a man. *Rejection of the proposal*: Here the proposal 'Is he an angel?', is rejected by the mind.

## **PRINCIPLES OF IDENTITY AND DISTINCTION**

It is the fact of being one and the same. According to this principle everything is what it is. Whatever is, is; and whatever is not, is not. Everything is its own being. Everything is itself, but in a way proportionate to its nature. This principle is implied in all judgments. In the affirmative judgment I say that something is and that it is as it is. It is itself. I affirm the necessary identity of that which I affirm with itself. The particular judgment 'this is' or 'I am' contains a general judgment which embraces all judgments. *Whatever is, insofar as it is, is and is what it is*. This principle is not a mere tautology. It is not concerned with such an obvious repetition as  $A=A$ . For the predicate adds to the subject the mode of necessity which stems from the Being of being. The judgment about being as being reveals that Being is precisely Being, self-sufficient, self-explanatory, and not referring to anything else, and therefore unconditioned and necessary.

*Distinction is the absence of identity. The principle means that every being is in some way distinct from the other.* Most of our thinking implies distinctions. When we make an inference, for example, we draw a conclusion from premises. But in doing so we have to take many distinctions for granted: we have to presuppose the distinction between the premises and the conclusion we draw from them. We must also distinguish between the subjects and the predicates in both the premises and conclusions. All these are different distinctions. When we draw our conclusion, our attention is directly focused on the conclusion and marginally focused on its relationship to its several premises. But a whole series of distinctions functions in the background. These distinctions are at work even though they are not being explicitly made at the moment we draw our inference. Indeed, just to say anything at all we have to take distinctions for granted.

## **PRINCIPLES OF NON-CONTRADICTION AND EXCLUDED MIDDLE**

An affirmative judgment is a reply to a question regarding a proposed situation, a proposition. But a question allows two possible answers: connecting and separating, yes or no. The point is whether the judgment which affirms the connection includes a negation of the separation. The reply is that connection and separation of one and the same thing in the same respect, i.e., the same mode of Being cannot go together; for only one of the two is true. This logical principle is based on the general ontological insight that *whatever is, insofar as it is, is not not*, i.e., it cannot not-be, and *is*

*not what it is not.* This principle is based on the all-embracing nature of Being. Outside Being there is only non-Being, but non-Being cannot be. Therefore, Being extends to everything. It is impossible to predicate not-to-be of any being as being. Accordingly, the all-embracing affirmation implies the impossibility of the all-embracing negation. It is absolutely impossible that there would be nothing. Hence a thing cannot *be* and *not-be at the same time under the same respect.* The distinguishing mark of the principle is the phrase: *at the same time under the same respect.* It means: from the same standpoint, in the same circumstances, under the same conditions. For instance, the statement could be true, 'it is possible for rain to fall and not to fall' if we refer to different localities, but it could not be true about the selfsame rain in the selfsame locality. It is also true that 'a boy can be a man', if we mean that he can be a man at a later period of his life; but a boy cannot be a man while he is still a boy. The validity of this principle is a pre-condition for all knowledge. However, the principle is not a mere negation. For in a genuine negation the subject is never the total unity of 'whatever is' but always a particular being. What is denied is not the Being of the subject in the absolute sense but always a particular mode of Being. I first affirm being as being and then judge that certain modes of Being are not included and perhaps even positively excluded. In this way there arises the distinction between the *one* and the *other*. Since negation always implies affirmation, human thought will be inclined to consider the principle of non-contradiction as its central principle. Just as negation implies affirmation and all-embracingness, so also the principle of non-contradiction implies the principle of identity as prior 'in itself'.

**The Principle of Excluded Middle** is expressed in different ways by different philosophers. It is an inference from the principle of identity and the principle of contradiction. If it is self-evident that Being is Being, and non-Being is non-Being; and if it is self-evident that a thing cannot *be* and *not be* at the same time under the same respect, then it is also self-evident that *there is no middle course possible between Being and non-Being.*

## PRINCIPLES OF CAUSALITY AND RELATION

*The Principle of causality* states: 'whatever happens or becomes must have a cause for its happening or becoming'. The expression 'whatever happens' means 'whatever begins to be or to exist'; 'becomes' means 'whatever passes from potentiality to actuality'. Hence the principle can be reformulated as follows: *Whatever passes from a state of non-existence into a state of existence must have an efficient cause for its existence.*

*Meaning of cause:* Action always implies a change and change implies causality. The agent is the 'cause' and the action of the agent producing the change is the 'causality'. The change produced in the patient as reaction is the 'effect'. Cause is that which produces an effect. In the traditional view, *cause is an ontological principle which exercises a positive influence in the production of something else.* There are three factors that enter into the concept 'production': that which produces, or the *cause*; that which is produced, or the *effect*; and the *positive influence* of the cause in the production of the effect, or the *causality*. Everything depends upon this positive influence in the production in order that a thing may be called a 'cause'. For this influence to be really causal, it must *affect the being* of a thing in its *production* (positive and ontological). Production means the bringing of a substantial or accidental thing from a state of potentiality to a state of actuality. Such a production evidently affects the 'being' or entity of a thing in some productive manner. This positive productive ontological (real) influence on the being of a thing is the most important factor in



causality. Mere external sequence or connection on the part of two things is not sufficient to bring them into the relation of cause and effect. For example, the fact that one train follows another along the tracks establishes no causal relation between them; for the connection between them is purely extrinsic. Cause cannot be a purely *logical principle*; for a purely logical influence of one thing on another is insufficient to constitute causality. For instance, the principle of non-contradiction exerts a tremendous influence upon all our thinking. Its influence is 'logical' and not 'ontological'. This principle does *not produce* our thinking, nor does it confer anything toward the production of the *entity* of our thought. For in fact it is the intellect which actually produces our thought and as such is its 'cause'. The influence of the cause may be either corporeal (e.g., seed producing a plant) or spiritual (e.g., the intellect producing thought). But in order that such an influence partake of the nature of causality it must be *ontologically and positively productive of being* in some manner.

### **Main Kinds of Cause**

There are four questions which can be asked of a thing, in order to explain the 'how and why' of its being. If we ask '*by what* is it made?' the answer is 'by the efficient cause.' If we ask '*out of what* is it made?' the answer is 'out of its material, its material cause. If we ask '*through what* is it made?' the answer is 'through its form, its formal cause.' And if we ask '*on account of what* is it made?' the answer is 'on account of the end or purpose which induced the agent to act.' By answering these questions we obtain the various determining factors which explain the production of the thing and make it to be what it is.

We will study these four causes further grouping them into two: intrinsic cause and extrinsic cause. *An intrinsic cause* is that which is inadequately distinct from the effect. The intrinsic causes are material cause and formal cause. *An extrinsic cause* is that which is adequately distinct from the effect. The two extrinsic causes are efficient cause and final cause. They do not enter into the composition of the being of things, but act upon them 'from without'.

### **Intrinsic Causes: Material Cause and Formal Cause**

*Material cause*: When things change, there is always a *substratum* (an underlying principle) which persists throughout the process of change. This substratum is something indifferent, potential, receptive, passive, determinable, actualizable. It is that which is changed, determined, actualized. This substratum is that out of which something becomes or is made. This is called the *matter* or material cause. It is the inner principle of potentiality and limitation. *Formal cause*: Formal cause is the correlative of the material cause. Matter and form always go together since they are related to each other as act and potency. Matter is indefinite; whereas form is definite. Matter is passive; whereas form is active. Matter is receptive; whereas form is the received.

### **Extrinsic causes: Efficient Cause, Final Cause and Exemplary Cause**

*Efficient cause* is that *by which* something is produced. A being of one kind is changed into a being of another kind by means of the action of the agent or efficient cause. Of all the causes which assist in the production of an effect by means of a positive influence, the efficient cause is recognized as a

*true cause* which has an unmistakable influence on an effect. When a mason builds a brick wall, one's action certainly influences its making, and the mason is the efficient cause of the wall.

*Final cause* is that for the sake of which an efficient cause acts. It is the end or intention which determines the action of the efficient cause in the production of something else. This intention or end *induces* the agent to act and determines the *kind* and the *manner* of action, so that the end or purpose may be achieved. For example, when a carpenter intends to make a chair, he selects the wood, cuts into proper lengths, nails them together according to a plan determined by the particular kind of chair one desires.

*Exemplary cause* is that in imitation of which something comes into being from the intention of an agent that determines its end for itself, e.g., drawing the picture of a flower on the board. The flower is the exemplary cause and the picture is the effect. In this definition the words, *a form in imitation of which*, indicate the idea which serves as a model since the idea is the same as the form which a thing imitates. *According to the intention of an agent* exclude the possibility that the likeness comes about by accident. *That determines its end for itself* indicate that there can be question of exemplary causality only if the agent determines the end for itself and not if the end is determined by another.

### **Effect**

Effect is that which proceeds from another totally or partially. The effects depend upon their causes ontologically and are similar to them. *Ontologically* means according to the order of Being. *Depend* means to proceed from another in some way according to its being. *Similarity* means partial *correspondence between distinct beings*. They are two kinds: positive and negative. *Positive similarity* is correspondence according to a perfection, e.g., two persons who have equal height. *Negative similarity* is correspondence according to a defect, e.g., two persons who are blind.

### **Cause, Condition, Occasion, Sufficient Reason and Chance**

Cause is an ontological principle which exercises a *positive* influence in the production of something else. In this way, cause is distinct from condition which does not exercise a positive influence in the production of something. A condition is only a prerequisite for the action of the cause. *Condition is that which is required in order that an efficient cause can act*, but it does not contribute any positive influence toward the production of the effect itself. The distinction between cause and condition may be illustrated by the following example. A stone of fifty kilogram is firmly held in place by the suction of mud in a swamp. The effort of a single person to lift it up is in vain. Another person comes to the person's help. Then, they lift the stone together. Both of them exercise positive influence upon the effect, viz., the change in the position of the stone. However, if one of them limits oneself to the removing of mud around the stone and leaves the rest to the other, the one would not exercise any positive influence upon the change of position. But one's action would remove the obstacle which prevents one from lifting the stone. Here, one's role is only *dispositive* and not positive.

An *occasion* exercises positive influence in so far as it helps to induce a free agent to produce an effect. *It is a circumstance or combination of circumstances which provide a favourable*

*opportunity for the free exercise of a cause*, e.g., a crowd is an occasion for pickpocket to ply his trade. However, a free cause can exercise its causality even when there is no favourable opportunity. Hence occasion differs from condition in so far as its influence is positive and not merely dispositive. Occasion also differs from cause in so far as its influence is not necessary for the production of the effect.

*The sufficient reason* is also distinct from cause. Sufficient reason provides an adequate explanation for the 'being' of a thing. It does not have to be *really distinct* from the thing whose 'being' is explained by it; whereas the cause of a thing is always *really distinct* from it. Otherwise the thing *would* be the cause of itself. Hence, we can say that every being has a sufficient reason of being, but not every being is caused. If the essence of a thing is really identical with its 'being', this essence is the sufficient reason for its 'being'. But if an essence is really distinct from its 'being', the sufficient reason for its 'being' must be found outside the essence. Hence a cause is a sufficient reason for the 'being' of something else.

*Chance* is an effect produced by the concurrence of two or more causes which operate independently and thus produce an effect which is *unforeseen* by anyone who does not know that several causes are at work or how these causes operate.

### **Principle of Relation**

Relation comes from the Latin word, *referre* which means bring back, the reference of one thing to another, mutual inter-directedness. It is defined *as the bearing* (reference, respect, attitude, ordination) *of one thing to something else*. 'To be is to be related'. Being is the Being of beings. As Being is the Being of beings, it is always related to beings and all beings are also simultaneously and radically related to Being (hence relative to Being). The *relative* is in opposition to the *absolute*. Recent philosophers have written more about these two concepts than about any other within the whole range of philosophy which has them as the foundation of the entire system of thought.

### **Factors of Relation**

Every relation contains three factors: subject, term and foundation. *Subject* is the radical principle of the relation. It is *that* which is related to another, e.g., I know him. *Term* is that to which the subject of the relation is referred or related, e.g., I know him. *Foundation* is the proximate principle from which the relation springs. It is the origin or ground of the relation, e.g., I know him. It is the basis, the ground, the *reason why* the subject is related to the term. It is the bond which unites the subject and term together and places them 'in relation' to each other. Foundation is further distinguished into two: Immediate & Mediate. *Immediate foundation* is the foundation which is intrinsic to the subject of the relation, e.g., I know him. Knowledge is intrinsic. *Mediate foundation* is the foundation which is extrinsic to the subject of the relation, e.g., I have a pen. Possession of the pen which is the foundation of the relation is extrinsic to the subject.

From this it is plain that one thing alone can never form a relation. Relation must exist *between two or more* things taken in reference to each other. The essence of 'relation,' consists in the '*esse ad*', the '*Being-toward*' of one thing to another. It is the bearing, the reference, the attitude,

the ordination of one to another due to some foundation which is the necessary *condition* for a relation, but not the 'relation' itself. The foundation is present in both the subject and the term. Two white horses, for example, are similar to each other in their white color. Their whiteness is not the relation of their similarity, but only the reason or foundation of their relation by which they stand to each other in a relation of similarity. The 'relation', therefore, *results from* the presence of a common foundation in a subject and term and is considered to be distinct from the foundation, the subject, and the term.

### **Kinds of Relation**

Relation can be grouped into two main classes: *logical and real*. *Logical relation* is the relation which exists only in the mind. It is a relation *made solely by the mind and placed by the mind between entities*. These entities may exist outside the mind or in the mind itself as concepts, judgements, and inferences. The foundation for such a relation is an *ens rationis*, a logical entity without any real foundation in the extra-mental things themselves for such a relation. The relation is strictly a product of the mind's thinking. For instance, we systematise our ideas when we study a certain branch of knowledge and in this manner bring them into relation with one another. There exists logical relation of comprehension and extension between every subject and predicate in a sentence, between the premises and conclusion of an inference, between a number of inferences in an extended argumentation; such relations are logical as they exist solely in the mind and its operations. Similarly, there are also relations between objects *outside the mind*, although these relations have no reason or foundation in the properties of the things themselves. For instance, a scepter represents royal dignity; a palm, victory; a red light, danger; a flag, a country; but the relation between these things is purely of the mind's own making and has no foundation in the things themselves.

*Real relation* is a relation which exists *between things, independent of the mind and its thinking*. The subject and the term are real entities in nature while the foundation of the relation is present in them *objectively* and not merely conceived by the mind as being there. There is thus a connection or bond between real things, due to something present in them, independent of all thought. Such a relation exists, for instance, between parent and offspring, between plant and flower, between two pups of the same litter, between two trees of equal height, between two houses of the same architectural style etc. A real relation may be either essential (transcendental) or accidental (categorical or predicamental). An *essential* (or *transcendental*) relation is one in which the very *essence* of one thing has a relation to something. This relation will always be present as soon as and as long as this essence is present. The essence cannot exist without this relation. Thus the relation between every being and an intellect, making this being 'true' and 'good,' is essential or transcendental; for it is an essential or transcendental attribute of all being to be true and good. Every creature owes its entire essence and existence to the creator, and thus the relation of the creature to the creator is an essential one. In the same way, the relation between body and soul in human is an essential relation since both are ordained toward each other to form a composite substance. Real Relation can also be subsistent or accidental. *Subsistent relation* is a relation which is identical with its subject and immediate foundation. *Accidental Relation* is a relation which is really distinct from both its subject and immediate foundation. An accidental (categorical or predicamental) relation is based upon an accident as its foundation. The accident is something superadded to the essence and its absence would not



destroy the essence itself. For instance, two children have blond and curly hair; in this instance they stand to each other in the relation of similarity. Two men are six feet tall; they are related to each other through the equality of the quantitative measurements. Obviously, 'blond and curly hair' and the equal 'height of six feet' are accidental modifications of these persons without belonging to their essence.

### Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) What do you understand by the principle of truth?

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

2) Explain the meaning of relation and subsistent relation.

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

### 2. 4. LET US SUM UP

Every science has its own starting point. The question about the starting point of metaphysics comes at the beginning of metaphysics itself. The starting point of metaphysics is the experience of 'something' as it manifests itself in various forms, especially in judgment, question and pure desire to know. These manifestations of starting point of metaphysics are in quite agreement with the fundamental notions and principles. The most important fundamental notions are the notion of Being, notion of action, and notion of self. Notion is vague and imperfect concept. Notions are of simple mental content. Principles are of complex mental contents. The main fundamental principles are the principles of truth and affirmation, principles of identity and distinction, principles of non-contradiction and excluded middle, and the principles of causality and relation. The starting point of metaphysics, the fundamental notions and principles are all complementary, and not contradictory.

### 2.5. KEY WORDS

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

**Action:** Action is the self-actualization of a being. We know what a being is from its activity ("action follows being" – *agere sequitur esse*; or, as the operation is so the being is).

**Self:** Self is the intrinsically and spiritually coordinating principle of a person.

## 2.6. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologica*. Tr. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947.
- Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. (In: *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle by Thomas Aquinas*.) Tr. John P Rowan. Vol. I. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961.
- Bittle, Celestine. *The Domain of Being*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1950.
- Coreth, Emerich. *Metaphysics*. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Tr. John Macquarrie. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988.
- Lonergan, Bernard. *Insight*. New York: Longmans, 1965.
- Loux, Michael J. *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Maritain, Jacques. *A Preface to Metaphysics*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1943.
- Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives*. Bangalore: ATC, 1999.
- Peters, John A. *Metaphysics*. Louvain: Duquesne University Press, 1963.

## 2.7. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

### Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. The starting point of metaphysics is the sensitivo-rational experience of 'something' as it manifests itself in judgment, question and the pure desire to know.
2. There are three fundamental notions: Notion of Being, Notion of Action or Operation, and Notion of Self. *Notion of Being*: Being is that which is in some way or something. That which is in some way or something, is always and immediately present in human experience. This experience of Being is as undeniable as the fact of the affirmation. *Notion of Action*: In my experience of something I know that I *experience* the experience. I am implicitly and immediately conscious of the activity of experience itself. *Notion of Self*: In my experience of something I know that I I experience the experience. I am implicitly and immediately conscious of my own self. The self is a fact of conscious experience which is both undeniable and inexplicable.

### Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. The principle of truth states that '*there is truth*'. Truth is conformity (correspondence) between the mind and the object. It is self-evident that truth exists; for even denying it would admit it.
2. Relation comes from the Latin word, *referre* which means bring back, the reference of one thing to another, mutual inter-directedness. It is defined as *the bearing* (reference, respect, attitude, ordination) *of one thing to something else*. 'To be is to be related'. Being is the Being of beings. As Being is the Being of beings, it is always related to beings and all beings are also simultaneously and radically related to Being (hence relative to Being). *Subsistent relation* is a relation which is identical with its subject and immediate foundation.



---

**UNIT 3****METHOD**

---

**Contents**

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Speculative Method
- 3.3 Dialectical Method
- 3.4 Retortive method
- 3.5 Induction
- 3.6 Deduction
- 3.7 Analysis
- 3.8 Synthesis
- 3.9 Reflection
- 3.10 Intuition
- 3.11 Indian methods
- 3.12 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.13 Key Words
- 3.14 Further Readings and References
- 3.15 Answers to Check Your Progress

---

**3.0 OBJECTIVES**

---

Just as the notion of being underlines, penetrates and goes beyond all other notions, so also metaphysics is the department of human knowledge that underlines, penetrates, transforms, and unifies all other departments. So it is very important to look at different methods this particular branch of philosophy uses. In this unit, you are expected to understand the most important methods used by metaphysicians. Some of these methods are also in common with methods used in other branches of knowledge. These methods are:

- Speculative method
- Dialectic Method
- Retortive Method
- Induction
- Deduction
- Analysis
- Synthesis



- Reflection
- Intuition

---

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

---

The term 'method' is derived from the Greek 'methodos' (road to). Hence etymologically the term refers to the way of doing something, the system of procedure to obtain or reach the end intended. It is the way of procedure from the known to the unknown, from a given starting point to final propositions in a determined field of knowledge. In speculative sciences it indicates the road to propositions concerning that which exists or is thought to exist; whereas in normative sciences it indicates the road to the norms governing the doing of something. In the sciences, the use of correct methods is most important in order to make certain that the conclusions are correctly connected with the starting point and the foundation. Every scientific method is the road from the known starting point to a result which in one or the other is linked to this starting point. This connection can be established through logical reasoning or deduction, or through induction, synthesis, or analysis. The characteristic feature of the discipline of philosophy is the existence of different methods in it. When there was no distinction between science and philosophy and all knowledge was philosophy, it was thought that the task of philosophy was to give a complete and coherent account of the universe as a whole. This view originated in ancient Greece and lasted for several centuries in the West until alternatives to it were developed. A method is a set of directives that serve to guide the process towards a result. Metaphysical claims can vary in their modal status: some are contingent truths while others are necessary truths. One would expect that quite different methods must be employed in these different cases. In fact, the variety is considerably greater than what it appears.

The metaphysical methods are not exclusively employed by philosophers only. Every human at some time or other utilizes metaphysical methods in one's thinking on philosophical problems. However, these methods are mainly utilized by the philosophers. Secondly the metaphysical methods are not absolutely different from scientific method. It has much in common with scientific methods. We can very well say that in solving its problems concerning science, the metaphysicians utilize the same methods of induction and deduction as used in scientists. Thus, in order to understand the philosophical and the metaphysical methods these two methods must be discussed.

This Unit includes brief overviews of a few of the prominent Western and Indian metaphysical methods.

---

### 3.2 SPECULATIVE METHOD

---

The intellectual development reached its climax in Athens as the various streams of Greek thought converged there during the fifth century B.C. The age of Pericles saw Athens at the peak

of its cultural creativity and political influence. The development of democracy and technical advances in agriculture and navigation encouraged humanistic spirit and speculative method. Pre-socratic philosophers had been relatively isolated in their speculations. Now in Athens such philosophical speculation became more representative of the city's intellectual life as a whole, which continued to move toward conceptual thought, critical analysis, reflection, and dialectic.

---

### **3.3. DIALECTIC METHOD**

---

Dialectic method of Socrates and Plato was essentially a method of discussion and debate in which the participants progressed from one point to another, each one disputing the point of the other until they could reach an undisputable point. It consisted in reasoning through rigorous dialogue as a method of intellectual investigation intended to expose false beliefs and elicit truth. The strategy was to take up a sequence of questions with whomever one was in discussion, relentlessly analyzing one by one the implications of the answers in such a way as to bring out the flaws and inconsistencies inherent in a given belief or statement. Attempts to define the essence of something were rejected one after another as being either too wide or too narrow. Often such an analysis ended in complete perplexity. Yet such times it was clear that philosophy was concerned less with knowing the right answers than with the strenuous attempt to discover those answers. To practice philosophy in the dialectic method was continually to subject one's thoughts to the criticism of reason in earnest dialogue with others. Genuine knowledge was not something that could simply be received from another, but was rather a personal achievement, won only at the cost of constant intellectual struggle and self-critical reflection. Dialectic takes a different turn in Hegel. Hegelian dialectic is not merely epistemological, but ontological too. The method of dialectic involves thesis-antithesis-synthesis in which thesis, antithesis and synthesis are only different 'moments' in the movement of thought resulting in both continuity and difference. The very birth of the thesis is the birth of the antithesis as well as the synthesis. The thesis carries the seeds of the antithesis within itself and the two together carry in them the seeds of synthesis. Dialectic is not a one time movement. It does not stop once a synthesis is reached out of a thesis and an antithesis. It moves on to a higher level in the next stage to a new moment when the synthesis of the previous level itself becomes the new thesis which generates its antithesis and from which yet another synthesis emerges. In this new synthesis, something of the previous synthesis remains, but with something from its antithesis added on. This novel synthesis again becomes the thesis for the next level of dialectical movement and it goes on like this.

---

### **3.4. RETORTIVE METHOD**

---

Towards the end of the patristic period, St Augustine tried to answer the problem of certainty with his method of retorsion. He held that the skeptics are mistaken in assuming that certainty of knowledge is impossible and that human can achieve only "probable knowledge," i.e., ideas whose validity is highly probable. Since any degree of probable knowledge implies an approach toward completely certain knowledge, the assumption of probably valid truths presupposes the

existence and attainability of absolute truths. If the skeptic argues that no real objects of his sensory experience exist, nevertheless he cannot doubt the fact that his perception does exist. The person who doubts all truths is caught in a logical dilemma, for one must exist in order to doubt; in fact, no matter what else one doubts, one proves one's own existence through the act of doubting. Nor is it of any use to suggest that one might err in thinking that one exists, for 'even if one errs, one exists' (*Si fallor, sum*).

---

### 3.5. INDUCTION

---

The principles of different sciences are arrived at by means of inductive process. For example in psychiatry some general principles concerning mental disease are discovered by observation of the behavior of mental patients, its recording, its analysis, classification and finally generalization to arrive at certain common principles. This is the method of induction. It is surely very true that many important metaphysical propositions concerning contingent matters of fact are such that they cannot be known in non-inferential way: they must be justified on the basis of other justified beliefs. Consider, for example, the thesis that humans have immaterial immortal souls, or the thesis that the mind is identical with the brain, or the thesis that the theoretical entities postulated by physics are real. How do metaphysicians proceed in such cases? It is hard to see any alternative to the inductive methods employed within science where one employs such notions as hypothetico-deductive method, crucial experiments, and inference to the best explanation.

---

### 3.6. DEDUCTION

---

Deduction is the process of reasoning from a known principle to an unknown. Deduction can be of two types, Logical deduction and transcendental deduction.

#### **Logical deduction**

Logical deduction is the process of reasoning from one or several logical content to its or their logical implications.

#### **TRANSCENDENTAL DEDUCTION**

Transcendental deduction is the process of justifications of the necessity of some conditions of a fact. Metaphysics, like other sciences, will use logical deduction when it will group premises to come to further conclusions. But it will use transcendental deduction to show the necessity of certain conclusions. In the measure in which the facts to be explained will be necessary, in that measure their conditions will also be necessary.

#### **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 Dialectic Method

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

.....  
2) What do you understand by Induction?  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

---

### 3.7. ANALYSIS

---

Analysis is the discovery of the parts of the whole. One fundamental method for establishing metaphysical truths that are necessary is by showing that they are analytically true statements, where this is a matter of showing that they follow from logical truths in the narrow sense via substitution in accordance with relevant definitions. But how are the definitions to be assessed? Here there are at least two fundamental criteria: one positive and one negative. As regards the negative criterion, a definition must not be exposed to counter examples, so a very important task in evaluating a definition is to see whether it is possible to construct counter examples to the definition. If it appears to satisfy this negative criterion, then the next question is whether the definition enables one to derive what seem to be the fundamental necessary truths involving the concept in question. Analysis can of different types.

#### **LOGICAL ANALYSIS**

Logical analysis is the discovery of the parts of an explicit content of knowledge, e.g., analysis of a concept.

#### **TRANSCENDENTAL ANALYSIS**

Transcendental analysis is the discovery of the a-priori necessary conditions of a given experience. (here transcendental means 'going beyond' thus 'transcending' the particularities of the objects of the experience to concentrate on the experience itself and on its conditions).

#### **ANALYTICAL JUDGMENTS**

Analytical judgments are those which express what the analysis has revealed. (If the analysis was true, to deny these judgments means to introduce a contradiction.) Analytical judgments can be divided again into two as, Analytical judgments in the strict sense and Analytical judgments in the broad sense

#### **ANALYTICAL JUDGMENTS IN THE STRICT SENSE**

Analytical judgments in the strict sense are those which express what the logical analysis has revealed (those who deny such true judgments put a contradiction between terms of contents of judgments.)

#### **ANALYTICAL JUDGMENTS IN THE BROAD SENSE**

Analytical judgments in the broad sense are those which express what the transcendental analysis has revealed. (Those who would deny such true judgments formed on the basis of the analysis of the experience of judgments itself would put contradiction between the terms and the exercise of the denial).

Metaphysics, as the other sciences, will of course use logical analysis in the frequent definitions of its terms. But its proper method will be the 'transcendental analyses. It will try to discover the a priori conditions of its starting point, i.e. our sensitive-rational experience. Thus it will discover the nature of the agent, the structure of the primary object of the knowledge, the existence and the nature of the agent's ultimate end.



---

### **3.8. SYNTHESIS**

---

Synthesis is the putting together of parts to compose or re – compose a whole. Metaphysics will use synthesis, first in so far as it rests on the direct judgments which imply several syntheses and the exercise of the first principles. Metaphysics will further aim at synthesis in as far as it will try to synthesize all its discoveries and put them into complex conclusions, theses, group of theses, sections and parts so as to form a complete treatise of metaphysics. It can be of two types. A posteriori synthesis and a priori synthesis

#### **A POSTERIORI SYNTHESIS**

A posteriori synthesis is the putting together of parts which have been the objects of particular experience

#### **A PRIORI SYNTHESIS**

A priori synthesis is that union of parts which is always taking place in a certain experiences, thus the data of that experience may vary, e.g. the direct judgments implies always a concrete and objective synthesis.

### **SYNTHETIC JUDGMENTS**

Synthetic judgments are those which express what experience reveals to be one. There will be definitions in metaphysics and they will fulfill the quite legitimate purpose of explication. But it is true that in metaphysics we want to do more than define essences. We want information about reality and judgments of existence. These will be grounded on experiences. When judgments bear on the phenomenal as phenomenal, then the judgments are synthetic a posteriori. When the experience and reflections on it manifest principles which are spontaneously operative in experience (as the principle of identity and principle of causality) then we have here a basis for what are called synthetic a priori judgments and with the help of these we are able or may even be forced to affirm realities which either belong to the material world or transcend it.

#### **SYNTHETIC A POSTERIORI JUDGMENTS**

Synthetic a posteriori judgments are those which expresses the unity of the particular data of experience, e.g. the judgment that “the thief is in the room” (those who deny them go against the contingent truth, but actually something else might be the case, and then the denial would not be false.)

#### **SYNTHETIC A PRIORI JUDGMENTS**

Synthetic a priori judgments are those which express the putting together, (the synthesis), which experiences as the experiences always implies. E.g. “The first principle of objectivity” is a synthesis, always implied in all judgments. The first principle of objectivity that “there is truth” is a spontaneous primary evidence which we recognize by reflecting on what we find within us; it is even a conviction which one cannot reject without restating it. St. Thomas has well expressed this when he writes: “it is self-evident that truth exists, for even denying it would admit it. Were there no such thing as truth, then it would be true that there is no truth; something then is true, and therefore there is truth”. In fact those who deny them go against a necessary truth and thus they always commit a contradiction.

---

### **3.9. REFLECTION**

---

Metaphysics uses reflection as its way to explore reality. Metaphysics will use reflections both in the sense of concomitant reflections on our direct judgments and other sensitive-relational experiences and of subsequent reflections on the implications of such acts. The concomitant reflection supplies the very first ground of certainty because we have here the most intimate unity of intelligibility of thing and understanding, since in ourselves we find both intelligible and intelligent. The subsequent reflections will use analyses, synthesis and deduction. These exist in different forms and manners. We have explained it in detail in the above section.

---

### **3.10. INTUITION**

---

Another important method that philosophers employ in attempting to arrive at necessary truths is that of appealing to intuitions. Where a metaphysical truth, if necessary, appears to be an analytic truth, the appeal to intuition would not seem to be a satisfactory terminus since it provides no account of why the proposition that seems to be necessarily true, whereas an analytic derivation would do precisely that.

Many philosophers hold, however, that there are a priori necessary truths that are not analytic. So, for example, there are propositions concerning apparently simple, incompatible properties, such as the propositions that nothing can be both red and green at the same place at the same time. In addition, if ethical statements have cognitive content, then it is natural to think that there are basic moral statements that would be true in any possible world and thus which are necessary such as the proposition that pain is intrinsically bad and the proposition that the killing of innocent persons is seriously wrong. But if this is right, then, if it can plausibly be argued that such propositions are analytically true, there may be no alternative to the view that the truth of such propositions is known by means of some sort of direct, intellectual intuition, however uninformative such an account may seem.

---

### **3.11. INDIAN METHODS**

---

Many Western scholars are of the view that Indian methods are always mystical. Although it is partially true, along with the mystical experiences the knowledge of the ultimate can be deduced through sound epistemological methods. Reality belongs to a level which cannot be attained by sense experience and by generalizations from sense perception. Thus in the Brahadaranyaka Upanishad, Yajñavalkya in his discussion with the priests, shows how one has to proceed from the crude material earth, through the elements of water, air and fire in the increasing order of subtlety to the general notion of being: “he who dwells in all beings, and within all beings are, and who rules all beings from within, he is the self, the ruler within, the immortal.” ( Brh. Up., III, VII, 15.).

But beyond this general aspect of material being (adhibhuta) are the levels of consciousness: one has to go up others, the internal sense of mind, and knowledge, to the inmost core of our conscious self which is the pure aspect of witness. “Hence ultimate reality has to be conceived as unseen, but seeing; unheard, but hearing; unperceived, seer but he,.. there is no other knower but he. This is thy self, the ruler within, the immortal.”( Brh. III, VII, 23.). Thus the search for reality ends in the pure conscious self, which is the purest and subtlest core of all things.



The same method of procedure appears in other Upanishads also. Kena Upanishad begins with the word “kena,” by whom: “impelled by whom, at whose will does the mind move, does the vital airs act, by whose movement does the speech speak, the eye and the ear and their presiding deities attain their objects?” the answer is that the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of speech and the eye of the eye is the Real beyond, who is indicated by the key word of the Upanishad, “Tadvanam,” namely the goal and object of all aspirations. He is so subtle that none of the human faculties can grasp him.

A parable makes the matter clear: once the gods were standing together and bragging about their feats in a victory they gained against the demons. Suddenly an unknown deity appears in the vicinity. God *Agni*, fire, is deputed to find out his identity. As a contention for answering his question the stranger challenged *Agni* to prove his power by burning a straw he put forth; *Agni* failed and is turned back. Then the god of the air, *Vayu*, approached and is turned back since he failed to blow the straw off. Finally, *Indra*, the god of the sky, approached the stranger. Then suddenly the deity vanished. Uma, the goddess of divine wisdom, appearing in mid-air told him that it was Brahman, the supreme, who appeared to them, and that only through him they had achieved the victory. The lesson of the parables is that action, represented by fire, and sense experience symbolized by the god of air, cannot in any way attain ultimate reality even the intellect, symbolized by the god of the sky, *Indra*, cannot directly attain reality, unless it is manifested by divine wisdom in mid air, i.e., in the cave of the heart, by a sort of intuition.

The reality is so subtle and so beyond all sense and imagination that those who think they know it, do not know it, while those who think they do not know it may very well have attained a real knowledge of it. But the mode of procedure is clear: go beyond the senses to ultimate and immutable reality, that is, the basis of all intelligibility and consciousness.

Indian philosophers also accept six means of knowledge (*pramanas*): perception, inference, verbal testimony, comparison, presumption, and non-cognition. Prof. Srinivasa Rao, in one of his recent articles, discusses these means of knowledge showing the intrinsic relation between metaphysics and epistemology. *Pratyaksha* (perception) is sense perception including mental perception. Perception may be determinate or indeterminate, ordinary or extraordinary, or yogic. This is a method universally accepted by all schools of Indian philosophy, but with their own individually prescribed interpretations. *Anumana* (inference) is necessarily linked with a universal relation and its recognition. The universal relation must have been cognized on a previous occasion, and must be re-cognized for inferential knowledge to occur. It is a process of reasoning by which we are led to what is not given in perception, but is always based on what is given in perception. This inference may be for oneself (*svarthanumana*) as in the case of a person non-verbally inferring within oneself the presence of fire on the hill upon observing smoke there; or, it may be for another person (*pararthanumana*), expressed in language, as when one argues to prove that there must be fire on the hill because smoke is observed. *Sabda* (verbal testimony) is a means of valid knowledge that enjoys a special kind of centrality in many schools. If a person has known things as they really are, his / her testimony should be accepted as a legitimate source of knowledge until we ourselves are able to attain direct knowledge of things. In several fields of knowledge, we accept the testimony of others even without questioning the truth of such testimony. *Upamana* (comparison) yields knowledge derived from judgments of similarity. A remembered object is like a perceived one. “y is like x,” where x is immediately perceived and y is an object perceived on a previous occasion that becomes the content of consciousness in the form of memory. For example, if someone has never seen a wild cow but has been told by others that it looks like a domestic cow, he will know that it is a wild cow when

he, later on, sees a wild cow in the forest. *Arthapatti* (postulation or presumption) is knowledge obtained through postulating a fact in order to make another fact intelligible. For instance, a man fasts during the day, but continues to gain weight. Then one must assume, barring physiological problems, that he eats at night. *Anupalabdhi* (non-cognition) is the only means of the cognition of non-existence. It yields knowledge of absence where an object would be immediately perceived if it were there. However, not every instance of the non-cognition of something proves its non-existence. For example, the failure of a person to see a chair in a dark room (i.e., non-apprehension by the person) by no means indicates that the chair is not there. Hence, for non-apprehension to be a sign of absence, the attempt at apprehension must be under appropriate conditions, which are conditions sufficient to perception.

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

---

### 3.12. LET US SUM UP

---

Traditionally, metaphysics was practiced as a top-down, a priori discipline, with Euclidean geometry as its model. The metaphysician begins with self-evident principle of a highly general nature, together with appropriate definitions, and proceeds to draw out the necessary consequences.

This approach is clearly exemplified in the work of two prominent eighteenth-century metaphysicians; Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Benedict (Baruch) de Spinoza. Leibniz spun metaphysical gold out of the dross of the principle of non-contradiction and sufficient reason. His entire monadology (monad means a 'unit' or 'one') replete with an infinite collection of possible worlds, with the actual world (the best of all possible worlds) consisting of a myriad of mutually reflecting, simple mind-like substances. Spinoza was even more self-consciously imitating Euclid, but his conclusions are almost diametrically opposed to those of Leibniz. Spinoza's ontology comprises exactly one substance (God or nature), of which the mental and the physical realms are two aspects, and everything about the one substance is absolutely necessary – only the actual is really possible.

In the course of the history the discipline of metaphysics has been regularly contested. Empiricists, led by David Hume, have often attacked a priori metaphysics, contrasting its conflicting results with the astonishing success of empirical sciences, on the one hand, and of mathematics on the other. At the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century, Immanuel Kant, in response to Hume's critique, attempted a partial vindication of a priori metaphysics. According to him metaphysics can play a legitimate role as handmaid to science and a less straightforward role in upholding ethics. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the appetite for idealist metaphysics began to fade. A realist assault on this tradition was launched by Alexius Meinong, Bertrand Russell, Gottlob Frege, and George Moore, and their style of argumentation, as much as the content of their conclusions, was influential in shaping the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries' more circumspect approach to metaphysics. Later a more scientifically minded thinkers, with the help of logical positivism and inspired by the Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, declared all metaphysical discourses completely meaningless. But the short-coming of the logical positivism was rapidly exposed in the course of time. Now

metaphysics cautiously revived by heirs of both movements is once again a flourishing discipline in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Contemporary metaphysics is characterized by a bottom-up approach rather than the traditional top-down approach. The contemporary metaphysician begins with a problem or puzzle, often generated by some basic data or the consequences of such data. To say that contemporary metaphysics is bottom-up is not to saddle it with a crude inductivism – the fallacious inference of general theories from finite data. The task of the contemporary metaphysician is not so much to prove an ontology, either from high-level first principle or from lower-level data. Rather it aims to propose an ontology to accommodate and explain the data, to resolve apparent conflicts by explaining away the appearance of such, or explain why the data are misleading. The methodology is less like that of pure mathematics and more like that of science. Given a finite amount of data, the number of potentially adequate metaphysical theories seems limited only by the imagination of practicing metaphysicians. To decide between theories we need more than data accommodation. Metaphysicians typically subscribe to Occam’s razor – the injunction to refrain from multiplying entities beyond necessity. The upshot of these principles is then, that a theory must explain the data; and, of two theories that both explain the data, the theory with fewer ontic commitments is to be preferred.

In short metaphysics starts from experience, rests on experience and uses the reflection which accompanies it. Though metaphysics uses logical analysis, logical deduction and advances to logical syntheses, its ‘speciality’ is in the use of the transcendental analysis and transcendental deduction. It will thus come to the transcendental conclusions or synthesis. These will not simply be laws which explain particular types of facts, but the expression of the actual real conditions of the necessary experience of being, as we have it in our sensitivo-rational experience. Thus, the synthesis will speak of real causes, of their nature, of their structure, of their relations.

Metaphysics will then be intrinsically *a priori* in so far as it will not rest on the particular data of our sensitivo-rational experiences, but on the experiences itself and its necessary conditions. Metaphysics, however, will be extrinsically *a posteriori* in as far as there must be an experience of data (whichever they are), before we can have the transcendental analysis of the experiences and the transcendental deduction of the necessity of its conditions.

In as far as metaphysics is *a priori*, it pre-exists totally and perfectly in the sensitivo- rational experiences in which it is exercised. Again metaphysics does not have, as a pre requisite, the full elaboration of scientific knowledge as some thought it had. As long as the proper standpoint of metaphysics has not been discerned, one would be inclined to think of metaphysics as a synthesis of all sciences. But once its standpoint has been discovered i.e. to explain “the science of being as being”, then we need only explore our necessary affirmation of being in its essential conditions, without having to wait for all the returns of scientific investigations.

**Check Your Progress II**

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) What do you understand by ‘apriori synthesis’?

.....  
.....

.....  
.....  
2) How do you explain Pratyaksha?  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

---

### 3.13. KEY WORDS

---

**Dialectic:** Dialectic (the dialectical method) is a method of argument, which has been central to both Eastern and Western philosophy since ancient times. The word “dialectic” originates in Ancient Greece, and was made popular by Plato's Socratic dialogues. Dialectic is rooted in the ordinary practice of a dialogue between two or more people who hold different ideas and wish to persuade each other. The presupposition of a dialectical argument is that the participants, even if they do not agree, share at least some meanings and principles of inference.

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

---

### 3.14. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

---

- Coreth, Emerich. *Metaphysics*. English Edition by Joseph Donceel with a Critique by Bernard Lonergan. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.
- Heidegger, Martin. *What is Philosophy?*. Tr. William Kluback and Jean T. Wilde. Plymouth: Vision, 1989.
- Magee, Bryan. *The Great Philosophers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Marias, Julian. *History of Philosophy*. Tr. Stanley Appelbaum and Clarence C. Strowbridge. New York: Dover Publications, 1967.
- Norris, Christopher. “Deconstruction,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. Edward Craig, Vol.2. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Panthanmackel, George. “From Dichotomy to Perichoresis: An Overview of Western Philosophical Methods,” in *Philosophical Methods: Through the Prevalent to a Relevant*. Ed. Johnson J. Puthenpurackal. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2004.
- Panthanmackel, George. *In Struggle and Dialogue With: A Concise History of Western Medieval Philosophy*. Bangalore: ATC, 1992.
- Rao, Srinivasa. “Philosophical Method in Indian Philosophy,” in *Philosophical Methods: Through the Prevalent to a Relevant*. Ed. Johnson J. Puthenpurackal. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2004.
- 

### 3.15. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

---

#### Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Dialectic method of Socrates and Plato was essentially a method of discussion and debate in which the participants progressed from one point to another, each one disputing the



point of the other until they could reach an undisputable point. It consisted in reasoning through rigorous dialogue as a method of intellectual investigation intended to expose false beliefs and elicit truth. Dialectic takes a different turn in Hegel. Hegelian dialectic is not merely epistemological, but ontological too. The method of dialectic involves thesis-antithesis-synthesis in which thesis, antithesis and synthesis are only different 'moments' in the movement of thought resulting in both continuity and difference. The very birth of the thesis is the birth of the antithesis as well as the synthesis.

2. The principles of different sciences are arrived at by means of inductive process. For example in psychiatry some general principles concerning mental disease are discovered by observation of the behavior of mental patients, its recording, its analysis, classification and finally generalization to arrive at certain common principles. This is the method of induction.

### Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. A priori synthesis is that union of parts which is always taking place in a certain experiences, thus the data of that experience may vary, e.g. the direct judgments implies always a concrete and objective synthesis.
2. *Pratyaksha* (perception) is sense perception including mental perception. Perception may be determinate or indeterminate, ordinary or extraordinary, or yogic. This is a method universally accepted by all schools of Indian philosophy, but with their own individually prescribed interpretations.

## UNIT 4 BRIEF HISTORY OF WESTERN METAPHYSICS

### Contents

- 4.0 Objectives
  - 4.1 Introduction
  - 4.2 Greek Metaphysics
  - 4.3 Medieval Metaphysics
  - 4.4 Modern Metaphysics
  - 4.5 Contemporary Metaphysics
  - 4.6 Let us sum up
  - 4.7 Key words
  - 4.8 Further Readings and References
  - 4.9 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 

### 4.0. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to acquire an in-depth knowledge of the history of western metaphysics. Without getting a historical knowledge of metaphysics, one cannot hope to get a real grasp of the metaphysical problems and the solutions offered by different philosophers. All great philosophers have been metaphysicians; they have dealt with the problem of reality. In the present unit, we will deal with the metaphysical systems in Greek, Medieval, Modern and Contemporary western philosophy. This is not a mere summary of different systems; rather it aims at showing the inter-connections among different metaphysical systems.

---

Thus by learning this unit the students should be able:

- to acquire an in-depth knowledge of metaphysics of the important metaphysicians in western philosophy.
- to see how the metaphysics of each successive thinker functions as a criticism/modification of previous thinkers.
- to relate metaphysics with other branches of philosophy.

### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, metaphysics is defined as the science of being as being, or of reality as such. The western metaphysics has a historical character in so far as the metaphysical reflection of different philosophers unfolds historically, very much like events in human history. Indeed, the thought of each successive thinker functions as a critique or modification of previous thinkers. The present survey attempts to clarify this intimate link among the metaphysical systems of different thinkers. Being the foundational discipline in philosophy, metaphysics is related to other branches of philosophy, especially epistemology--the theory of knowledge. Traditionally, epistemology was considered as the first part of metaphysics. We may say that as metaphysics is, so is epistemology, and also vice versa. Moreover, metaphysics is related to cosmology, philosophical anthropology, natural theology; for, the nature of ultimate reality determines material objects, man and God. Finally, it is also related to ethics in so far as morality is determined by the nature of man, which in turn is dependent on the interpretation of ultimate



reality. We will deal with other branches of philosophy only in so far as they are needed to clarify the relation among the metaphysical reflections of different philosophers.

## **4. 2. GREEK METAPHYSICS**

### **Pre-Socratic Metaphysics**

We find nascent metaphysics even in Thales' philosophy, the first western philosopher, who held that everything can be explained in terms of water. Anaximander criticized this position, and posited the 'infinite' as ultimate reality; and Anaximenes in his turn differed from Anaximander, affirming 'air' as ultimate. Pythagoras, being a mathematician, and impressed by the harmony of nature, taught that numbers constitute the essence of reality. It was Heraclitus who for the first time in western philosophy proclaimed becoming or change, as more fundamental than permanence. According to him, everything that exists, including man, exists because it is in a process of continuous change. Only becoming or change is real, and being or permanence is mere illusion. Not only do things change from moment to moment; even in one and the same moment they are, and are not, the same. It is not merely that a thing first is, and then a moment later, is not; it is both, is and is not at the same time. The at-onceness of 'is' and 'is not' is the meaning of becoming. To signalize the reality of incessant change, Heraclitus chose as his first principle the most mobile substance he knew, namely, fire. Fire is not an abiding substratum in all change, but the denial of all substances. It is an exact parallel of the metaphysical principle of becoming.

Parmenides challenged Heraclitus' teaching that everything changes. How can a thing, both be and not be at the same time? To say that it can, is to say that something is, and is not, which is a contradiction. Parmenides denies becoming and affirms being. Hence from being only being can come, and nothing can become something else; whatever is, always has been, and always will be; everything remains what it is. Therefore there can be only one eternal, unchangeable being. Empedocles, Anaxagoras and Democritus tried to reconcile the problem of permanence and change, holding that there are some permanent elements in reality, and also some other elements which are the causes of all changes.

### **The Sophists and Socrates**

The Sophists and Socrates were mainly concerned with the problem of knowledge. Because the previous thinkers held different opinions regarding the nature of ultimate reality, the Sophists came to the conclusion that it is impossible to attain true knowledge about reality. Hence metaphysics is impossible. Since they were unable to know reality, there cannot be a morality based on the nature of reality; ethics was merely conventional. Socrates attempted to confront the Sophists' problem of knowledge head on. He demonstrated that knowledge through concepts is attainable making use of dialectical method. Since knowledge is attainable, there is also the knowledge of morality; according to him knowledge is virtue.

### **Plato**

Plato starts his metaphysics with Socratic concepts. Now, the concepts have no validity unless there are realities corresponding to them. Plato was interested in mathematics, especially geometry. Since he did not find perfect geometrical figures such as circles, squares, triangles, etc., in this world corresponding to their concepts in human mind, Plato concluded that these exist in a transcendent, ideal world. Similarly, corresponding to all ideas in the mind, there exist essences or forms in the ideal world--the highest form, being the idea of the Good. Now these forms can be known only by rational mind. Compared to the ideal world, the world of experience is mere shadow. Matter is evil. Senses which perceive this world are not dependable sources of knowledge. To explain the reality of man, Plato invented the myth of the pre-existence of human soul which, inhabiting a star, contemplated the forms of the ideal world, and fell due to desire for this world. Thus rational knowledge is innate. The soul is imprisoned in matter; matter being evil, human body too is evil. Hence moral action consists in suppressing the body, and liberating the soul for the contemplation of forms. Plato's philosophy ended up in a dualism between the world of experience and ideal world.

### **Aristotle**

Aristotle's metaphysics starts with the rejection of Plato's ideal world of forms. For him, forms do not exist in a transcendent world, but they exist in the things of the world of experience. In his view, both senses and intellect co-operate in the acquisition of knowledge—universal ideas--through the process of abstraction. Corresponding to the universal ideas in our minds, there exist essences in things. Aristotle drew up ten categories such as substance and nine accidents, classifying all realities according their modes of existence. The substances of natural bodies, including man, are constituted out of matter and form; and these possess accidents such as quantity, quality, etc. Motion is explained as transition from potency to act. Reflection upon the fact of motion in this world led Aristotle to conclude that there exists an unmoved mover—God; God is thought-thinking-thought. This prime mover is not the creator or efficient cause of the world, nor does he know the world, because God has no ideas in his mind. For, Aristotle had already rejected Plato's world of ideas. God moves the world only as a final cause. Aristotelian metaphysics ended up in a dualism between the uncreated world and uncreated God.

### **Neo-Platonism**

Neo-Platonism of Plotinus is a monistic synthesis of Platonism. In his metaphysics, the One--the ultimate reality--corresponds to the form of the Good in Plato's metaphysics. The world of *nous* is the ideal world, and there is the world-soul and matter. Other realities emanate from the One, each subsequent stage proceeding from the one which is just previous to it. Just as Plotinus' metaphysics deals with the emanation from the One to matter, so his moral philosophy is concerned with the reverse process or the return of man to God by means of purification from matter. Such purification is marked by three stages: practical, contemplative and ecstatic.

## **4. 3. MEDIAEVAL METAPHYSICS**

### **Augustine**

Medieval metaphysics marks the synthesis of the metaphysics of Plato and of Aristotle with Christian faith. The great philosophers, St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, attempted to Christianize Plato and Aristotle. Augustinian metaphysics is almost completely Platonic except for the fact that he brings in God with the doctrine of exemplarism. There are exemplars—forms of Plato's ideal world—in the mind of God according to which he created the world. Universal ideas are obtained through divine illumination.

### **Thomas Aquinas**

Though St. Thomas is known to be an Aristotelian, at the heart of his metaphysics is the Platonic doctrine of ideas; he borrowed from St. Augustine exemplarism—the doctrine that there are ideas in the mind of God according to which he created the world. St. Thomas' contribution to Aristotelian metaphysics is his theory of essence and existence. All created beings are constituted of essence and existence. Different members of the same species possess similar essences; for example, Peter and Paul, have similar essences or human natures. In material things, essence itself is composed of matter and form. St. Thomas makes the distinction between contingent beings and necessary being; essence and existence are distinct in contingent beings, whereas in necessary being—God—they are identical; that is, God is existence itself. The principle of individuation—that which makes an individual thing to be that thing different from another thing—is matter limited by quantity. In the acquisition of knowledge, St. Thomas gives a subordinate role to sense image in so far as abstraction of universal ideas is the work of agent intellect. Corresponding to these ideas there exist essences in things. The intellect knows individual things only indirectly through sense image, since the direct object of intellect is the universal essences in things. God is both the efficient and final cause of the universe. God created the world according to the ideas in his mind. St. Thomas accorded primacy to intellect over will in God and also in man. In creating this world, God's will was guided by the intellect; hence the world is rational. In ethics, St. Thomas held that moral laws are based on human nature with their transcendent foundation in the ideas in divine mind. In his thought, St. Thomas affirms the threefold existence of the universals: in the mind of man and of God as concepts, and in things as essences. There is no dualism in the metaphysics of St. Thomas.

### **John Duns Scotus**

With Duns Scotus started the decline of medieval philosophy. Though he followed St. Thomas on important metaphysical doctrines, he differed from him on crucial points. Though universal ideas are acquired through abstraction, Scotus gave an important role to sense image in this process, whereas St. Thomas accorded primacy to intellect. The latter taught that universal essence is the direct object of the intellect, and so the intellect knows the individual only indirectly. But Scotus held that the intellect knows also the individual thing directly since the higher faculty understands also what the lower faculties—senses—know. Moreover for him, the principle of individuation is thisness—*haecceitas*. Regarding the doctrine of universal essences, St. Thomas would hold that if X and Y are two men, their two essences or natures are similar. Though Scotus spoke of a common human nature, he would not mean that the actual nature of X is similar to the actual nature of Y. Further, he held voluntarism—primacy of the will—both in man and in God. Thus in creating the world, God assigned to everything its own nature: to fire that of heating, to water that of being cold, and so on. He could have created a universe ruled by

laws opposite to those which presently govern it. Because all things are dependent on the will of God, nothing in the universe is rational. Hence moral laws are not rational. God has prescribed them. Therefore, he could have made a society in which murder and polygamy would not be wrong. With regard to the Decalogue, the first three commandments regarding God are necessary since they follow from God's love of himself. In effect, all these doctrines imply a denial of ideas in the mind of God--the foundation of rationality in the universe--the rejection of universal ideas and essences, and the affirmation of the individual.

### 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) Compare the metaphysics of Plato and that of Aristotle.

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

2) What are the differences between the metaphysics of Aristotle and that of St. Thomas Aquinas?

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

### 4.4. MODERN METAPHYSICS

Greek and Medieval philosophy started philosophizing with object; and this experiment came to an end with the skepticism of Occam. Both rationalism and empiricism in modern philosophy start philosophy with subject; that is, what is given in the subject: rationalism with innate ideas, and empiricism with sense impressions.

#### René Descartes

Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz are the rationalist philosophers in modern philosophy. Descartes' philosophical background was provided by the skepticism of Occam. Agreeing with the skeptical doctrine, he proceeded to doubt everything; but doubting itself is thinking, and if he is thinking, Descartes concluded, he exists: *Cogito ergo sum*. He is certain about the existence of self. Now, the self finds in itself many ideas—the innate ideas. One of the ideas is that of God. Since the idea of God is the idea of a perfect Being, God must have placed it in the self, and hence God exists. There are also ideas about the external world, and we have a belief that such a world



exists. God who is truthful would not give us this belief if such a world did not exist. After having established the existence of self, God and world, Descartes proceeds to build up his metaphysical system. He proposes his metaphysical categories--substance, attributes and modes--in the place of the ten categories of Aristotle. Substance is a reality which so exists that it needs no other reality to exist. So defined, there can be only one substance, namely, God; but Descartes admits relative substances, such as matter and mind. The essential characteristic property of substance is called attribute. Thought is the principal attribute of mind, and extension that of body. But there are also modes, such as particular thoughts in mind, which are separable, in the sense that mind can exist without them. Matter and mind being entirely different, Cartesian metaphysics ends up in dualism.

### **Benedict Spinoza**

Taking Descartes' definition of substance strictly, Spinoza builds up a deductive system of metaphysics. Given this definition, there can be only one substance, namely, God. Mind and matter are the attributes of God so that Cartesian dualism is transformed into pantheistic monism. Spinoza accepts Descartes' concepts of attributes and modes. For him, God has infinite number of attributes of which we know only mind and matter. There are also infinite modes and finite modes.

### **Gottfried Leibniz**

According to Leibniz, the ultimate substance is monad which is the center of force. He got the notion of monad from a synthesis of the concepts of physical atom and mathematical point. In physics, atom is the smallest unit which is real, but divisible. But in mathematics, a point is indivisible, but not a real entity. Neither atom nor mathematical point can be substance because substance must be real as well as indivisible; and it should have also the element of motion. Monad is such a real and indivisible substance, as center of force. They are the metaphysical units of all living and non-living objects, including God.

### **John Locke**

Empiricism was another experiment at philosophizing which started with subject—with sense impressions in subject. Locke, Berkeley and Hume are the empiricist philosophers. According to Locke, we have no innate ideas as held by rationalists; all our knowledge come from experience—sense impressions. In order to reach the world of objects from sense impressions, he makes use of the principle of causality. External objects are the causes of impressions in us. Locke makes a distinction between primary and secondary qualities of material objects; primary qualities such as extension, figure and so on, are objective, whereas secondary qualities such as colour, smell, taste, etc., are subjective. Though as an empiricist, he cannot affirm metaphysical realities, he holds that there are substances such as matter and mind. A body is a substance supporting primary qualities such as extension and impenetrability. There are spiritual substances or souls with the qualities of thinking and willing. There is also pure spirit, namely, God.

### **George Berkeley**

George Berkeley agrees with Locke that sense impressions are the objects of our knowledge. But he rejects the distinction between primary (objective) and secondary (subjective) qualities; according to him, even primary qualities are subjective, since primary and secondary qualities cannot be separated. Apart from primary and secondary qualities, there is no material substance holding together these qualities, as held by Locke. For, if this substance is separate from qualities, it is unknowable, and so is meaningless. But if it is connected with qualities, it exists only when perceived. Hence if primary and secondary qualities are subjective, and if there is no material substance apart from these qualities, then the so-called material world does not exist objectively. Its reality consists in its being perceived by the subject; *esse est percipi*: to be is to be perceived. More precisely, to be is to be perceived—as impressions; or to be is to be a perceiver—as mind. Minds or spirits, and their perceptions, are all that exist. The objects of experience are not material things; they are perceptions in our minds.

### **David Hume**

David Hume drew the logical conclusion of empiricism. If experience is the source of knowledge, metaphysics which claims to attain knowledge of reality beyond experience is impossible. Hence he rejects the metaphysical concepts of substance and causality. For Hume, substance is a meaningless concept. We think of extension, figure, colour, sound, and other properties of bodies, as qualities which cannot exist by themselves. Imagination feigns something unknown and invisible—substance—which is unchangeable despite the change of different qualities. This is a fiction. Moreover, there is no metaphysical concept of causality. Our knowledge of the relation between cause and effect is based on experience. Sense impressions are associated with one another, and they succeed one another with a certain constancy.

### **Immanuel Kant**

Hume's skepticism is said to have aroused Kant 'from his dogmatic slumber.' With his Copernican revolution in philosophy, the turn to the subject that started with Descartes reached its climax. Most of the philosophers who came after Kant, even contemporary philosophers, merely extended Copernican revolution in different areas of thought. Most of the thinkers till Kant's time held that for knowledge to be true, it must conform to the object. Kant literally reversed this doctrine—and this is the Copernican revolution—and maintained that it is the 'object' that is to be conformed to the 'subject,' or rather to the conditions of cognition. The cognitive structure of 'mind' is viewed as the source of certain conditions to which the 'object' must conform in order to constitute knowledge. This does not mean that there is an 'object' waiting to be conformed to 'mind,' nor a 'mind' to which the 'object' is conformed. Rather an object is that which is conformed to certain a priori cognitive conditions.

Kant investigates these a priori conditions of knowledge employing transcendental method. These conditions are a priori forms of space and time of sensibility, and twelve categories of understanding; these are not obtained from experience of objects, but rather they are presupposed in all experience. On the level of sensibility, sense impressions are organized by the forms of space and time. But in order to constitute rational knowledge, there must be a higher synthesis employing twelve categories of understanding. Two such categories are substance and causality. For example, in order to make the causal judgment that stone breaks window glass, the



experiences of a stone coming into contact with glass and immediately afterwards the continuous pane of glass being replaced by falling fragments are subsumed under the category of causality.

Now, the ultimate condition of the possibility of knowledge, according to Kant, is the transcendental 'I' or the transcendental unity of apperception. This unity is not derived from experience, but is a necessary presupposition of the synthesis of the manifold sense data into an intelligible whole. The objects conformed to a priori forms of space and time, and twelve categories of understanding are called phenomena. Noumena or things-in-themselves are objects existing independently of knowing subject. We know only phenomena, the product of organization of experience by means of forms and categories. What things are in themselves—noumena--what is it that causes sensations in us, we do not know. Hence science and mathematics dealing with phenomena are possible, but metaphysics dealing with noumena such as world, man and God, is impossible.

Just as objects are to be conformed to a priori forms and categories in order to constitute knowledge, so human acts are to be conformed to the form of will, which is called categorical imperative; it is the command to do duty for its own sake. Moral act is good when it is done solely from respect for duty regardless of consequences. It is this a priori form of will that determines empirical elements, namely, human actions, and makes them moral. Similarly, an object is judged to be beautiful when it is conformed to the faculty of taste. The sense of beauty is not built up by repeated experiences of beautiful objects. In experience I apprehend the object only in its sensible qualities and its spatio-temporal dimensions. I must have the form of beauty which I attribute to the object; or else even the simplest experience of the beautiful will be impossible. Kantian philosophy ends up in the dualism between phenomena and noumena.

### **German Idealism**

German idealists--Fichte, Schelling and Hegel--looked upon themselves as the philosophical successors of Kant. That metaphysical idealism developed out of the system of a thinker whose name is associated with skepticism about metaphysical knowledge is one of strangest developments in the history of western metaphysics. The starting point of German idealism is Kantian notion of thing-in-itself or noumena. Idealists proceeded to eliminate thing-in-itself in order to complete Kant's project. Given Kant's premises, there was no room for an unknowable entity supposedly independent of mind. Kantian philosophy had to be transformed into a consistent idealism; this meant that noumena had to be regarded as products of thought, as in the case of phenomena.

### **Johann Fichte and Friedrich Schelling**

For Fichte, the Absolute as thought is the ultimate reality, and nature is the projection of the Absolute. Individual egos and material things are its manifestations. The Absolute cannot become conscious of itself unless it is opposed by non-ego or nature which it projects. The Absolute ego becomes conscious of itself in this act of creation. Schelling accepts Fichte's concept of Absolute ego as ultimate reality, but differs from his concept of nature. Schelling rejects the view that nature is the projection of the Absolute. According to him, the Absolute must be conceived as the indeterminate identity of spirit and nature. Production of nature is due

to the fact that the pole of nature prevails over the pole of the spirit through the unconscious action of the Absolute. Schelling conceives nature and mind as progressive stages in the evolution of the Absolute that expresses itself in inorganic and organic realms, in individual life and social life, in history, science and art. The Absolute reaches its highest goal—self-consciousness and freedom—in man. It is in man that the original identity of nature and spirit is manifested through aesthetic intuition. The artist imitates the creative action of the Absolute and becomes conscious of its activity. In artistic creation, the Absolute becomes conscious of its own creative force.

### **Georg Hegel**

Hegel accepted Fichte's insight that the Absolute ego is the metaphysical principle creative of all reality, and Schelling's intuition that this Absolute is not static, but a dynamic process which evolves. Reality—the Absolute Spirit—for Hegel, is a dynamic process of evolution in which something that is undifferentiated differentiates itself and assumes many contradictory forms until all the potentialities are realized, and all contradictions reconciled. Every stage in the process contains all the preceding stages and foreshadows all the future ones. Reality is full of contradictions and negations. For example, the plant germinates, flowers, withers and dies. In understanding these processes, we must predicate each of these contradictions, and show how they are reconciled and preserved in the whole. They must be understood as parts of an organic system. The movement of the Absolute manifesting itself in nature and mind in its journey towards self-consciousness is called dialectical movement, with its three moments of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. It cannot become conscious without a world, and it achieves full self-consciousness in the minds of human beings. In rational thought, the Absolute becomes fully conscious of itself. Metaphysics expresses the content of the Absolute through the proportionate medium of rational thought. The Absolute contemplates itself as objective existence.

## **4. 5. CONTEMPORARY METAPHYSICS**

### **Edmund Husserl**

In Husserl's phenomenology, we find another variety of idealistic metaphysics along Kantian lines. According to Husserl, Kant was not radical enough. He discovered the region of meaning conferring, object constituting subjectivity—the transcendental I—but did not reach the pure ego which constitutes not only scientific objects—the phenomena—but also all varieties of objects and sense of the world. By taking a more radical transcendental turn, Husserl was able to reach the pure subjectivity, and show how the world of everyday experience is its accomplishment. He could accomplish with respect everyday world what Kant could achieve regarding the world of science. He was able to account for those transcendental structures of conscious activity that are presupposed by our capacity to constitute the sense of the world of experience.

Husserl makes use of the methods of epoché—bracketing the world of existence—and eidetic reduction—abstracting from the particular—in order to reach the region of transcendental ego which is the meaning-giving, object constituting subjectivity. For him, the transcendental subjectivity is the source of all meanings of the world and of any worldly facts.

## Martin Heidegger

Heidegger's philosophy of being is yet another experiment at extending the Copernican revolution initiated by Kant, and modified by Husserl. Kant left the dualism between phenomena and noumena; and Husserl's technique of epoché—bracketing the world of existence—in fact separated the world of transcendental subjectivity from the real world. Heidegger proposes to employ phenomenological method without epoché, and to deal with everyday world in view of clarifying the problem of being. According to him, traditional philosophers were 'forgetful' of being. They asked the 'why' question, and ended up with the Supreme Being—God—as the ground all beings. Hence Heidegger calls traditional philosophy 'onto-theology.' He attempts to separate 'onto-' from 'theology,' that is, detach literally ontology from theology, thereby 'destroying' the traditional onto-theological metaphysics.

Since traditional philosophy was 'forgetful of being,' Heidegger proposes to ask the question of being anew. He starts this project with the very being who asks this question, namely, man, christened Dasein. Dasein is the transcendental self in relation to being. According to Heidegger, Aristotle interprets human existence in terms of categories that are alien to man. His system of categories is taken from the domain of natural things, the basic category being 'substance.' Heidegger claims that the notion of substance does not fit Dasein. Instead, he analyzes Dasein on the basis of its own fundamental experience. Traditional categories taken from nature are replaced by existentials—the concepts that describe the being of Dasein. On the basis of such phenomenological description of Dasein, Heidegger inquires into the question of being.

Now, Dasein is described as being-in-the-world; and its various dimensions are brought under the key concepts of existentiality, facticity and fallenness. Existentiality is correlated with understanding and projection, facticity with anxiety, and fallenness with being-amidst and concern with things. And the totality of Dasein's structural whole comprehending existentiality, facticity and fallenness is called care. The significance of existentiality is being-ahead-of-itself, of facticity is being-already-in-the-world, and of fallenness is being-alongside the entities within the world. These are the essential features of Dasein's 'everyday,' inauthentic mode of existence. In order to get an integral vision of human existence, Heidegger proceeds to analyze the phenomenon of death. In anticipating death, man achieves the overarching unity that gathers up all the possibilities of human existence; and Dasein is made painfully aware of its temporality. Thus it is temporality that constitutes primordially the totality of the structure of care, with its dimensions of existentiality, facticity and fallenness. These three dimensions of care receive temporal interpretations in terms of a futural being-ahead (existentiality), a past being-already (facticity), and a present being-amidst (fallenness). Thus Heidegger gives a final interpretation of the basic constitution of Dasein in terms of temporality with its three dimensions of present, past and future—the future given priority.

Now what about the question of being and of ground? Traditional metaphysics attempted to ground the irreducible facticity of human's selfhood as well as that of nature on the Absolute or God. But Heidegger accepted the facticity of the self as such; that is to say, he sought to interpret Dasein in terms of its own structure, and the ultimate constitution of Dasein is found to be temporality. Rather than providing a ground outside Dasein, temporality has been recognized as its essential constitution. Thus Dasein is grounded in nothing outside itself. Dasein, held out into

nothing, is beyond all beings, and has in this sense attained ultimate transcendence, the goal of metaphysics.

### **Alfred North Whitehead**

Whitehead's process thought is a neo-realistic metaphysics of becoming. He was opposed to the idea which had dominated metaphysics since the time of Aristotle that every entity consists of a permanent substratum supporting different qualities. Now, if we start with permanence, change can only be an appearance; but if we start with change, we can explain permanence and self-identity as the repetition of relatively enduring patterns of activity. This is the Whiteheadian strategy. Whitehead interprets reality as an organic process. The word 'process' implies temporal change and interconnected activity. He calls his metaphysics 'the philosophy of organism.' The basic analogy for interpreting the world is organism, which is a highly integrated and dynamic pattern of interdependent events.

According to Whitehead, reality is constituted by interrelated events rather than by separate, unchanging substances. For him, transition and activity are more fundamental than permanence and substance. The ultimate constituents of reality are actual entities. These are microcosmic units of process that may be linked to other actual entities in order to form things of everyday experience. An actual entity endures only for an instant—the instant of its becoming; that is, its active process of self-creation out of the elements of perishing past, to become the datum for succeeding generations of actual entities. Thus actual entities are in the process of perpetual becoming and perishing, but as they perish they are taken up into the creative advance of the whole, and are passed on to other actual entities. The universe is a process of perpetual becoming, flux, and change, in which actual entities come to be and pass away.

Coupled with this doctrine of flux is the notion of permanence of all things. While Whitehead rejects an unchanging substrate underlying all change, he does not discard the concept of substrate as such. But this substrate does not exist apart from individual becoming. In order to explain permanence, Whitehead brings in the concept of definiteness or form; for there can be no becoming of actual entities, which is not definite or determinate. But becoming itself cannot generate definiteness out of itself. The factors of definiteness whereby the becoming of actual entities acquires determinate character are called 'eternal objects' which are in the primordial nature of God. These forms of definiteness are capable of specifying the character of actual entities. Thus instead of definite things—substances--undergoing change, becoming takes on definite patterns of reality through forms of definiteness.

The doctrine of God completes Whitehead's metaphysics of becoming. God has two natures--primordial and consequent. As primordial nature, God is unlimited potentiality. Whitehead ascribes the function of ordering of potentialities to God. In this function God is thought of as an abstract, impersonal principle. As such, he lacks actuality. As unlimited potentiality, God's primordial nature includes eternal objects which account for order in the becoming of actual entities. But the consequent nature of God is subject to the process of actualization in the actual world. As such, God is the ground of novelty as well as of order, presenting new possibilities with open alternatives. He elicits the self-creation of individual entities and thereby allows for novelty as well as structure. God influences the world without determining it. He does not



determine the outcome of events nor violate the self-creation of each being. Every entity is the joint product of past causes, divine purposes, and new entity's own self-creation.

### 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 transition from Kant's philosophy to German idealism.

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

2) What are the differences between Kant's synthesis and Husserl's phenomenology?

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

### 4.6. LET US SUM UP

After having made a brief survey of western metaphysics, we find two important characteristics therein. The first concerns the starting point of metaphysics. In general, Greek and medieval metaphysics started with the object, whereas modern and contemporary metaphysics with subject. Second, in western thought, we find metaphysics of permanence and metaphysics of change. The former interprets reality as static permanence, and for the latter reality is dynamic becoming. Most of the western metaphysicians understand reality as static, except Heraclitus, Hegel, Bergson, Whitehead and Heidegger who interpret reality as becoming. Western metaphysics is comprehensive in so far as it deals with most important metaphysical problems. For the student who has a general understanding of western philosophy, the present summary provides a firm grasp of western metaphysics. It is indeed the story of metaphysics in the west.

### 4.7. KEY WORDS

**Metaphysics:** As mentioned in the introduction, metaphysics is defined as the science of being as being, or reality as such.

**Subject:** Subject is traditionally interpreted as that which knows, as opposed to object as that which is known.

### 4.8. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES



Collins, J. *A History of Modern European Philosophy*. Milwaukee: 1954.  
 Collins, J. *Interpreting Modern Philosophy*. Princeton: 1972.  
 Copleston, F. *A History of Philosophy*. Vols. I – VII. Westminster: 1946-1965.  
 Gunst, D., and Gilje, N. *A History of Western Thought*. London. 2001.  
 Kenny, A. *The Oxford History of Western Philosophy*. Oxford: 2000.  
 Lavine, T. Z. *From Socrates to Satre: The Philosophic Quest*. New York: 1984, 1989.  
 Mascia, C. *A History of Philosophy*. New Jersey: 1957.  
 Robinson, J., and Cobb, J., eds. *The Later Heidegger and Theology*. New York: 1963.  
 Scruton, R., *A Short History of Modern Philosophy*. London: 1981; 2002.  
 Stace, W. T. *A Critical History of Greek Philosophy*. New York: 1964.  
 Thilly, F. *A History of Philosophy*. Allahabad: 1965; revised edition, 2007.

#### **4.9. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

##### **Answers to Check your progress I**

1. Plato is known as idealist since his metaphysics was concerned about the forms of the ideal world; whereas Aristotle is called a realist since he dealt with the world of our experience. Plato held that corresponding to our concepts, essences or forms exist in a transcendent world. But for Aristotle forms are in the things of this world. For Plato, this world is a shadow; according to Aristotle, this world is real.

2. Though St. Thomas is an Aristotelian, there are crucial differences between both of them. At the heart of his metaphysics is the theory of exemplarism: that there are ideas in the mind of God. This is tantamount to bringing back Plato's ideal world, which Aristotle rejects. Aristotle does not admit creation; God is only the final cause of the universe. For St. Thomas, God is not only the final cause of the universe, but also its efficient cause--creator. Moreover, St. Thomas introduces the doctrine of essence and existence, which Aristotle does not have. According to this theory, created beings are composed of essence and existence. In material things there is a double composition; they are composed of essence and existence, and essence itself is constituted out of matter and form.

##### **Answers to Check your progress II**

1. According to Kant, there is a dualism between phenomena and noumena. The German idealists wanted to eliminate noumena. They attempted to do this by regarding noumena as products of thought. For this, the transcendental I of Kant had to be transformed into the creative ego—the Absolute subject. Kant's work dealt with the activity of transcendental I. The thinking ego is the coordinator of the data of experience; the practical ego is the legislator in morality; the sentimental ego is source of beauty and finality in nature. Still there is the dualism between phenomena and noumena. Now, the activity of the ego is transcendental. Hence German idealists extended the activity of the ego beyond truth, morality and beauty to reality itself—noumena. Thus they transformed the transcendental I of Kant into the absolute subject which creates all reality.

1. Husserl's phenomenology is an extension of Kant's Copernican revolution. According to Kant, the objects of knowledge are to be conformed to the cognitive conditions in the subject. He discovered the region of meaning conferring subjectivity—the transcendental I. But he was mainly concerned with the possibility of science and scientific objects--phenomena. In his phenomenology, Husserl attempted to reach the transcendental subjectivity which confers meaning, and constitutes not only scientific objects, but also all objects of everyday experience. Thus Husserl was more radical than Kant. Moreover, unlike Kant, Husserl does not accept noumenon or thing-in-itself. For him, the only world that is real for us is the world of phenomena. He does not accept thing-in-itself, because it would imply that what actually appears in experience is not the real thing; that the phenomenal object is merely a substitute for something else beyond experience.



## **BLOCK-2 INTRODUCTION**

Human finds oneself confronted by two types of beings in the world: finite things and finite persons. They are distinguished by their unique relationship to Being. Things participate in Being according to their essence, and strive towards the fullness of Being accordingly. But the things cannot distinguish Being from its concretization in essence. Hence their actuation does not break through to Being itself and ultimately explicitate the essence. Hence things remain blank for themselves and for other things. They are of themselves silent partners for human. In persons, human encounters beings like oneself, i.e., other fellow human beings. The humans participate in Being through their essence in such a way that in their actuation they at once distinguish Being from essence and so attain to Being itself. In other words, the human person is capable of complete reflection on oneself (self-reflection). By virtue of this reflection the human can reduce the outermost externals of things to the most intimate inwardness of Being itself. Hence we see an essential connection between person and Being. In things, Being is alienated from itself, while in the person it is at home or has possession of itself. Consequently, things appear as diminished beings over which human persons or experiencing agents tower as full beings. That is why an understanding of Being calls for an analysis of the metaphysical structure of the human person or experiencing agent. The experiencing agent is as structured as one's action is. 'As the action is, so the agent [agent = a being that acts] is.' The action is composed of exercise (exercise = the inner element of the action which accounts for its taking place) and determination (determination = the inner element of the action which determines or distinguishes one action from other actions). Hence the experiencing agent (person) must also be composed. The experiencing agent is composed of Being and essence. Essence is composed of substance and accidents. Substance is composed of prime matter and substantial form. Prime matter is in potency; whereas substantial form is in act. This Block has 4 units: 1. Being and Essence, 2. Substance and Accidents, 3. Matter and Form, and 4. Act and Potency.

Unit 1 is on "Being and Essence." Being is that which is in some way or something. It is unlimited in itself. But we know that we are limited beings. We come into being and come to an end. The same is with every other being (limited being). Hence, we have the experience of Unlimitation and of limitation. The principle of Unlimitation is Being and the principle of limitation is essence.

Unit 2 is on "Substance and Accidents." We also know that we always experience sameness and permanence. As a person I have always been the same from my birth until now; but I have also undergone change in my stature, complexion, etc. The inner principle of permanence or sameness (identity) is substance, and the inner principle of the consequence of change or addition is accident. Substance is always being in itself; whereas accident is being in another.

Unit 3 is on "Matter and Form." All material beings become: become more or become less. No material being ever remains the same. Hence, all material beings in so far as they are material are capable of assuming innumerable forms; they are capable of receiving new forms. It is possible because matter in itself is indeterminate without any form; matter (especially prime matter) is the principle of indetermination, whereas form (substantial form) is the primary principle of determination of finite being.

Unit 4 is on "Act and Potency." Act is the state of being; whereas potency is the capacity to become. Being (that which is in some way or something) includes within it both being and

becoming. Act as state of being is perfection, which is finite or infinite. Every being and essence has an act within it. The only principle without any act in it is prime matter, which is pure (total) indetermination or pure (total) potency.

In this unit we have come to know that the experiencing agent is as structured as one's action is. 'As the action is, so the agent is.' We can know a being from its action. Action belongs to the nature of a being. We know the nature of a being from its action. Action need not mean explicit and positive happenings. Action means that activity of a being by which we can recognize and identify a being as it is. For instance, a pen acts as pen; a stone acts as stone; a cat acts as cat; and human acts as human. In this sense, every being acts. There is no being that does not act. We are able to distinguish beings from one another because they all differ in their actions. It is not only that actions differ from one another but each action itself is composed of two elements: exercise and determination. In the same way, beings are different from one another and they are composed of various inner principles, which we have already seen.



---

## UNIT 1

## BEING AND ESSENCE

---

### Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
  - 1.1 Ancient Philosophy: Being as Essence
  - 1.2 The Middle Ages: Being as *Esse*
  - 1.3 The Modern Period: Breakdown and Ferment
  - 1.4 The Contemporary Period: Beyond Being and Essence
  - 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

---

The objective of this Unit is to familiarize the student with the closely related terms *being* and *essence*. The method we will be following is historical, because it is more correct to speak of the history of the meanings rather than of 'the meaning' of being and essence. The limitation of the Unit is that it concentrates mainly on the West.

By the end of this Unit you should be able to distinguish and identify at least four great periods in the history of the meanings of being and essence in the West.

- The ancient identification of being and essence;
  - The medieval identification of being with *esse*;
  - The breakdown of the medieval synthesis in the modern period;
  - Contemporary efforts to go beyond both being and essence.
- 

### 1.1. ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY: BEING AS ESSENCE

---

The earliest Indian reflections on being may be found in hymn X, 129 of the *Rgveda*, which speaks of a mysterious 'One' as the originator of the universe, noting that then there was neither Being (*sat*) nor Not-Being (*asat*). *Sat*, derived from the infinitive *as*, to be, here means the manifestly existent, all creatures distinguishable by their form and name (*namarupa*), including gods; *asat* means the not yet differentiated material, the primal matter out of which names and forms emerge.

In the West, reflection on being achieved its first high point in the philosophy of Parmenides, which is characterized by an opposition between being and appearance, and a clear option for being as stability and unity. What is real neither arises nor perishes, and this thinking continues to influence the subsequent Presocratic nature philosophers who, however, unlike Parmenides, do not conclude that the objects of our everyday experience are mere appearances.

Plato is the first in the West to have explicitly raised the question, What is being? The question is answered in *The Sophist* by accepting a Form or Idea of being, but also by distinguishing two



forms of being: Ideas, which have their own Being, and particulars, which have Being only through participation. Like Parmenides, then, Forms or Ideas are stable and unchanging; unlike Parmenides, there is a plurality of Forms. Plato refers, in fact, to the Forms as *ousiai*. His *ousia* is the decisive formulation of *einai*, being a substantive derived from the feminine participle of *einai*. *Ousia* is that of which 'is' is properly predicated. It is the real and primary being (*ontos on*). It is that which something is as such: its whatness. Thus Plato equates being with Form or Idea. In contrast, the things of experience are merely imitations or images of the Ideas, and so, while they are not absolutely nothing, they do not have any immanent *ousia*.

Against Plato, Aristotle upholds the individual existent as the paragon of reality and calls it 'primary substance' (*prote ousia*), in opposition to 'secondary substance' which is merely conceptual. For him, the first substance is *hypostasis* or subject, because it is "that of which everything else is predicated, while it is itself not predicated of anything else." (*Metaphysics* Book 7, ch. 3.) Still, this term is not yet specialized and Aristotle uses it to mean all sorts of subject, substrata, supports, or subject-matter. Perhaps we could say that for Aristotle, *hypostasis* is, in material substances, the essence (*to ti en einai*) composed of matter and form, where form is that which makes matter into a substance. It is primarily the whatness of a thing, the essence, that makes a thing what it is. There is an equation in Aristotle between being (*ousia*) and essence.

Hellenistic philosophy repudiated both Platonic ideas and Aristotelian essences or forms. The Stoics held the view that only corporeal things exist, and that only such things can either affect or be affected by something. Since the soul, for example, can clearly be affected or affect, they drew the reverse conclusion that the soul itself is corporeal. The denial of beings beyond the perceptible world remains a fundamental position of Stoicism. The Church Fathers, on the other hand, have a concept of being that is quite distinct, deriving it from an interpretation of the "I am who am" of *Exodus* 3, 14. Thus Clement of Alexandria allowed that God can be named 'being,' in the sense of 'the real and only being,' who was, is and will be, and who undergoes no change. According to Gregory of Nazianzen also, 'being' is a name that first and foremost describes the divine essence. Since God as 'being' encompasses being as a whole, Gregory calls him, in a famous metaphor, "as it were an unending and limitless ocean of Being."

The reception of Greek philosophy in the Latin-speaking world encountered significant difficulties with the translation of important words. *To on* was rendered by the non-classical *ens*. Seneca coined the word *essentia* as a translation of *ousia*: just as *ousia* is the substantive of the Greek infinitive *einai*, *essentia* is the substantive of the Latin infinitive *esse*. This usage, however, did not become established: under the influence of Aristotle's *Categories*, *substantia* became the dominant translation of *ousia*. The terms *ousia*, *substantia* and *essentia* play an important role in the Trinitarian and Christological controversies. At the time of these controversies, their meanings were still floating and ambiguous, together with those of *prosopon* / *persona*, *hypostasis* / *subsistentia* / *subjectum* / *suppositum*, and *physis* / *natura*. In Greek, *prosopon* was retaining its ancient meaning of mask or character, whereas in Latin its cognate *persona* was attaining the sense of *subjectum iuris*. Among the Greeks, it was *hypostasis* that was acquiring this meaning of *persona*, while its Latin cognate *substantia* only meant for the Latins essence (Gk. *ousia*) or substance or nature (Gk. *physis*), for which they also used *natura*. This led to imaginable confusion between Greek and Latin theologians. Finally, during the fourth

century AD, it was agreed to say that Christ was, in Latin, one *persona* in two distinct *naturae* or *substantiae*, in Greek one *hypostasis* in two *physeis* or *ousiae*. Similarly, they declared that God is one Essence or Substance (*ousia* / *substantia*) in three persons (*hypostaseis* / *personae*). These developments are significant for the medieval Christian reflection on being and essence.

---

## 1.2. THE MIDDLE AGES: BEING AS *ESSE*

---

The Muslim philosopher Avicenna (Ibn Sina) initiated an important distinction between being and essence. One of his theses was that 'being' indicates 'being-real', while 'essence' indicates the Whatness of a being. Being is to be understood as the act of some particular being; it is not a property of its essence; and it is related to its essence as an accident, even though not a categorical one. On the other hand, the essence has its own value: it is indifferent to determinations such as universality or individuality, and mental or real ways of being, and can be thought of without them. So essence and being are distinct. This teaching about the accidentality of the Being of created beings was accepted by Algazel (Al Ghazali) and Moses Maimonides, but rejected vigorously by Averroes (Ibn Rushd).

Thomas Aquinas takes over Avicenna's distinction of being and essence, but with Averroes rejects the accidentality of being. In fact, with him the act of being, which he refers to as *esse*, comes to occupy explicit primacy over essence understood as the Whatness of a being. Thus if Aristotle may be regarded as the champion of essence, Thomas is the champion of *esse*. Parmenides had established linguistic argument as an independent power that could challenge the evidence of the senses, thus making way for the distinction between sense and intellect. Plato had given pride of place to understanding when he insisted on the reality of a world of eternal Forms. Aristotle had systematized the distinction between sense and understanding by distinguishing between matter and form in the essence of a thing, or the essence that is the thing, the *ousia*. To Thomas, however, goes the credit of making systematic a further distinction between understanding and judgment. Thus where Aristotle was content to say that among sensible things, 'that which is' is either the essence or at least an essential, with Thomas being ceases to be identified with essence; it is now primarily the act of existence, or better, pure *esse*. Aristotle had, of course, a theory of judgment, but judging for him was the composition or division of concepts, not the absolute positing of what is true; thus he reduced judging to experiencing plus understanding. Thomas does tend to use Aristotelian language, but, with his superior grasp of the distinction between understanding and judging, he was able to acknowledge and emphasize the real distinction between essence and *esse*.

Thomas' doctrine can be synthesized in the following manner. Being has two denotations: being pure and simple, and being qualified in some sense. A being pure and simple is that which is. A qualified being does not itself 'be'; instead it refers in some way to an act of existence. Examples of qualified being are accidents, the intrinsic and constitutive principles of being, possible, and beings of reason. Examples of being without qualification are God, angels and material creatures. God is being as pure and unrestricted act. Angels are beings composed of form and act. Material creatures are beings composed of potency (matter), form and act.

Hence essence also has three denotations. In God, essence is pure act itself. In angels, essence is form. In material creatures, essence is composed of potency and form. Form is related to matter as insight to sensible data. Essences are also divided into essences pure and simple, and essences qualified in some sense. An essence pure and simple is the essence of being pure and simple. An essence in a qualified sense is the essence of anything that pertains to a being pure and simple. *Esse* is the act of a being, the act of being, the act of an essence. In God, *esse* is pure act itself. In angels it is an act limited by form; in material creatures it is an act limited by essence composed of matter and form. There is a real, adequate, minor distinction between finite essence and contingent act of existence. There is a real, inadequate, minor distinction between a finite being and its essence. That which is, in other words, is not a finite essence, but a being composed of essence and act of existence. In God, being, essence and act of existence are the same. But in a creature, being pure and simple is indeed that which is; but it is by essence and act of existence that the creature is a being.

Substance has two denotations; further, it is understood in several ways. Substance is either first or second substance. Second substance is an abstraction, such as man or cow. First substance is a concrete reality such as this man or this cow. But this may be taken in two ways: first, as including accidents; second, as prescinding from accidents. Further, first substance can be conceived without accidents, (1) as composed of potency, form and act, in which case it is, as regards substance, a being pure and simple; (2) as composed of potency and form, in which case it is not a *being* pure and simple but an *essence* pure and simple.

The matter can be made clearer by noting that Plato has an analogy of form, Aristotle an analogy of substance, but Thomas alone an analogy of being. Platonic forms (*ta eide*) are posited on the analogy of universal concepts: they are eternal, immutable, subsistent, immaterial, intelligible, but not intelligent. Aristotelian substances (*ousiai*) do not correspond to concepts; they proceed instead from an analogy of the intelligent and the intelligible. Thus in material things they are the intelligible that is grasped in the sensible. In that which is immaterial, *ousia* or substance is both one who understands and what is understood; there is identity between the one understanding and what is understood. Material substances are known by an investigation of the formal cause. Separate substances cannot be known in this manner because they neither have senses nor are sensible things. So Aristotelian analogy proceeds to a conception of separate substances through the intelligent and the intelligible. Human intellect is moved to understand by the mediation of sensible data; separated intellects are immovable, they are not moved by anything, in them intelligible and intelligent and intellect are one and the same. As for Thomist analogy of being, its systematic root is the assertion that the object of intellect is unrestricted being or 'all things.' The intellect is in act or potency depending on its relation to universal being. Only God's intellect is purely and simply in act, because no created intellect is unrestricted being. An angelic intellect is always in act, but only with respect to certain intelligibles. Human intellect is merely potency in the genus of the intelligible; even after it has received a species, without a phantasm it understands nothing in act. Thus the Aristotelian doctrine is included in such a way as to be transformed. In material things, besides matter and form, there is also the act of existence. In separate substances, besides form there is also the act of existence. And beyond these there is God, who is subsistent act of existence itself, pure act. Thus Thomas proceeds by asking, not: What, analogically speaking, is a separate substance? but: What, analogically speaking, is the act of existence, being, that which is? To this the answer is that being not only has a twofold

denotation (being pure and simple, and being qualified in some sense), but also is twofold (being by its essence and being by participation) and is known in a twofold way (being quidditatively known, and being analogically known). The Thomist system simply and utterly transcends Aristotelian essentialism, for while it includes the Aristotelian doctrine, it adds to it another doctrine that is simply and utterly new, and it adds it in a systematic fashion.

We must note that such a systematic addition and transformation is possible only to the extent that, within the realm of sensible things, being does not denote the same thing as essence or essential. For if these denote the same thing, one will ask with Aristotle about material and immaterial beings, and answer with him through a science of material things and of separate substances. For if 'being' and 'essence' have the same denotation, the question 'What is being?' is none other than the question of what this, that, or the other essence is. Only if being adds something above and beyond the essential does the question of what being is make sense; and only then is this question answered by dividing being into being by its essence, and being by participation.

Thomas does not speak explicitly of a real distinction between *esse* and essence, but he does mean a non-mental difference between the two in the concrete existing thing. Opposition to the real distinction came from the Latin Averroists, the Dominicans and the Franciscans. The latter two groups, however, based themselves on a general and extrinsic reason: they objected to the use of Islamic and Aristotelian sources. The problem was brought sharply into focus by Giles of Rome, with his insistence not merely on the distinction but on a separation between essence and *esse*: without this, he said, there is no proof of creation, analogy, distinction of substance and accidents. Henry of Ghent countered with a rational distinction between essence and existence, and refused it a major role in philosophy and theology; he was joined in this later by Duns Scotus. But Thomas remains the most important protagonist of the real distinction.

**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 being understood in the ancient period of the West?

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

2) How is being understood in the medieval Western period?

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

---

1.3. THE MODERN PERIOD: BREAKDOWN AND FERMENT

---



The masterly sublation of Aristotle achieved by Thomas in his philosophy of *esse* soon suffered an eclipse and a breakdown, not only at the hands of his opponents but also at those of his own disciples and interpreters. Modern Western philosophy thus inherits not so much the Thomist synthesis as the breakdown represented by late Scholasticism. A. MacIntyre has even referred to modern rationalism the first cousin of late Scholasticism.

Descartes, in effort to give philosophy a fresh beginning, refuses to engage in a systematic ontology; still, his *Cogito* contains certain assumptions about existence. Being is first one's own existence, discovered with intuitive certainty in the performance of thinking; the existence of things of the outside world is guaranteed ultimately only through the truthfulness of God. Again, Descartes insisted on a strict distinction between essence and existence. Essence, however, is not so much the Whatness of a thing or its definition, but the principal attribute of a substance. Thus extension is the essence of corporeal substance, and thought the essence of thinking substance. As for existence, Descartes understands it as a perfection; he can thus say that it belongs necessarily to the nature of the most perfect being, God.

Hobbes rejects all metaphysical concepts such as essence and entity as futile and superfluous, and makes a break with Aristotle when he holds that definitions are of names, not of things. An essence is merely that accident by which we give a name to a body. For Locke, only corporeal things are real, and their basic determination is the 'solidity' which is attained through the sense of touch. Everything that exists is either an idea in us or a real being outside us. In contrast to Hobbes, Locke does admit a real essence that is the bearer of qualities, but this real essence is mostly unknown to us. It is the colour, weight, etc. of a thing which gives it a right to a particular name, and that is its nominal essence. Hume admits that all our ideas are associated with the "most perfect idea and assurance of being." Still, the reality outside us corresponding to perception is ultimately only an object of belief. As for 'substance,' he rejects it as an 'unintelligible chimera.' One consequence of such thinking is that real essence becomes unimportant, and philosophy becomes a study of meanings.

In Leibniz we find once again the effort to work out an ontology, but now it is not so much the science of *esse* as of the most universal concepts such as something, nothing, thinkable, being, and thing. The idea of being is innate in all peoples, but we come to it by the Cartesian way of self-experience and distinct ideas. Being is thus what can be clearly grasped, and the existent can be perceived through inner or outer sense. As for essence, it is basically the possibility of what one proposes; it is eternal because it is a pure possibility. This essence as possibility contains the act of existing. For Wolff, essence is that in which is found the ground of all the rest that belongs to a thing: one knows the essence of a thing when one understands how it is determined in its type. True, essence here appears to be merely a possibility, but since possibility is something necessary, the essence of a thing consists in this, that it is a definite type of possibility; thus essence is necessary, eternal, unchanging.

Given Kant's Copernican Revolution, the term Being plays a minor role in his philosophy. The place of traditional ontology is taken by the Transcendental Analytic, which replaces Being and beings with the pure ideas of reason as the spontaneous conditions of possibility of experience. However, in the special context of the ontological proof of the existence of God, the concept of Being does play a central role. In this context, Kant distinguishes two meanings of Being: (1) if



something is posited as a characteristic of a thing, Being means the positing of this relationship; (2) if the thing is posited in and for itself, then Being means the absolute positing of the thing, or Dasein. The main point in this distinction is that Being in the sense of Dasein is not a predicate or determination of things. Thus the statement 'God exists' brings to the concept God no new property. The real contains nothing more than the merely possible. The ontological proof of God's existence fails because existence cannot be derived from an analysis of transcendental ideals. Being as posited can never be affirmed *a priori*, because our awareness of existence is derived wholly and completely from the unification of experience. As for essence, Kant distinguishes between the logical essence and the real essence or nature of a thing. Both refer to inner principles of things: logical essence is the principle of all the possibilities of a thing, while real essence or nature is the principle of what belongs to the Dasein of a thing. Thus geometrical figures have a logical essence, but no nature. Kant holds that, while we can easily understand the logical essences of a thing, we cannot see the real or natural essence of a thing as a whole. However, he holds that it is necessary neither for the natural sciences nor for metaphysics to know the entire real essence of a thing.

The doctrine of Being is the subject of Hegel's Logic. Together with the doctrine of essence, the doctrine of being constitutes the 'objective Logic' that takes the place of traditional ontology. The Logic has its starting point in 'pure knowing.' Pure knowing presents itself as the 'undifferentiated.' In its non-differentiatedness, pure knowing is 'simple unmediatedness,' pure Being. As pure knowing should be called nothing but knowing as such, so pure Being must be called nothing but Being itself. Being is therefore the non-determinate, the unmediated, empty intuition and empty thinking. In this total non-determinateness it is therefore Nothing; it is simply identity with itself. However, insofar as Being is transformed into Nothing, a movement has taken place, and a new moment appears, which is Becoming. The unification of Being and Nothing in Becoming produces Dasein, and there arises 'determination as such.' Thus in its attempt to know what Being is in and for itself, knowing cannot remain with the unmediatedness of Being; it enters into itself, and awaits the emergence of the Truth of Being. This emerges in the first negation of Being, in essence. Being in its truth reveals itself as having become Nothing – it emerges as Appearance. Thus one arrives at the second great step of ontology, to the Logic of Essence. Insofar as Appearance appears not as the manifestation of another, but as itself, there emerges Reflexion, the appearance of essence in itself. In the presentation of essences, Reflexion reaches determination. With the Logic of Essence and the doctrine of concepts derived from it, the Logic of Being is abandoned; yet the movement of knowing leads back to Being. On the highest level of knowing, which is the Idea, there is pure unity. The Idea is simple relation to itself and therefore pure Being, but through the mediation of the concept it is Being brought to fulfilment, Being as the concrete and as totality. Hegel's Logic can therefore be understood as a universal doctrine of Being, as the explicitation of the meaning of 'is'. Since, however, primordial reality is the Absolute Idea, and since Hegel tends to equate Being with essence, we may say that Hegel returns in a sense to Aristotle.

Kierkegaard reacted against the absence of place for the individual and the particular existent in Hegel's dialectic, but 'existence' has a different meaning for him: it means the manner of being proper to a human being. The 'ex' in existence is not the emergence of beings from their causes and from prior nothingness, but the intentionality of consciousness going towards something different from itself. For Dilthey, the concept of essence belongs to the life-categories that, in

contrast to the formal categories of thought, express a fact of life contained in the inner experience of the subject. Since however life as a whole is ultimately not to be grounded through concepts, the concept of essence contains a dark and non-groundable core that we cannot discipline through any kind of logic. Instead, there is in each individual a centre of his essence and of the meaning of his existence, which we can understand through the consciousness of our relationship with him. As for Nietzsche, he completely rejects the distinction between essence and appearance. For him, the 'Outer' is the 'Inner', and 'appearances' are not masks of an unknown X but rather Manifestation, Power and Life itself. Yet in the end, manifestation almost always becomes essence and functions as essence.

Husserl's philosophy is a *sui generis* return to the immutability of essences. For Husserl, essence means above all that which can be found in the ownmost being of an individual as its What, that can be empirically experienced through individual intuition. What is intuited is the pure essence or *eidos*. To every individual object belongs an 'essential state,' and to each essence correspond possible individuals as its factual particularizations.

---

#### 1.4. THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD: BEYOND BEING AND ESSENCE

---

The great re-emergence of the question of Being takes place, of course, in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. Heidegger was one of Husserl's most brilliant pupils. His originality consists in adopting the phenomenology of Husserl and applying it, not to the rarefied world of pure essences, but to the factual world in all its temporality and concreteness. Heidegger's whole philosophy can be understood as concerned with the question of Being. *Being and Time* (1927) tries to explicate the meaning of Being by examining a particular being, *Dasein*. The peculiarity of *Dasein* over other beings consists in the fact that the Being of this being is to be concerned about Being. That *Dasein* comports itself towards Being in this way gives its Being the character of Existence. *Dasein* essences thus, that it is the 'there,' the lighting up of Being. This Being of the There, and only this, has the basic relation of Ex-sisting, which means ecstatic dwelling in the truth of Being. Heidegger places the word 'essence' in inverted commas and verbalizes it, so that it means the Ek-stasy of *Dasein*. As for essence in the sense of a generic and universal concept, Heidegger calls it the 'trivial' and 'unessential essence,' in contrast to the 'essential essence' that consists in what a being really is. Understood as a verb, essence (*wesen*) means 'to last' (*währen*). The enduring of that which, having come into unconcealment, remains there, is the 'Presence' (*Anwesen*). The structures of Existence are the existentials, and together these existentials form the existentiality of *Dasein*. Further, since *Dasein* is always and primordially being-in-the-world, its meaning is concealed there. As being-in-the-world, *Dasein* begins to understand itself when it grasps itself in its temporality. In the second part of *Being and Time*, Heidegger had planned to show the structures of *Dasein* as modes of temporality. But this part never appeared, and Heidegger left unanswered the question whether temporality is the path to the meaning of Being. His 'Turn' tries to think Being without thinking back to a grounding of Being on beings. According to Heidegger, the history of metaphysics has concentrated on beings and so has missed the 'Truth of *Seins*' that 'essences' as the Hidden. When he uses expressions such as "A being is. Being essences," he is trying to avoid encapsulating Being in categories and in the language of presence-metaphysics. He also tries, with the help of a 'silent teaching' instead of a logic, to indicate that one can never directly speak of Being itself, because it only

essences in silence. In later writings he tries, with the help of a *strikeout* (*Sein*), to indicate the way in which the new thinking that does not articulate itself in statements dissolves Being. The concept of Being has thus freed itself from all the coordinates of ontology. Interestingly, however, the late writings tend to think of Being as a power possessing the attributes of personality: Being 'speaks to', 'denies,' 'withdraws.' The high point in Heidegger's mythicization of Being comes when it becomes a cipher of salvation philosophy for 'the select few of the future,' for those who await 'the distancing and nearing of the last god.'

Taking off from Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger, Sartre addresses the Being question. Against Kant's separation of the Thing-in-itself and Appearance, Sartre insists on the self-manifestation of appearance; but this is not an abandonment of 'transphenomenality'. Rather, it means: the Being of appearance is distinct from appearance; it is the condition for the unveiling of being, but is not itself unveiled. The ontological difference presents itself thus as the difference between the phenomenon of Being and the Being of the phenomenon. The question about the Being of the phenomenon turns to consciousness. In so far as it is always consciousness of something, consciousness points away from itself to the thing in itself. Between the being in itself and consciousness, whose way of Being is to be for itself, there is a radical gap: while the in itself is an undifferentiated affirmation of itself, the Being of the for-itself lies in the annihilation of the for-itself – its Being is never given, it is always deferred, is always in question and longs for Being, always conceives itself and shatters in the process. At the same time the in-itself and the for-itself belong together. This *a priori* unity marks the concrete relationships of human beings in their Being in the world. Sartre's ontology explicates the human condition with emphasis on the consideration of existence with others and with special attention to the human body.

The groundswell against being and essence that we have noticed since the inception of modern philosophy builds up into a wave with Nietzsche and Heidegger, and crashes down with the movement known as Postmodernism. Derrida, one of the stellar figures of this movement, describes the Western intellectual tradition as "a search for a transcendental being that serves as the origin or guarantor of meaning." Such an attempt to ground meaning relations in an instance that lies outside all relationality was referred to by Heidegger as logocentrism. Derrida argues that the whole philosophical enterprise is *essentially* logocentric, and that this is a paradigm inherited from Judaism and Hellenism. He further describes logocentrism as phallogocentric, patriarchal and masculinist. He was vigorous in pointing out and highlighting "certain deeply hidden philosophical presuppositions and prejudices in Western culture," arguing that the whole philosophical tradition rests on arbitrary dichotomous categories such as sacred/profane, sign/signifier, mind/body, and that any text contains implicit hierarchies, "by which an order is imposed on reality and by which a subtle repression is exercised, as these hierarchies exclude, subordinate, and hide the various potential meanings. Derrida refers to his procedure for uncovering and unsettling these dichotomies as deconstruction."

### 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 fate of being and essence in the modern Western period?

2) How is being understood in the contemporary period?

---

### 1.5. LET US SUM UP

---

Where Parmenides used various forms of the word *einai* to speak of Being that is stable, unchanging and one, Plato coined the word *ousia* to characterize his eternal Forms, in contrast to which material things are mere imitations. Aristotle instead upholds the individual existent as the paragon of reality, first *ousia*. These may be either pure immaterial essences, or else mixed essences composed of matter and form.

Where Aristotle had an analogy of substance, Thomas Aquinas worked out an analogy of *esse*: God is the pure *esse*; angels are substances composed of act of existence and essence; material things are composed of act of existence and essence, but the essence is itself composed of form and matter. Thus Being for Thomas is primarily *esse* rather than essence.

This higher synthesis and transformation of Aristotle is broken up in various ways in the modern period. The empiricists regard essences as merely nominal. Kant recognizes that existence is not a predicate, but relegates Being to a minor role. Hegel ignores *esse* to construct a Logic of Being and a Logic of Essence culminating in the Absolute Idea. In reaction to his neglect of the particular and the individual, Kierkegaard works out a new meaning of existence as the manner of being proper to human beings.

Heidegger works out a phenomenology of factual existence, seeks the Being of meaning, and raises anew the question of Being. However, he abandons his early efforts when he opts for a poetic recognition of the Truth of Being that 'essences' in silence. Derrida is representative of postmodernism when he proscribes all philosophy as logocentric, and conceives of his own task as one of deconstruction of the subtle violence of philosophy and of civilization. Postmodernism therefore seeks to get beyond the thinking of Being and essence/*logos* that has characterized the history of the West.

---

### 1.6. KEY WORDS

---

***Einai***: Gk. infinitive 'to be.'

***Ousia, ousiai***: Gk. substantive derived from *einai*, variously translated as being or substance.

***To ti en einai***: Gk. expression coined by Aristotle, usually translated as essence.

***Esse***: Lat. infinitive 'to be'; act of existence.



---

## 1.7. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

---

- Aquinas, Thomas. *Concerning Being and Essence (De ente et essentia)*. New York / London: D. Appleton-Century, 1937.
- Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. Books 3, 7.
- Gilson, E. *Being and Some Philosophers*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1952.
- Gilson, E. *L'être et l'essence*. Paris: Vrin, 1948, 2002.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. New York: Harper & Row, 2008.
- Lonergan, Bernard. *Verbum: Word and Idea in Thomas Aquinas. Ch. 1. Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan Vol. 2*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.
- M. Heidegger, Martin. *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*. ET: *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)* Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- Plato. *The Sophist*.
- Ritter J., Gründer, K. and Gabriel G, eds. *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*. Basel: Schwabe, 2004.

---

## 1.8. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

---

### Answers to Check your progress I

- 1) In the ancient period of the West, being tends to be identified with essence in the sense of the Whatness of things, and essences are considered stable and unchanging in themselves. Parmenides regarded only the stable and unchanging as being, and further regarded being as one. Plato preserved this emphasis on stability when he spoke of a world of eternal, unchanging Forms, but admitted a plurality of such Forms or *ousiai*. Aristotle extended the word *ousia* also to material things, and indeed exalted the individual existent as the prototypical substance or *ousia*. Still, even for him *ousia* or being is largely its essence, though in material things the essence consists not only of form but also of matter.
- 2) In the medieval period of the West a distinction emerges between essence and existence. Especially for Thomas Aquinas, being is primarily not essence but act of existence, or *esse*. He establishes an analogy of *esse*: God who is pure *esse*; angels who are beings composed of form and act of existence; and material things that are composed of essence and existence, and whose essence is further composed of matter and form.

### Answers to Check your progress II

- 1) In the modern period, Hobbes and Locke begin insisting that essences or definitions are of names rather than of things. Kant does recognize that existence is not a predicate, but relegates Being to a minor role as compared to the pure ideas of reason. Hegel swallows up both *esse* and movement into the dialectic of the Absolute Idea. In reaction, Kierkegaard worked out a new meaning of existence as the manner of being proper to the human being, and Nietzsche refused to acknowledge any difference between essence and



appearance. Thus the modern period represents a breakdown of the synthesis achieved by Thomas Aquinas.

- 2) The contemporary period may be regarded as an ongoing effort to get beyond both Being and *logos*. Taking inspiration from Husserl, Heidegger creates a phenomenology of factual existence and raises anew the question of Being. This he does by examining Dasein, which is that being whose Being is to be concerned about Being. Eventually he abandons this attempt and opts for a poetic recognition of the Truth of Being that 'essences' in silence. Derrida goes one step further when he characterises the whole history of philosophy in the West, including that of Heidegger, as logocentric, and proposes to replace it by deconstruction of its violent and repressive dichotomies.



## UNIT 2 SUBSTANCE AND ACCIDENTS

### Contents

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 The notion of Substance
- 2.3 The Existence of Substance
- 2.4 Nature of Substance
- 2.5 A Misconception about substance
- 2.6 Division of Substance
- 2.7 Union of Substance and Accidents
- 2.8 Accidents: Definition
- 2.9 Division of Accidents
- 2.10 The Reality of Accidents
- 2.11 Accidents have Their Own “To Be”
- 2.12 Real Distinction between Substance and Accidents
- 2.13 Let us Sum Up
- 2.14 Key Words
- 2.15 Further Readings and References
- 2.16 Answers to Check Your Progress

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

Every finite being is constituted of various intrinsic metaphysical principles. And one such metaphysical principle is that every finite being is composed of substance and accidents. In this unit, you are helped to understand:

- Nature of substance and accidents
- Division of Substance and Accidents
- Characteristics of Substance and Accidents

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The word ‘Substance’ literally means ‘subject or substratum’ that which supports. It is derived from the Latin word ‘substantia’ which means ‘standing under’. Substance thus literally means then “that which stands beneath”. Secondly the role of substance is related to its nature that is something subsistent. This means that it does not exist in something else, but in itself, as the relatively permanent principle of a being. We can hence define substance as ‘the basic inner principle of relative permanence of a being that becomes.’ From this definition we may conclude

that finite beings are composed of a relatively permanent principle which remains primarily the same throughout secondary changes, and secondary principles which may come and go without producing a change in the primary mode of being. The relatively permanent principle is called “substance”, and secondary principles are called “accidents”. There is, however, far more to be said about this concept hence we need to examine this concept in greater detail.

## **2.2 THE NOTION OF SUBSTANCE**

The notion of substance is acquired from our sense experience. It is a primary datum of experience that in finite beings there is a kind of multiplicity even within the confines of the individual being. Remaining the individual it is, the finite being shows itself to be manifold in the order of activity, i.e., it can undergo changes without becoming an altogether different individual. For instance, a small seedling will grow up into a tall tree, drop its leaves periodically, bring forth flowers and fruit; yet it remains the same tree. A baby will grow up and increase not only in size and age, but also in skill, knowledge, etc.; yet internal consciousness reveals to each one of us that we are still the same Ego as five, ten or twenty years ago.

Thus when a change takes place in a being in such a way that this change does not modify the thing in its individual essence, it merely adds a secondary determination; it gives a new mode of being, but does not take away the first or essential mode of being which the thing possessed prior to the change.

When the external senses perceive the changes that take place, the intellect may endeavor to find a rational explanation of this process on the level of being. Thus it conceives the qualities which may come and go as determinations which affect something that is underneath these changes and modify them. The difference between the determinations and their subject is expressed by the terms “accidents” and “substance”. Thus our intellect acquires at the concept of substance and accidents as corresponding to a reality existing in the extra mental world.

The concept of substance may be acquired also from the analysis of our internal intellectual activity. We are conscious that in our acts of knowing our own ego, which first did not think about a certain subject, e.g. electricity, now thinks about it. Hence, again, the acts of thinking are conceived as transitory affections or determinations of a more permanent Ego. This leads us to conceive them as accidental determinations of the substance of our Ego.

## **2.3 THE EXISTENCE OF SUBSTANCE**

When a relatively permanent reality is compared to its transitory determination, the intellect perceives that the latter are real, no doubt, but not capable of existing in themselves. For instance, running, being blue, being struck, etc. are perceived by the intellect as incapable of existence except in a subject which is running, blue, struck, etc. But is the reality in which these transitory determinations exist capable of existing in itself? If so, then its nature is different from that of the transitory determinations or accidents, which cannot exist in themselves. It

presupposes then something else which can exist in itself, and therefore differs in nature from the accidents. Thus we are led to the existence of substance.

If we wish to present a formal proof for the existence of substance, we may argue as follows:

If there is any reality at all, it will exist either in itself or in another. If it exists in itself, it is a substance. If it does not exist in itself but in another, this other exists either in itself or in another. But we cannot continue this series to infinity because an actually infinite series is impossible and does not explain anything. Therefore, substance exists.

## 2.4 NATURE OF SUBSTANCE

From all that is said so far we need to retain two aspects about the nature of substance

- a) It is the subject, the substratum, in which accidents inhere. The term “substance” can express this function, for it is derived from the Latin “*substo*”, I stand under, I support.
- b) It exists in itself and does not need to inhere in another.

Now the question is to know which of those two is the primary reality of the substance, to support accidents or to exist in itself? While we are willing to admit that psychologically “to support accidents” is prior to “to exist in itself”, i.e., that we arrive at the knowledge of substance through its function of supporting accidents, it should be clear that ontologically, or in the order of reality, “to exist in itself” is prior to “to support accidents”. For in order to act as a support of something else a thing must be capable of supporting itself, i.e. it must exist in itself. If a thing is of such a nature that it can exist in itself, it will be able to act as a support of others. Hence to be subject or a support of accidents is a property which flows from such a nature if there are accidents to be supported. Accordingly, the proper definition of “substance” should not express the function of supporting but the nature which is such that it can exist in itself. Thus we arrive at the traditional definition of substance as “that to whose nature is due a “to be” in itself and not in another”.

“To be in itself”, is not merely a negation of existence in another, but expresses the positive perfection of independence in being. Independence in being, however, may be either absolute or merely relative. By absolute (intrinsic and extrinsic) independence in being is meant that a thing does not depend upon anything else in any way whatsoever it exists not only ‘in’ itself, but also ‘of’ itself. Such absolute independence, of course, can be found only in the pure act that is infinite being or God. Hence if absolute independence in being were required of a substance, only God could be called a substance. But independence may be taken also in a relative sense, i.e., as merely intrinsic independence, which is had when a being exists “in” itself, but not “of” itself. It is in this sense that substances are said to be independent in being.

## 2.5 A MISCONCEPTION ABOUT SUBSTANCE

Much of the modern opposition to the concept of substance is based upon a misunderstanding of its true nature. A misunderstanding for which perhaps the scholastic philosophers of the seventeenth century are most to blame. When we say that a substance is that where accidents inhere, this function of the substance might convey the impression that the substance is like a pincushion into which pins are stuck, or like an inert piece of rock in the middle of a stream to which things cling precariously. This idea is far from the truth. Substance is not an inert, unchanging support but a dynamic reality. Every time a new accident inheres in the substance, the substance itself is modified. Such accidental modifications take place continuously, so that the substance is continuously “becoming” something. Moreover, the substance is really identical with essence, and the essence is, in a way, the active principle of its proper accidents, which emanate from it “by a kind of natural resultance”. Thirdly, the reality which is the substance is identical with the nature or essence of a thing, which is the primary principle of all activity of this thing; therefore, the reality which is the substance is also the principle of all activity exercised by this thing. Lastly, the activity of a finite being, especially if it is of an intellectual nature, gives meaning to its existence and tends to make it overcome as far as possible the limitation inherent to being finite. If this dynamic character of substance had been sufficiently stressed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, much of the subsequent confusion might perhaps have been avoided.

## **2.6 DIVISION OF SUBSTANCE**

By an analogous division substance may be divided into finite and infinite substance. By a further analogous division, finite substance may be divided into complete and incomplete substance. An incomplete substance is one whose nature must be united to another substantial co-principle. Matter and form by their union become one substantial essence; hence they are substantial co-principles or incomplete substances. A complete substance is one whose nature does not have to be united to another substantial co-principle; for instance, the substances of a cat, a tree, a man. Substances may be incomplete in substantiality, or complete in substantiality but incomplete in specific perfection. A substance which is incomplete in substantiality cannot exist without being united to its substantial co-principle. Such are primary matter and purely material substantial forms. A substance which is incomplete in specific perfection but complete in substantiality can exist-in-itself, but cannot exercise all its functions without being united to its substantial co-principle. The human soul, as we see in rational psychology, is the only example of this type of substance. It can exist independently of the body, but without the body it cannot exercise all its functions, such as nutrition and sensation.

Another important division of substance is primary and secondary substance. In Aristotelian and Thomistic philosophy primary substance means that individual substance, i.e. that which ontologically is the subject of accidents and logically the subject of predicates. Primary substance itself has no subject, whether logically or ontologically, but is the subject.



Secondary substance, nevertheless has a subject in the logical order of attribution. In other words, secondary substance refers to the universal ideas (genus and species) under which individual substances are classified. This division also is rather analogous than univocal.

## 2.7 UNION OF SUBSTANCE AND ACCIDENTS

The union of substance and accidents results in such a way that this union does not bring to existence a new being but only modifies an already existing being. This union will be more clear when we compare this union with the union of essence and existence. The union of essence and “to be” in a being makes a thing to come into existence, that is it gives the first “to be” to the thing; but when an existing thing acquires a new mode of being without losing its first mode of being, as it happens in the union of substance and accidents it does not get a first “to be”, but only a secondary “to be”. When, for example, a bare tree gets leaves, it retains its “to be a tree”, but acquires in addition the secondary mode of being, “to be leaved”. When a man becomes skilled in mechanics, he retains his first mode of being, “to be a man”, but acquires in addition the secondary mode of being, “to be skilled in mechanics”. Thus, while the union of essence and “to be” results in being which is perfectly unified or “one”, the union of the primary and secondary modes of being does not result in a being which is perfectly unified.

As compared with the term “essence”, substance has a more restricted meaning. We may speak about the essence of an accident and about the essence of a substance, but generally we do not speak about the substance of an accident. If, however, we limit the use of essence to that of substantial beings, both terms “essence” and “substance”, indicate one and the same reality, although from a different point of view. By “essence” we indicate what a reality is, whereas by “substance” we indicate the mode of being of this reality.

A last remark, from the foregoing considerations it should be clear that in philosophy the meaning of the term “substance” is entirely different from that in physical science. In physical science “substance” is a subdivision of matter, i.e., of bodies and applies to those classes of bodies which under the same conditions have the same physical and chemical properties. The substance of physical science is opposed to “mixture”, which term indicates bodies with variable physical and chemical properties. In philosophy “substance” is opposed to “accident” and applies to any being to whose nature is due a “to be” in itself.

### 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 definition, meaning, and nature of Substance?

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

2) Enunciate different types of Substance

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

## 2.8 ACCIDENTS: DEFINITION

Accident is defined “as a reality to whose essence it is proper to be in something else, as in its subject”. Concerning this definition let us retain a few points:

- a) Just like substance which has a nature or essence to which subsistence is fitting and which places the subject within a species. Likewise each accident has its own essence, which differentiates it from other accidents and to which dependence on the being of a subject is fitting. For instance colour has an essence distinct from that of temperature and yet to subsist is not fitting to any of them.
- b) The words “as in a subject” are added to the definition to indicate the manner in which accidents are in another. They are not in another as a part is in the whole (a limb in the body) nor as the contents in the container (water in a glass), nor as a substantial form is in matter and gives it its first “to be”, but as form is in a subject to which it gives a further determination.
- c) Because accidents are such that to their nature is due a “to be” in another, they are by their very nature imperfect beings. Hence for example we do not say that accidents, say, whiteness, come to be, but rather that their subject becomes white. However, this imperfection of accidents should not be conceived as if the essence of an accident were incomplete and in need of an essential co-principle. It is a complete essence, but one which lacks independence, and therefore has to inhere in a subject.

## 2.9 DIVISION OF ACCIDENTS

Accidents modify or denominate their subject in various ways, and to these correspond the nine "Categories" enunciated by Aristotle. They are:

- Quantity,
- Quality,
- Relation,
- Action,
- Passion,

- Time,
- Place,
- Disposition (the arrangement of parts), and
- Habit, or raiment (whether a thing is dressed or armed, etc.)

These varieties of accidents can be classified into four groups according to their origin:

- a) Accidents which belong to the species : these are accidents which spring from the specific principles of the essence of a thing and are therefore properties common to all individuals of the same species (e.g., the shape of a horse, the powers of understanding and willing in man).
- b) Accidents which are inseparable from each individual: these accidents stem from the specific way the essence is present in a given individual for instance being tall or short, being fair or dark-complexioned, being a man or woman – these are all individual characteristics which have a permanent basis in their subject.
- c) Accidents which are separable from each individual: these accidents such as being seated or standing, walking or studying, stem from the internal principles of their subject, but they affect it only in a transient manner.
- d) Accidents which stem from an external agent : some of these may be violent, that is they are imposed upon the subject against the normal tendency of its nature (Viral disease) others in contrast may actually be beneficial to the subject which receives them.

Beside these, there is sometimes question of modal accidents, by which are meant further determinations of accidents. For instance, shape is a modal accident of extension, which it determines, and pitch is a modal accident which determines sound. Modal accidents affect directly the accident which they determine, and indirectly the subject in which this accident inheres.

## **2.10 THE REALITY OF ACCIDENTS**

That there are real accidents which are really distinct from their subject is unanimously accepted by all philosophers and follows immediately from what we have seen. If there are changes which do not result in a new substance, such changes take place in a subject which loses or acquires a perfection that does not belong to its substantial essence, but is a secondary determination of this substance. Now, if perfection can be lost without a change in the essence of its subject, it follows that this perfection is really distinct from the subject, i.e., from the substance.

## **2.11 ACCIDENTS HAVE THEIR OWN “TO BE”**

It is to be noted that accidents have their own ‘to be’. For example we can conceive that “in Socrates there is one “to be” insofar as he is white, and another “to be” insofar as he is a man.....

to be white is a “to be” of Socrates, not insofar as he is Socrates, but insofar as he is white. Hence there is nothing to prevent the multiplication of this “to be” in one hypostasis or person; for the “to be” by which Socrates is white is other than the “to be” by which he is Musician”. Keeping in mind that “to be” merely actualizes whatever is real, we should have no difficulty in accepting the view that each accident has its own “to be.

There is however an objection to this view is that it seems to militate against the unity of the individual substance. If substance and accidents each have their own “to be”, they may conceivably exist close together but they would not, so it seems, form a unit. To this, we may answer saying that “real distinction between substance and accidents does not destroy the unity of the being”. That both substance and accidents are abstractions of reality. The reality is the concrete individual whole, which is composed of substance and accidents. It is this whole which “becomes” something when a new perfection is acquired by the substance. Hence the “to be” of each accident is really a “to be” of the concrete individual whole. Substance and accidents are not several beings put together to form a whole, but the entire being forms a whole with substance and accidents. The accidents are not complete autonomous realities added to a substance, they are only determining aspects of the substance which complete it and do not therefore give rise to a plurality of juxtaposed things.

The unity of the composite also becomes evident in the case of operations. An animal for instance carries out many different actions which does not hamper its unity. In the case of man, it is neither the intelligence which understands, nor the will that desires, rather it is the person who understands and desires by means of these respective powers and consequently all his operations are imbued with an underlying unity.

Thus a being is a certain whole which is composed of a substance and certain accidents. These are elements which form a certain unity, and do not exist separately. No accident exists without its substance and no substance exists without its accidents except in God who is perfectly simple where there are no accidents found. Hence all finite beings are composed of substance and accidents which form a complete being.

Moreover, substance and accidents are related to one another as potency to act. Now potency and act by their union become one. Although this union of substance and accidents does not result in a perfectly unified being, nevertheless there is real, though imperfect, unity. Were we to require perfect, substantial unity for the composite of substance and accidents, it would be impossible to explain accidental change. Any change in that case would be a change of a substantial unity as such.

## **2.12 REAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN SUBSTANCE AND ACCIDENTS**

A substance and its accidents are really distinct from one another. This can be clearly seen by observing accidental changes in which certain secondary perfections disappear and give way to other new ones without the substance itself being changed into another substance. Such alterations are possible if the accidents are really distinct from the substance which they affect.

The colour of the apple for instance is something really distinct from the apple itself since the apple changes in colour when it ripens but does not cease to be apple. All accidents by virtue of their very essence are distinct from their subject. For instance to be divisible is by nature proper to quantity where as substance is by itself both one and indivisible. Relation is a reference to another, in contrast, substance is something independent.

From the above study we understand that in the metaphysical structure of being we can see that being is constituted of two important principles that is substance and accidents. The relatively permanent aspect is called substance for it is that remains all though while the being undergoes changes. And the accidents are the changing elements.

### Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) Describe the nature and division of accidents.

.....  
.....

2) Explain the relation between Substance and accidents

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

## 2.13 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have made an attempt to clarify the notions of substance and accidents the two necessary components of finite beings. We have gone to the root words of these two notions and have enunciated their nature and division. By this lesson we have shown that in every finite being there is a changing element and there a permanent element. This study has highlighted to the fact that though a being could undergo regular changes, at the core of its self it contains a permanent element, it manifests that it is the same being. This study brings to our minds that change is part and parcel of our very existence, but in all the changes that take place the core of the person or the being is not lost but it is enriched.

## 2.14 KEY WORDS

**Substance:** Literally means 'subject or substratum' that which supports. It is derived from the Latin word '*substantia*' which means 'standing under'.



**Accidents:** are the perceptible qualities of an object such as its color, texture, size, shape, etc; things which change but do not affect the essence of the object are accidents.

**Act:** Refers to the mode of being which is existing in its actuality, in its present time. It is “that which is now”.

**Potency:** Mode of being which is not yet but the possibility towards the mode of being in act. That which will come into existence.

**Essence:** is properly described as that whereby a thing is ‘what it is’, it is the “whatness” of a thing, the *quiddity* of the thing.

**Existence:** is the act of being (esse). It answers to the question “whether a thing is”.

## 2.15 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Alvira, Tomas, Luis Clavell, & Melendo Tomas. *Metaphysics*. Manila: Sinag-Tala Publishers, INC., 1991.

Bittle, Celestine N. *The Domain of Being*. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1939.

Bogliolo, Luigi. *Metaphysics*. Bangalore: T.P.I., 1987.

Connel, Richard J. *Substance and Modern Science*. Houston: Centre for Thomistic Studies, 1988.

Coreth, Emerich. *Metaphysics*. Ed. Joseph Donceel. New York: Herder and Herder, 1968.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. London: Blackwell Publishers, 2001.

Koren, J. Henry. *An Introduction to the Science of Metaphysics*. London: B. Herder Book CO., 1955.

Mellor, D.H. *Matters of Metaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going*. Bangalore: A.T.C, 1999.

Seidel, George, J. *A Contemporary Approach to Classical Metaphysics*. New York: Meredith Corporation, 1969.

Stein, Edith. *Finite and Eternal Being*. Washington D.C: ICS Publication, 2003.

## 2.16 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

### Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. The word ‘Substance’ literally means ‘subject or substratum’ that which supports. It is derived from the Latin word ‘substantia’ which means ‘standing under’. Substance thus literally means then “that which stands beneath”. It is to be noted that every finite being possesses two important components one which is relatively permanent principle which remains primarily the same throughout secondary changes. This relatively permanent principle is called “substance”. We can acquire this concept from our sense experience. We see for instance, a small seedling will grow up into a tall tree, drop its leaves periodically, bring forth flowers and fruit; yet it remains the same tree. A baby will grow up and increase not only in size and age, but also in skill, knowledge, etc.; yet internal consciousness reveals to each one of us that we are still the

same Ego as five, ten or twenty years ago. Thus when a change takes place in a being in such a way that this change does not modify the thing in its individual essence, it merely adds a secondary determination; it gives a new mode of being, but does not take away the first or essential mode of being which the thing possessed prior to the change. Amidst the qualities which come and go in a being there remains something underneath these changes; a subject which keeps up its identity all through. This is the substance. The nature of substance is that it exists in itself and it is independent. Besides it supports the accidents which inhere in it.

2. Substance may be divided into finite and infinite substance. Finite substance refers to all beings other than the infinite being or God. When we talk of finite substance we can divide it into different types: complete and incomplete substance. An incomplete substance is one whose nature must be united to another substantial co-principle. A complete substance is one whose nature does not have to be united to another substantial co-principle; for instance, the substances of a cat, a tree, a man. Another important division of substance is primary and secondary substance. In Aristotelian and Thomistic philosophy primary substance means that individual substance, i.e. that which ontologically is the subject of accidents and logically the subject of predicates. Primary substance itself has no subject, whether logically or ontologically, but is the subject. Secondary substance, nevertheless has a subject in the logical order of attribution. In other words, secondary substance refers to the universal ideas (genus and species) under which individual substances are classified.

### **Answers to Check Your Progress II**

1. Accident is defined “as a reality to whose essence it is proper to be in something else, as in its subject”. Accidents inhere in a subject called substance. They cannot exist on their own. Thus for example colour cannot exist on its own, it is always in a subject like a cloth, building, or any object. Because accidents are such that to their nature is due a “to be” in another, they are by their very nature imperfect beings. Although accidents do not exist on their own they nevertheless have their own to be. For example we can conceive in a human person that he has a ‘to be’ of his colour, another ‘to be’ in his size, another ‘to be’ in his place and so on. Hence there is nothing to prevent the multiplication of this “to be” in one hypostasis or person. Accidents modify their subject in various ways. These modifying attributes Aristotle calls them as categories. They are nine: Quantity, Quality, Relation, Action, Passion, Time, Place, Disposition (the arrangement of parts), and Habit, or raiment (whether a thing is dressed or armed, etc.).

2. Substance and accidents are mutually related to one another. Substance and accidents are not several beings put together to form a whole, but the entire being forms a whole with substance and accidents. The accidents are not complete autonomous realities added to a substance, they are only determining aspects of the substance which complete it and do not

therefore give rise to a plurality of juxtaposed things. We can verify the unity between substance and accidents in the activity of a being. An animal for instance carries out many different actions which does not hamper its unity. In the case of man, it is neither the intelligence which understands, nor the will that desires, rather it is the person who understands and desires by means of these respective powers and consequently all his operations are imbued with an underlying unity.



## UNIT 3

## MATTER AND FORM

### Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Essences as Substance and Accidents
- 3.3 The Problem of Individuation
- 3.4 Matter as Principle of Limitation
- 3.5 Matter and Form in Aquinas' Metaphysics
- 3.6 Distinction between Matter and Form
- 3.7 Role and Importance of Quantity in Individuation
- 3.8 Individuation in Aristotle
- 3.9 Individuation in John Duns Scotus
- 3.10 Position of Francisco Suarez
- 3.11 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.12 Key Words
- 3.13 Further Readings and References
- 3.14 Answers to Check Your Progress

### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

The problem of “One and Many” or “Unity in Diversity” has been one of the important themes of philosophical thinking and discussions from the inception of the subject itself. It is of course the fact of change that we notice in the nature around us that presents us with this problem. The problem of change, however, is only one of the issues connected with the problem of One and Many. For soon the attention of a philosopher like Parmenides fell on the notion of being, outside of which there is simply nothing. Everything in every phase is being. However his monistic outlook on the nature of being contradicted the facts of experience. Hence there has to be a different solution to the problem of One and Many or Unity in Diversity. To find a solution it is also important to look at the whole issue of limitation in the order of existence. Aristotle seems not to have paid much attention to the metaphysical problem of multiplication and limitation of existence but he contributed indirectly in solving the problem by evolving the doctrine of potency and act, whereby he accounted for the unity-in-diversity involved in change. Aquinas, a medieval philosopher, extended this doctrine to the problems in the order of existence. Aquinas was able to synthesize the platonic doctrine of participation and the Aristotelian theory of potency and act. He then concluded that all finite beings are intrinsically composed of Being and essence as co-principles ordered to each other in a potency-act relationship. He went on to prove that Being and essence are really distinct in all beings except one – God. God's essence is identical with His Being. Now according to Aquinas beings which are multiplied in existence are all totally alike in so far as they are and totally unlike in so far as each is what it is. Further, this means every being which is limited in being possesses an intrinsic principle whereby it is limited. It should be noted that these two principles are perfectly proportioned to each other. The essence specifies and limits Being to be the Being of this finite individual. Being, on the other hand, actuates the essence so that it is an existing essence. Thus we can arrive at a solution to the problem of One and Many in the order of Being by stating that

beings are limited and multiplied in the order of being in as much as the act of being is received into diverse essences. Our objective here would be:

- to examine what exactly these essences are. In trying to explain what essences are we will discover that there are two intrinsic principles in the essence of limited beings: Matter and Form.
- to present matter and form as a solution to the problem of individuality of beings.

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Matter is the stuff (substrate) out of which something is made or fashioned. The word, *matter* is derived from the Latin word, *materia*, meaning *wood*. *Materia*, itself, traces back to the word, *mater*, meaning *mother*. Thus considered, matter is the ‘mother-substance.’

At a peripheral level form is the external shape, appearance of a thing. At a deeper level form is that which specifies matter to be what it is. In metaphysics form is the active, determining principle of a thing as distinguished from matter, the potential principle.

The words ‘matter’ and ‘form’ have been used in a number of ways throughout the history of philosophy. For Anaxagoras (500-428 B.C.) matter is eternal. Originally it is a confused mass containing all the ultimate particles or seed mingled together. The static state of the confused mass was, at some point, disturbed by a rapidly rotating motion which disentangled the seeds bringing about eventually the things of the world and the heavenly bodies. In fact the dualism between matter and form was introduced by Anaxagoras by his concept of *Nous*, which according to him is “the thinnest of all things”. It might be true to say that with the notion of *Nous* Anaxagoras attempted to describe a spiritual reality in the inadequate material terms of his time. For this reason, Aristotle termed him as being the only “sane man among drunkards”, referring to the absurdities of his predecessors.

Plato applied the term ‘form’ to identify the permanent reality that makes a thing what it is, and for him it belonged to the real world. Whereas, matter was finite and subject to time, change, multiplicity and belonged to the shadow world. Matter is essentially inferior to the forms. It can never be reducible to the other. Hence there is a dualism between the two. Matter lacks stability and unity. It is responsible for all the imperfections and disorders in the world. It is non-real and in this sense, it is non-being. It is not ‘non-existent’; rather it has a lower form of existence. Any reality it has is due to the reality of the forms. The world is the result of the inter-play of the forms and matter. The Platonic concept of form had its origin in the Pythagorean theory about numbers. Number is the ultimate element of reality; all reality is made of numbers. In this Plato found inspiration for his theory of “eternal form”, the immutable essence that is “imitated” by material, sensible things existing in the world of shadows.

Aristotle was the first to distinguish between matter (**hypokeimenon** or **hyle**) and form (**eidōs** or **morphe**). He rejected the abstract Platonic notion of form and argued that every sensible object consists of both matter and form, neither of which can exist without the other. To Aristotle matter was the undifferentiated primal element; it is that from which things develop rather than a thing in itself. The development of particular things from this germinal matter consists in differentiation, the acquiring of the particular forms of which the knowable universe consists. Matter is the potential factor, form the actualizing factor. (Aristotle further posited the existence of a prime, or unmoved, mover, **i.e.**, pure form separate from matter, eternal and immutable.)

Thus according to Aristotle, the matter of a thing will consist of those elements of it, which, when the thing has come into being, may be said to have become it; and the form is the



arrangement or organization of those elements, as the result of which they have become the thing which they have. A favourite example of Aristotle's is the case of a house made out of bricks. The bricks are the matter of the house, but bricks all by themselves do not account for the house, as opposed to a pile of bricks. The form is a cause in the sense of that it is constitutive of the thing it is the form of, just as the matter is constitutive of the thing. But form has a certain priority and explanatory value because the form accounts for the matter being in a certain configuration while in that configuration, something that matter cannot do.

Aristotle's notion of form combines with his teleological viewpoint to give the conclusion that formal development has a direction and may have a goal and that some things are more informed than others. Bricks are more in-formed than clay and a house more than bricks.

According to Plotinus (205-270 A.D.) matter is the lowest of all the emanations. If the One (Transcendent Absolute) can be regarded as the light which diffuses itself, then matter is the last extremity to which the light extends. It is the dimmest part. In relation to the One it is unilluminated darkness, the privation of light, the anti-thesis of the One. In itself matter is unconscious. It lacks all form and intelligibility. It gets its intelligibility from form and from being an integral part of bodies as their substratum. Matter is also the principle of evil in so far as when the soul is in contact with matter, or with the external world, it forgets its origin and being engrossed in the world of matter it degrades itself more and more.

Plotinus does not hold that matter is evil in itself. He studies matter not so much in itself as in its relation to form. Matter is that which remains after all the formal principles have been removed. Hence, any activity and goodness that it has, is not due to itself but due to a foreign principle, namely, the form to which it is unified. Hence it cannot diffuse itself. Matter strives after form and goodness but it can never hold on to it. Matter is in constant change and movement. Hence it is the principle of multiplicity.

Immanuel Kant treated form as if it is a property of mind; he held that form is derived from experience. In other words, he said, it is imposed by the individual on the material object.

### 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) Define/describe Matter and Form:

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

2) Explain the development of the notion of Matter and Form

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

### 3.2 ESSENCES AS SUBSTANCE AND ACCIDENTS

The term 'essence' primarily refers to the substance and in a qualified sense to the accidents. For the present our focus is on the term essence as referring to the substance. The substantial essence is known and defined in terms of its characteristic modes of activity. A human being, for example, is a substance having vegetative, sensory, and intellectual activities. On the basis of these activities he/she can be defined as a corporeal, sentient, rational, and living substance. All

human beings have the same definable types of activity. They are alike, therefore, in their specific notes: they are the same in species. The definition of a human being expresses this specific essence, and is predictable univocally of each and every human being, in so far as he/she is a member of the human species. However, for the very reason that it is truly universal, the definition does not express the individuality of the members of the species. Krishnan and Husain are alike as men, and yet they are completely diverse as individuals. How can this be?

### **3.3 THE PROBLEM OF INDIVIDUATION**

Aquinas insists upon locating the principle of this diversity within the essence of the individual being. The source of this diversity lies within and must therefore be represented by something in the individual essence. This in turn acknowledges the fact that each member of the class is a limited expression of all the conceivable perfections which could be attributed to the common essence of the class as a whole. It would amount to the view that each individual must be said to “participate” or possess in some degree the perfections of its class. It would further lead us to the need to place within the very essence itself of each member of the class an additional principle of limitation for the essence. Here it is the essence that is being limited and the principle of limitation can be termed as “prime matter” (material prima). The actual essence thus limited is called the substantial form. It should be noted that only the essences of material substances are thus limited.

### **3.4 MATTER AS PRINCIPLE OF LIMITATION**

Matter can be said to be the principle of limitation in the essence, which is itself a principle of limitation of act of existing. The actual essence which is limited by being received into the limiting matter principle is called substantial form. This doctrine of matter-form composition of the essence in the material substances of our experience is known as hylemorphism, a conjoined Greek term for matter and form. Accepting matter as the limiting principle in the essence gives us a rational explanation for the multiplication of many similar essences in the class or species.

### **3.5 MATTER AND FORM IN AQUINAS’ METAPHYSICS**

In Aquinas’ Metaphysics matter principle is the first intrinsic potential principle of limitation in the essence of the material substance whereby each individual in such a class is distinct or individuated from every other member of its class or species. And the substantial form in material substances is the first intrinsic actual principle which renders the potential material principle actual, thus making the whole essence capable of receiving the act of existence. Using hylemorphism as a rational explanation of how there can be many distinct individuals who are nevertheless members of a single class is the special contribution of Aquinas. Taken together both are in potentiality to their act of existing, the principle by which the whole composite is actuated. Neither the matter nor the form has a separate act of to be. Rather one act of to be is received into both principles of the composite essence together. It is clear, however, that this actuation is received through the substantial form. Surely, the substantial forms cannot act in any way independently of their material principles. In other words, matter and form co-act. Thus from matter and form we get a unit, without any external bonding uniting them. Here we can note the force of the axiom: *Oneness of being follows its to be*. The material principle is constituted in its very nature as an essential relation to form. Form, in turn, is constituted as an essential relation to the material principle. They are correlatives in the same way the principles of essence and existence are in the being as a whole. They are co-causes of their actions too. It is right to conclude then that since the matter and form cannot act independently of one another they cannot exist too independently of one another. Hence the formula: No matter without form; no form without matter.

### 3.6 DISTINCTION BETWEEN MATTER AND FORM

From what we said above it must be evident that there is a real distinction between the matter and form principles. This is not only because they are related to each other as potency to act but also because matter is a principle of limitation in the essence. It is as if matter is saying, “this much and no more” in the essence for this being. If the limiting principle in the essence were not really distinct from that which it limits, then one material substance in a class would not be really distinct from another in the class. In a word, it would not be really individuated. Besides, in an essential change the form can be separated from the matter. Of course, the matter must instantaneously receive a new form. Thus the matter is separated from this particular form and immediately receives a new form. As is clear, separability is one of the simplest and best tests of real distinction. We should also note that matter represents limitation of such perfections as pertained to the common essence representing the whole class, whereas, form represents this unlimited aspect as the common essence in the individual. It, of course, pertains to the class or specific perfections. Matter pertains to the peculiarly individual perfections which separate one member of the class from all others, so-called individual differences. For instance, a human being’s form (soul) represents such perfections as his/her human class possesses; his/her matter (body) represents the individual differences peculiar to him/her alone in his/her class. Indirect predication, however, is possible. Matter has form. Form has matter. Hence, matter is not form. Form is not matter. Therefore they are really distinct. The distinction, however, is a minor real distinction. For, here we are dealing with two principles of being rather than two distinct beings.

#### Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) Describe the role of matter and form in Limitation:-

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

2) Explain the distinction between matter and form:-

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

### 3.7 ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF QUANTITY IN INDIVIDUATION

At first sight it would seem obvious even to an ordinary person that an individual in its class is recognized by its various particular appearances: its peculiar size, shape, colour, fixed quantity, and the like. Such observation certainly is not off the mark. But there is a hitch and we need to go beyond. The problem of individuation is not at all the usually simple one of how the individual is recognized. Rather it is one of finding a rational explanation of how the individual is metaphysically constituted as an individual in its very being. What is it within the being by which it is constituted undivided in itself and separated from all other beings?

It is evident that it is by the proper accident of the quantity of a material substance (in which the other accidents, such as colour, shape, weight, and the like, first inhere, and then, through the quantity, in the substance itself) that the individual is so recognized. Quantity is thus a very profound modifying factor, though still of an accidental character, in all material substances. Such substances are often designated as *quantified beings*. It is for these and other reasons, that

Aquinas insists, that quantity exercises an auxiliary role with the essential principle of matter to complete the principle of individuation. It is by the principle of individuation that the individual being is distinct from similar beings belonging to a class. In Chapter two of his metaphysical work *On Being and Essence*, Aquinas writes: “We must realize that matter which is the principle of individuation is not any matter whatsoever, but only signated matter (*materia signata*). By signated matter I mean matter considered under determined dimensions.” According to commentators of his work, the reference to “determined dimensions” is to the accident of quantity which possesses certain dimensions in space.

Accidents, the causes of lesser determinations in a being, are as it were “con-created” or produced with the production of the essence or substance. Without them the substance would not be fully equipped for existence. Hence they are called “proper” accidents. They are said to flow as it were from the essence or substances necessarily, though not of the essence. Such an accident is quantity in material substances. Quantity is generally described as that proper intrinsic and absolute accident having dimensions inhering primarily in the material principle of a substance. When a material substance is said to be perfected by quantity in accordance with its role as an accident, it is done necessarily under certain determined dimensions.

Quantity by its nature is equipped to perform this auxiliary role. It is essentially divisible and, as such, is the basis of numerical designation. Moreover, without its proper accident of quantity with determinate dimensions, prime matter is not equipped of itself to exercise its essential function of making a material substance fully individual in its class or species. The reason for this is that of itself matter is undetermined and common to all material substances. Matter must itself, therefore, receive a certain determination or perfection. Such determination or perfection comes from quantity, which is its proper accident. This does not in any way mean that quantity can become a co-constituent with the material principle in the individuation of the substance. It should be carefully noted that what is to be individuated is neither the matter nor the quantity but the received act of existence.

### **3.8 INDIVIDUATION IN ARISTOTLE**

Aristotle’s doctrine of individuation uses the similar terms of matter and form. Aristotle did not reject his teacher Plato as much as it sometimes thought. For Aristotle matter seems to be the principle of individuation. He says in his *Metaphysics*, “What is numerically different has matter; for one and the same concept, humanity for instance, belongs in many. Socrates however is one.” For Aristotle, as for Plato, not only was the conceptual or universal and unchangeable essence the only object of science and true knowledge, but it was also ultimately identical with the real essence in the individual. In view of this the matter as principle of individuation cannot be a part of the individual essence even though Aristotle frequently says matter is part of the whole composite substance. Indeed the matter has its own existence, as has the form. Therefore the difference between John and Simon, for instance, is due entirely to the fact that the one unchangeable universal form of man is received in one case by this flesh and these bones (matter) and in the other by these other flesh and bones. However, since these two human individuals agree with each other not only in having a form (soul) but also in having a body (the matter of the form), Aristotle even grants that there must be universal matter including bones and flesh in general. In Aristotle the Idea or Form exists immanently in numerically different individuals as many times as it is itself received unchangeably into the various parts of changeable and divisible matter. Reception of the Form into this matter implies only an unessential individuation. No real limitation is involved. There is no individual being in the full sense of the term. Aristotle failed to give a rational explanation of the real and distinct



individuality of each existing being because he failed to consider the act of existence as a distinct principle in finite beings. Therefore he was in no position to answer the second and auxiliary question of individuation of such individual beings within a species in view of the similarity of their respective individual essences. The complete absence of any doctrine of participation in Aristotle, in any full sense of that term, is the source of his failure on both counts.

### **3.9 INDIVIDUATION IN JOHN DUNS SCOTUS**

Scotus followed Aristotle in identifying being primarily with essence. He rejected the general metaphysical principle of potency limiting act and thus refused to accept Aquinas' doctrine of participation, with its consequent real distinction between essence and existence in all finite beings. He also rejected the matter-form doctrine of individuation as Aquinas presented it, and in these respects he followed Aristotle. Scotus also opposed the unicity of substantial form in material substances and insisted on a plurality of formally distinct forms corresponding to the several grades of being in the thing (for example, the vegetative, sensitive, and rational forms in the human substance). He further held for a final form by which every material substance is distinct from every other member of its class. It is known as the form of "thisness" (*haecceitas*). The real distinction of individuals presupposes that each of them contains "realities" which differ. They do not differ in their common nature. Therefore some "reality" is added to the common nature by individuation. Scotus expresses this doctrine as follows: "Besides the nature there are accordingly in this individual and in that one some primarily different entities by way of which this one and that one differ; that is, that entity in that individual and this entity in this one. Thus they cannot be negations ... nor some accident. Therefore they are certain entities of themselves positively determining the common nature." It is therefore by this unique individual property that matter in itself becomes this numerically one thing. The "*haecceitas*" or "thisness" form also renders quantity and all accidents individual.

Evidently Scotus is forced to his position on individuation by his exaggerated realism, which seeks to safeguard the objective validity of our abstract and scientific knowledge. He overstates the reality of the common or universal form, making it something real on the part of the thing instead of having the so-called formal nature only in the mind. Every grade of perfection in the being, represented by a common form, is individualized by this ultimate form of thisness. It is unnecessary and really irrational to posit "thisness" to explain individuation.

### **3.10 POSITION OF FRANCISCO SUAREZ**

Suarez stated that the abstract universal representing the common aspect of the class to which the individual belongs is contracted by an individual difference to constitute the individual. As realized in the individual, this abstract common nature is identical with the entire entity of the individual substance. The same is true of the conceived difference. Accordingly the intrinsic principle of individuation, or the entity existing in the individual and making the realized specific nature incommunicable is only logically distinct from this realized, abstractly conceived nature. In reality, it is identical with the realized common nature or with the entire substantial being of the existing individual.

Suarez's position is deeply influenced by his theory of knowledge. His extreme emphasis on the fact that the existing individual is the only genuine reality is a truth. However, it should not be isolated from the problem of knowing the individual. Suarez claims that the active intellect can completely spiritualize the image so that its entire content in all its particularity is rendered intelligible. Thus this spiritualized species or form represents the individual in the intellect in the same way it is represented in the senses by the particular image. In this way the intellect knows the individual immediately and directly, he insists. Here Suarez is being far too optimistic about



the power of the human intellect, making it in certain respects equal in power to the intellect of purely immaterial substances (angels, for instance). Thus his position on the principle of individuation, which is the result of his extreme claims for the power of the human intellect, inherits all the weakness of his very doubtful principles of knowing.

**Check Your Progress III**

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) Describe the role and importance of quantity in Individuation:-

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

2) Briefly state the views of Aristotle, Scotus and Suarez on individuation:-

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

**3.11. LET US SUM UP**

Every individual within a species intrinsically possesses a principle whereby it is totally individual and a principle whereby it has the same essential determinations as every other member of the species. By virtue of the principle of sufficient reason, each individual of a species has within itself that whereby it is totally like every other member of its species, and that whereby it is totally unlike every other member. For everything which exists has that whereby it is what it is. That element in each member of a species whereby it is like every other member is a principle which accounts for its substantial or essential determinations. For it is precisely in the common possession of the same substantial determinations that the likeness lies. This principle is thus the principle of substantial form, the metaphysical principle which intrinsically determines a being to its essential mode of existence. But since substantial form accounts only for the essential likeness of all individuals within a species, there must be another principle in the order of essence by which the beings differ from each other. This difference consists in the fact that the substantial form exists in different subjects. The principle of difference, therefore, is a principle in the order of essence capable of receiving and possessing substantial form and one which of itself confers no positive determinations. It is therefore a principle of potency in the order of essence. This is the principle of prime matter, that metaphysical principle whereby a being is capable of being determined to its essential mode of existence. Now these two principles – substantial form and prime matter – are very much related. They form a composition, since they make up a union of two distinct elements, which do not actually include each other. This is a real composition, since the elements are really distinct, outside the mind considering the composition. Since the two elements coalesce to form the essence of one being, they are not complete beings themselves, but metaphysical principles constitutive of a being. Substantial form is a principle of actuality since it confers the specific determination on the being. Prime matter is potency since it receives substantial form. Thus, the composition is a metaphysical one, of principles related to each other as act and potency. Prime matter plays a role in the individuation of an essence. Since of itself prime matter is completely indeterminate the principle of individuation is not merely prime matter, but rather prime matter marked by

quantity. There are different views on individuation especially those of Aristotle, Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and Suarez.

### 3.12. KEY WORDS

**Hylemorphism:** It is the theory of the composition of matter and form.

**Individuation:** it is the limitation of an essence, which of itself is communicable to many individuals, to some definite singular realization.

**Quantity:** It is generally described as that proper intrinsic and absolute accident having dimensions inhering primarily in the material principle of a substance.

**Signated Matter:** Matter considered under determined dimensions.

### 3.13. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Aquinas, Thomas. *On Being and Essence*. Toronto, Canada: Institute of Medieval Studies, 1949.

De Raeymaeker, Louis. *The Philosophy of Being*. New York: Herder, 1954.

Dulles, Avery R. Et al. *Introductory Metaphysics*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955.

Gilson, Etienne. *Being and Some Philosophers*. Toronto, Canada: Institute of Medieval Studies, 1949.

Maritain, Jacques. *An Introduction to Philosophy*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1930.

Maritain, Jacques. *A Preface to Metaphysics*. New York: Mentor Omega Books, 1962.

### 3.14. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

#### Answers to Check your Progress I

1. Matter is the stuff (substrate) out of which something is made or fashioned. At a peripheral level form is the external shape, appearance of a thing. At a deeper level form is that which specifies matter to be what it is. In metaphysics form is the active, determining principle of a thing as distinguished from matter, the potential principle.
2. The words 'matter' and 'form' has been used in a number of ways throughout the history of philosophy. For Anaxagoras (500-428 B.C.) matter is eternal. Plato applied the term 'form' to identify the permanent reality that makes a thing what it is, and for him it belonged to the real world. Whereas, matter was finite and subject to time, change, multiplicity and belonged to the shadow world. Matter is essentially inferior to the forms. It can never be reducible to the other. Hence there is a dualism between the two. Aristotle was the first to distinguish between matter (**hypokeimenon** or **hyle**) and form (**eidōs** or **morphe**). He rejected the abstract Platonic notion of form and argued that every sensible object consists of both matter and form, neither of which can exist without the other. Matter is the potential factor, form the actualizing factor. According to Plotinus (205-270 A.D.) matter is the lowest of all the emanations. If the One (Transcendent Absolute) can be regarded as the light which diffuses itself, then matter is the last extremity to which the light extends. It is the dimmest part. In relation to the One it is unilluminated darkness, the privation of light, the anti-thesis of the One. Immanuel Kant

treated form as if it is a property of mind; he held that form is derived from experience. In other words, he said, it is imposed by the individual on the material object.

### **Answers to Check your Progress II**

1. Matter (“prime matter”) is the principle of limitation in the essence. The actual essence thus limited is called the substantial form. It should be noted that only the essences of material substances are thus limited. Accepting matter as the limiting principle in the essence gives us a rational explanation for the multiplication of many similar essences in the class or species.
2. There is a real distinction between the matter and form principles. If the limiting principle in the essence were not really distinct from that which it limits, then one material substance in a class would not be really distinct from another in the class. In a word, it would not be really individuated. Besides, in an essential change the form can be separated from the matter. Of course, the matter must instantaneously receive a new form. Thus the matter is separated from this particular form and immediately receives a new form. As is clear, separability is one of the simplest and best tests of real distinction. Hence, matter is not form. Form is not matter. Therefore they are really distinct.

### **Answers to Check your Progress III**

1. It is evident that it is by the proper accident of the quantity of a material substance that the individual is so recognized. Thus quantity exercises an auxiliary role with the essential principle of matter to complete the principle of individuation. It is by the principle of individuation that the individual being is distinct from similar beings belonging to a class. Quantity by its nature is equipped to perform this auxiliary role. It is essentially divisible and, as such, is the basis of numerical designation.
2. Aristotle’s doctrine of individuation uses the similar terms of matter and form. For Aristotle matter seems to be the principle of individuation. The matter as principle of individuation cannot be a part of the individual essence even though Aristotle frequently says matter is part of the whole composite substance. In Aristotle the Idea or Form exists immanently in numerically different individuals as many times as it is itself received unchangeably into the various parts of changeable and divisible matter. Reception of the Form into this matter implies only an unessential individuation. No real limitation is involved. There is no individual being in the full sense of the term. Aristotle failed to give a rational explanation of the real and distinct individuality of each existing being because he failed to consider the act of existence as a distinct principle in finite beings. Therefore he was in no position to answer the second and auxiliary question of individuation of such individual beings within a species in view of the similarity of their respective individual essences. The complete absence of any doctrine of participation in Aristotle, in any full sense of that term, is the source of his failure on both counts.

Scotus rejected the matter-form doctrine of individuation as Aquinas presented it, and in these respects he followed Aristotle. Scotus also opposed the unicity of substantial form in material substances and insisted on a plurality of formally distinct forms corresponding to the several grades of being in the thing (for example, the vegetative, sensitive, and rational forms in the human substance). He further held for a final form by which every material substance is distinct from every other member of its class. It is known as the form of “thisness” (*haecceitas*). The real distinction of individuals presupposes that each of them contains “realities” which differ. They do not differ in their common nature. Therefore some “reality” is added to the common nature by individuation.

Suarez stated that the abstract universal representing the common aspect of the class to which the individual belongs is contracted by an individual difference to constitute the individual. As realized in the individual, this abstract common nature is identical with the entire entity of the individual substance. The same is true of the conceived difference. Accordingly the intrinsic principle of individuation, or the entity existing in the individual and making the realized specific nature incommunicable is only logically distinct from this realized, abstractly conceived nature. In reality, it is identical with the realized common nature or with the entire substantial being of the existing individual.



**Contents**

- 4.0. Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 The Operative Level
- 4.3 The Level of Essence
- 4.4 The Existential Level
- 4.5 Let us Sum Up
- 4.6 Key words
- 4.7 Further Reading and References
- 4.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

---

**4.0. OBJECTIVES**

---

Insight into, and understanding of the basic structures of ourselves as beings, and of the realities around us, is the main objective of this unit. This unit explains how act and potency are the two ultimate co-principles of all that comes into being. For an initial meaning of the words “act” and “potency” just look up any Standard English dictionary. What they mean in metaphysics will soon be clear. You know that “act” may be just another word for activity or actualization, or action; and “potency” is another word for power, capacity, ability or faculty.

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

- Understand his/her own potentialities better, as well as their in-built limitations ; select the potentialities it would be better for him/her to actualize
- See oneself and others not only as human beings, but as beings sharing in the universal condition of all finite composite, changing, limited beings, subject to spatial and temporal conditions, and depending on many interrelations
- Realize the truth that whatever comes into being, whatever belongs to the created world, is constituted of act and potency, not only at the operative, but also at the essential and existential levels
- Explore the nature of causality in its various manifestations, and to distinguish final from efficient causality...and embark on the search for the Absolute, without whom finite being cannot be.

---

**4.1 INTRODUCTION**

---

We are dealing here with the metaphysical structure of finite being. After having studied the relation of substance to accidents and matter to form in the previous units, we now come to the ultimate constitutive co-principles of finite being. Finite beings are characterized by their



limitations, changeability, composite nature, and interdependence. From these very characteristics, we have to conclude – as we shall show in the following pages – that all finite beings are constituted of act and potency at the operative, essential and existential levels. These three levels are really inseparable, but we consider them separately just for a better understanding of the co-principle of all finite reality.

Act and potency are technical terms. Potency is a term that may refer to: capacity, ability, power, possibility. Act is associated with: action, activity, actualization, actuality, perfection, realization, since they are applicable at different levels of reality, they are susceptible to analogical predication.

The operative level is the level of action and capacity for activity. The essential level is deeper than the operative, and deals with the intrinsic constitution of material beings. The existential or entitative level refers to the relation between essence and existence. The terms act and potency are therefore analogical since their significance is similar at different levels. In general, potencies are called active potencies when they are used for action and activity. Potencies are passive when they are acted upon. Both kinds of potencies belong -- as properties, accidents or attributes to material as well as spiritual substances. Substances therefore are in potency with reference to these properties. Substances do not act immediately through themselves, nor do they actualize themselves except through their potencies. Potencies and acts are not substances, but co-principles of finite substances at the operative as well as existential level. “Dunamis” is the word used by Aristotle, for potency; and “energeia”, for act.

---

#### 4.2 THE OPERATIVE LEVEL

---

In order to get at the metaphysical structure of beings like ourselves, let us start with the operative level, which is the sphere of activities that are manifest to the senses, and more or less evident to everyone. At the ports ships are arriving and departing; and at the air-ports, the planes. The metaphysicians see all this as the operative level of reality, and set themselves to understand and explain the basic reasons for it all.

##### ***Movement and Change – Act and Potency***

Movement and Change are so obvious, so constant, and so inevitable, that it is taken for granted by Eastern as well as Western philosophies. The Vedic elements, earth, air, fire, water, are moving and movable. In Samkya, ‘prakrti’, for instance, is constantly undergoing evolution. The Vaisheshika atoms are also ever on the move. The Buddha, too, saw the passing nature of everything that came to be. The Sarvastivada school of Hinayana Buddhism also maintained that there was neither being nor non-being, but constant becoming.

Many thinkers may not speak explicitly of act and potency, but they do speak of change and evolution, and process as pervading all natural reality, and remind us at least remotely of Heraclitus whose over-all vision of the world was opposite to that of Parmenides. Wherever there is process or change or movement, there is interplay of act and potency. Potency as well as act interplay in the various kinds of change and movement that we see in the world around us:

*Local change:* One kind of change is local change, which means change of place. Nature has not

given plants and trees the potencies for local movement as she has given to animals; nor has Nature given human beings, abilities to fly, as she has given to birds. But, in giving humans intelligence, she has given them the remote active potency: human beings naturally cannot fly, but actualizing the potentialities of the mind, human beings can now fly higher and faster than many birds.

Long before Newton formulated the basic laws of mechanics, Aristotle had attempted to describe motion and change metaphysically in terms of act and potency. “Motion is the act of a being in potency in so far as it is in potency.” The take-off of an airplane from Delhi for Bangalore is an act of a being in potency for Bangalore. It is a being coming-to-be in Bangalore. It continues to be in potency till it alights, and finds itself actually in Bangalore. When actually in Bangalore, a plane, or bus, or passenger, or whatever, may be potentially elsewhere.

*Quantitative Change:* This kind of change refers particularly to physical growth: increase or decrease in quantity. This kind of change is constantly taking place among the minerals, the metals; among non-living things as well as living things. Living things – including ourselves – grow in height, weight, strength, from childhood to maturity. This growth takes place in time. Trees, which don't have the potencies for local movement, have more potentialities for quantitative growth than animals and human beings. Trees also have potentialities for living longer than animals or human beings.

*Qualitative change:* As in the case with local change and quantitative change, qualitative change is seen and experiences in Nature's works as well as in human affairs. The qualities of fruits and vegetables, for instance, can change, depending on the rainfall, the soil, the season; they can deteriorate with the passage of time. They can improve through the agricultural sciences. Success, progress, advancement --- all depends on actualization of potentialities. These are all acts of beings in potency in so far as they are in potency. When that potency is actualized, they will be in act, but in potency to some other act.

Within ourselves and our consciousness,, in our environment, in others, in the areas of health, education, economics, politics, music, technology, etc. there are not only local and quantitative changes, but any number of qualitative changes. The interplay of act and potency is everywhere around us.

At the operative level, change, motion, movement is an act of a being in potency in so far as it is in potency. Hence, all these beings and their operations are a mixture of act and potency, activity and passivity, actuality and possibility, activity and passivity.

**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. Mention three words associated with “act”.

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

2. What is change? Mention three kinds of change.

**Potencies: Passive and Active.**

Nature, working like an artist under the supervision of her Creator, equips her products with the means for acting and functioning in harmony with their respective natures. Individuals, we see, when they begin to be, need to be brought passively into being. They are equipped with potencies to be activated, and changed into active potencies. It is very evident that no one does what he or she cannot do. What people could not do, or make, or understanding at one time, they can at another. Time has an important part to play in the activation and actualization of potencies and their activation.

Acts presuppose active potencies. Whoever actually speaks, CAN speak. Whoever actually sees, can see. Whoever actually invents, CAN invent... From the act and the fact, we rightly conclude that there is some potency or potencies which make that act or activity, possible. Acts, therefore, presuppose potencies as well as their activation.

This is clear from the behavior of non-living as well as living beings. Living things, like plants, are endowed with potencies for feeding, growing and multiplying. Animals, fish and birds are equipped with potencies for self-movement, sense-knowledge, and other faculties for the preservation of individual and species. While moving themselves, they are also moved by their desires for food, security, reproduction.

Human beings are more richly endowed by Nature than other creatures. Our five senses and mind are potencies for knowing; our hands, for doing and making; our feet, for walking, running, local movement; our wills, for choosing how and when to use our other endowment. Our will is therefore the queen of our potencies. There is no activity without the potency for that activity. It follows that for each of our activities, personal, social, professional, etc. we need as many potencies.

Human intelligence is full of a great variety of potentialities, talents, abilities, for self-actualization through a great variety of arts, crafts and skills in farming, building, dancing, driving, and hundreds of thousands of activities including flying. It is easy to understand that without eyes, we cannot see; without ears, we cannot hear; without wings, we cannot fly; without intelligence, we could never have invented flying machines.

What is the purpose of these relatively active potencies? Their purpose is their corresponding activity or ACT. What can see (active potency) and what can be seen (passive potency), meet in the ACT of seeing. What can hear (active potency) and what can be heard (passive potency), meet in the ACT of hearing, and so on.

We here call them relatively active because these and other potencies that, at first sight, appear active may sometimes need to be activated. In such cases, they are passive, rather than active.

The eyes, for instance, are active, when seeing and looking, but they may need light to activate them. This means that some passive potency can be activated and so become active.

What is in act in one sense at one time may be in potency at the same time in another sense; but nothing can be in act and in potency in the same sense, at the same time.

### ***The Language Connection***

Although language cannot be taken as a sure guide to the understanding of reality, we admit that some features of reality are reflected in language. Verbal constructions and expressions sometimes picture the construction of reality.

In English, adjectives ending in -ble, often affirm or deny potency, possibility, capacity, ability, potency: able, unable, capable, incapable; visible, invisible: legible, illegible: audible, inaudible; curable, incurable, etc...

Verbs often refer to acts, actions, and activities. Moreover, most English verbs have active and passive voice. Their usage very often corresponds either to activities, or to active potencies, on one hand, and passive potencies on the other. For example: active voice: You are reading this. Passive voice: This is being read by you..

There are also verbs that indicate potency. CAN is the principal verb in English that indicates potency or possibility. When someone tells you: You CAN succeed. It means you have the power, the ability to succeed. Possible = can be = possible cannot be = impossible.

### ***Potency, Act and Purpose/Finality***

Purpose means aim, goal, and intention. We introduce here the notion and reality of "purpose" because it has an extremely important role to play in the works of Nature, and also of human affairs.

Nature urges her products to actualize their various potentialities in order that they may flourish. Living organisms are instinctively moved to change and move themselves from place to place in search of food, shelter, security, and whatever is good for them. This characteristic of Nature to direct particularly living organisms towards an end or goal is known as teleology.

In view of the intentions she had for each class of her products, Nature inscribed her intentions into class of her products. Grass was given its properties for the good of cows and for their nourishment. Cows were provided with the active potencies of digesting the grass without cooking or boiling it. Nature has written her intentions into the very structure of the human body, in which are planted its active and passive potencies. As Socrates pointed out, the mouth is placed just below the eyes and the nose, so that whatever enters the mouth can be seen and smelt in advance.

Potencies for sensing and feeling and moving, draw animals, fish and birds to the food and the good that they desire and need for the actualization of their potentialities and maintenance of



their lives. In other words, they are moved by their desires towards what is good for them and away from what would injure them.

Humans also are moved towards food and pleasure and towards the fulfilment of their aspirations partly by Nature, partly by culture and have some purpose, aim and goal and intention for all their activities. As potencies are intended for acts, so acts are intended for actualization and fulfilment.

Human purposes are to increase individual and social well-being and happiness, and to progress in every field of human activity: economic, political, commercial, artistic, etc. The invention and manufacture of goods never loses sight of the purpose. The organization of games and sports and entertainments always keeps in mind the purpose. Two-wheelers, three-wheelers, four-wheelers, have their purpose written into their wheels. Spoons and forks and knives have their purposes written into their structures. And so with all that men manufacture: shoes, watches, TVs, generators, etc...

Since everything in Nature and in human affairs is ruled by finality, we can take it as a principle that whatever is moved is moved by another. In other words, final causes and purposes have active potencies to move by attracting and drawing desires, emotions, moving and motivating intentions. From experience we know that beauty, goodness, honour, glory, and many other things – including movies – have the power or potency to move and draw thousands of people to themselves. That precisely is the meaning of the principle: Whatever is moved is moved by another. What is moved has passive potency that which moves, has actuality and promises actualization and fulfilment.

There can be series of final causes, like aiming at getting through pre-university, graduate, post-graduate, attainments with a view to securing a highly lucrative or prestigious position in society. This would mean a graded actualization of potentialities --- each comparable to a movement moved forward by the actualization .of a previous potentiality. Actualization is achieved in grades and stages.

Both in the operations of Nature or of human beings, the goal is some good --- whether implanted by Nature into her products, or chosen by human beings, who are the products, not only of Nature, but also of culture and free choice. In the latter case, the good may be real or apparent. That is why act is said to be a perfection and fulfillment of potency.

There is a real difference between efficient causes on one hand, and final causes, on the other. In both cases, whatever is moved is moved by another. Drivers, carpenters, masons, pilots, surgeons can become efficient causes, because of their active potencies. . But unless they are driven to work by some desirable goal, such as need for bread, or love, or prestige, or money, or pleasure, they may prefer to remain idle. Their potencies are active as far as their work is concerned, but passive with respect to their motivation.



Conclusion 3: Act and potency are co-relative, that is, they match each other and are made for each other and meant for each other.

**Potency, Act and Efficiency**

As we have just seen, whatever is moved is moved by another.

*Explanation: what IS moved has passive potency.*

*.....by another: having active potency ...*

This "--other" may be another part of the same being, or another being.

We have shown above how this applies not only in the sphere of final causes. This principle is operative also in the sphere of efficient causes, as will be made clearer from the following.

Inanimate things, like tables and chairs, instruments and books, cannot move themselves. Passive potency can be compared to inertia. Newton would say that they need a force to move them. That force can be compared to active potency.

Things that cannot move themselves or even people who cannot move themselves fast enough and far enough are sometimes carried about as cargo in trucks or trains. The trucks and trains are equipped with engines and motors. In such cases, whatever is moved is moved by a motor. Engines and motors have the active powers and potencies to be movers.

As in the case of final causes, so too in the case of efficient causes, whatever is moved, is moved by another. "Another" means an agent with active potency such as a motor. A good illustration for this is a railway train consisting of many coaches. What moves the engine driver to be efficient in his job, is some final cause, some motivation, such as sense of duty, or service of commuters. The engine has active potency, while the coaches have passive potency. The engine is the efficient mover (efficient cause), and when it moves the first coach is moved (passivity) and moves the second coach, which, in its turn is moved, and moves (activity) the third coach, and so on.. A running train is a fine example of moved movers, moving movers, in the sense that the coaches immediately after the engine are moved by the engine, while moving the coaches that come after them. In this way, passive potencies of the coaches are turned into active.

Living beings – as we have just seen -- are distinguished from non-living, because they have active potencies for self-movement, potencies for self-actualization. In so far as they move themselves, they are active and in act. In so far as they are moved, they are passive, and in potency. Senses and sensations are accompanied by motor neurons in the nervous systems that move my right hand to strike dead, the mosquito sucking the blood from the back of my left palm.

In such a case as this, it may be a bit difficult to distinguish efficiency from finality. But the distinction is clear in the case of an engine driver, who moves the train at the signal from the guard or station-master, for the purpose of the good, or even for fear of losing his job. Whereas the railway engine moves the coaches because of its efficiency, the station-master moves the engine driver by a kind of moral force, which can be reduced to final causality, as has been

explained above (4.2.3)... Whereas final causes move by appealing in some way to desire, appetite, hope for something good, efficient causes usually move to act and work and bring about desirable changes.

Living things can also be efficient causes in generating other living beings. Hens, for instance, have active potencies for laying eggs. Eggs have potentialities to grow from hens in potency into hens in act. From this it might appear that act presupposes potency. That is very true. All our activities presuppose that we have the ability, capacity, or competence for those activities. But it is also true that absolutely speaking, potency presupposes act. In other words, though the egg comes before the full-grown hen, -- potency before act – without the actual hen, there would be no egg. Act comes and must come, before potency.

Conclusion 4: Whereas, absolutely speaking, act precedes potency in the sphere of nature, intention and finality, potency precedes act, relatively and temporally, in the sphere of efficient causality.

**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. Do non-living things have active potencies? Give reasons for your answer.

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

2. Do human beings move themselves, or do they have potencies that are moved by some thing outside themselves?

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

---

**4.3 THE LEVEL OF ESSENCE**

---

Let us now proceed from the operative to the essential level of finite beings. That is like proceeding from the fruits of the tree to the roots of the tree, from the behavior to the nature, from the more evident to the less evident, from the operations and accidents to the essence and substance.

As you already know from a previous unit in this block, material substances are composite beings constituted of two co-principles, matter and form. Act and potency, at this level, acquire new shades of meaning. “Potency “means “the material co-principle”; and “form”, the first act at the essential level. This is not the external, accidental, form, but the internal, substantial form of material being.

It is important to remember that when we deal with matter and form as potency and act at the essential level, we are dealing not with being as being, but being as material. Finite spiritual beings are simple, and therefore not composed, at what has been called the essential level...

As you may remember from what you have already learnt, Parmenides and Zeno had challenged change and plurality, while maintaining the being was unchanging and one. Aristotle countered this double challenge by inventing a two-lever key to unlock the mystery of being --- i. act and potency; and ii. Analogy. In fact, it is better to consider these solutions, not as inventions but as discoveries, because as you have seen up till now, that inter-play of act and potency is so manifest and evident, that if Aristotle had not discovered it, one of us would have done so.

It is easy to see that wherever there is change, there is composition, because in change, there is a term away from which, a term to which and something underlying. This means that there is composition of the underlying substratum; wither with the first term, or the second. This is precisely what you will notice, if you peruse once again what you have read above, Local, quantitative, and qualitative changes have places, quantities and qualities respectively as their terms away from which and to which. The underlying substratum is the substance. What happens if substantial change takes place? That brings us from the operative to the essential level, and to matter as underlying substantial change.

### ***Matter as Passive Potency***

To begin with, let us consider human inventions and man-made articles and items, such as crockery, cutlery, machinery, footwear, etc. Everything made or manufactured by human beings presupposes some raw material out of which new products are made.

Raw material is pre-required for the manufacture of slippers, spoons, motors, airplanes. From where does this raw material come? From Mother Nature. It is she who supplies about 92 elements and billions of compounds and mixtures for the manufacture of millions of products by human beings. The stuff out of which, products are made, came to be known as the material cause. Here the word "cause" is used analogically. The material cause is not the efficient cause.

From where does Nature get her raw material for the manufacture of the 92 or so elements? What is the stuff out of which, Nature makes her products?

That was the question ancient sages in East and West put to themselves. The earliest recorded Greek philosophers, the Milesians, were greatly interested in the material out of which nature made her products. Just as humans manufactured new products from pre-existing raw materials, they suspected that Nature too was using some more elementary material. Was it water, air, something boundless? Empedocles believed that earth, air, fire and water were the four basic elements. That search led to the 92 natural elements of today's chemistry.

In ancient India, the satkaryavadins maintained that the effect (karya) pre-existed in the cause. "...the effect, before its manifestation is potentially contained in its material cause. Production is only an actualization of the potential (shaktasya shakua karanat)."

Texts such as this make it clear that there were Indian thinkers who perceived the difference

between act and potency. Kumarila and some Jainas hold that the effect is both real and unreal before its production. Apparently “real and unreal” could be taken to mean “actual and potential”. These references show that the ancient Indian sages had observed the inter-play of act and potency in the realities around them, though they had not systematically analyzed it.

A further question would be: Are the elements the ultimate stuff out of which Nature makes all her products. The answer is: NO. First, because the elements are already formed, with their nama and rupa. Whatever has a clearly and distinct identity, with properties and characteristics of its own, is already formed matter. Each element has its own distinctive features. Some, like uranium, have active potencies such as radioactivity. So the elements are not the ultimate stuff or primary matter.

Secondly, there is possibility of transmuting the elements into one another. In other words, substantial change can take place between the elements. The possibility of substantial change of one element into another is an indication that there is still some underlying substratum that is neither this nor that. It is pure potency. This is what Aristotle called primary or entirely unformed matter.

*By pure potency, we mean potency unmixed with act of any kind, and therefore lacking all active potencies. Since existence is an act, primary matter does not exist independently by itself, but only co-exists with the form. Hence, we cannot even focus on primary matter, without speaking of form. Only the atoms and subatomic particles, out of which the elements are made, can be considered the primary matter and pure potency.*

Primary matter is that which underlies all the 92 or more elements, and permits their transmutation into one another. As already mentioned earlier, the elements are NOT primary but secondary matter, since they already have nama-rupa, name and form, and are clearly distinct from one another. But the sub-atomic particles, which have NO independent existence, may be considered the primary matter thought of by Aristotle.<sup>1</sup> This is the view of Heisenberg, an awardee of the Nobel Prize for physics.

### **Form as Act**

From the foregoing, you already know that all material substances are constituted of two co-principles: matter and form. The elements are the building blocks of our material world; and they themselves have matter and form in their very essence and constitution.

To have a better idea of form, let us look again at the manufacturing business: All the vehicles coming out of the same factory are of the same kind or form or model or design. The job of a factory is to assemble materials into the form selected by the firm or company. There are Fords, Boleros, Chevrolets, Volvos, etc. A Volvo bus may be damaged or destroyed or discarded; but the form of the model that is with the company continues to manufacture NEW Volvos, and so can replace the old. Factories, therefore, join matter and form. The raw material they use can be considered relatively primary. This, however, is NOT pure potency.



All this is possible because the form is one and relatively unchanging; while the materials are manifold and changing all the time. The quantity and number of Volvos, Boleros, Boeings, AK rifles, depends on the matter. In this sense, matter is sad to the principle of individuation, which accounts for the plurality of individuals, participating in one form.

Nature, too, seems to work according to plans and models, classifying her products into solids, liquids, gases; plants, mammals, birds, and many species within each genus. Materials are assembled in a great diversity of ways and moulded into different forms. In these forms are rooted the properties and active [potencies referred to in 4.2 above. What Nature manufactures, far surpasses man-made factories and their products. The latter are extrinsically assembled, and cannot multiply themselves or repair themselves, or direct themselves at least till today. But Nature's forms act as final, as well as efficient causes. This is more manifest in living things, whose substantial forms are called souls. Into the very heart of the form of the egg, Nature has written the programme to be followed for the actualization of the potentialities of the respective eggs. That is why the substantial form is called the first act of the essence, making the essence such, and locating it in the hierarchy of being. Here, "act" does not mean activity in the operative sense; neither is it actuality in the existential sense, but a possible and feasible organization of the material in view of its functions and activities, and its possible actualization in existence. In 1900, Wilbur Wright, one of the inventors of the airplane, wrote to a French aviation pioneer, Chanute, "...flight is possible for man." In 1903, flights became actual.

---

#### **4.4 THE EXISTENTIAL LEVEL**

---

After considering the inter-play of act and potency on the operative and essential levels of beings, let us now probe their mutual relations and roles at the existential level, which is sometimes called entitative.

It is obvious that the operative and essential levels can without difficulty be merged into the existential. At the operative level, Nature as well as human beings can do many things, and also make many things because of their active potencies. When it comes to making new things – as Nature does through reproduction, and factories do through production – we have the passage from the operative to the essential levels. Both operations as well as new products and inventions take place on the existential level, and are sometimes inseparable from it but distinct from it, as act and potency are always distinct, but sometimes inseparable from each other.

##### **Essence as Potency for the Act of Existence**

At the existential level, the preferred meaning of potency is possibility or capacity, while the preferred meaning of act is actuality, reality, fulfillment, realization.

Essences as you already know from a previous unit, is not the same as existence. When you ask: What is this; your question refers to essence, not to the existence, which is presupposed, but to



the nature of the thing before you. When you ask: Is there life on Mars? You are referring to existence.

There is a difference and real distinction between essence, on one hand, and existence on the other. There were no cars or flying machines in the time of Aristotle, Aquinas, or Leonardo da Vinci. But today they exist. This means that their essences were in potency. Had they not been possible, they would never have been actual today. Apply the same to ourselves. Thirty, forty years ago, today's students were not existing; they were possibilities. Today they are actualities. Every finite possible essence needs an actually existing active potency to bring it from possibility into actuality. Nature has given human as well as other living beings the active potencies to bring new living beings of their own species into existence. Human beings, as we saw, brought cars, planes, etc. from possibility into reality.

### Potency Limits Act

Being is like an immense ocean. This ocean cannot be contained in any finite essence. Finite essences can be compared to dams or tanks, or water-containers great and small. All containers have limited capacity. It is true that active potencies give power for action. The greatest active potency in the natural world is the human intelligence. But even human intelligence is rooted in human nature and essence, and is therefore limited. And this essence has a limited as well as limiting capacity for containing the vast ocean of being and existence and actuality.

If at the essential level human nature has a limited capacity, it will inevitably follow that at the operative level, its potencies, however powerful and efficient, will be limited and finite. That is confirmed by experience. All material living forms are mortal. With the privation of the substantial form, substantial change takes place, from living to non-living matter, showing the limits of material life.

As the Buddha and many others have pointed out, whatever is born is doomed to die. And as has been pointed out above, whatever is moved is in potency, and is moved by another. So whatever is brought to birth is brought from possibility into actual existence, by some being(s) in act, otherwise what is possible would never have a chance to be. This fact and its accompanying insight has led Aristotle and others to the general conclusion that there is One, Unchanging Being Who is Pure Act, in the sense that His Essence is the very act of being and existence, unmixed with unfulfilled potentialities. This is the Supreme Being that cannot not be.

### 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. Show how essence is not the same as existence.

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

2. What does Pure Act mean?

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

---

#### 4.5 LET US SUM UP

---

The change and movement which we see all around, and also within us is the act of beings in potency, in so far as they are in potency. Whatever is moved is in passive potency. Whatever is moved, can be moved and must be moved either by itself or by another. If it moves itself, that means it has parts, some of which are moved, while others act as movers. Nature has indeed bestowed on living things potencies to move, and to be moved. Nature, however, is not infinite. Hence, the potencies given by Nature are not only limited, but also limiting. So the self-movement is limited, depending on the energy available to the system, which needs to be re-fuelled. Hence, the organic system is moved by another, namely by some good outside itself, for instance, food, security, pleasure or whatever, according to the purposes and intentions of Nature.

In accord with these intentions, birds, animals, bees and others can proceed from the operative to the essential levels by joining form to matter, for instance, in building nests, making honey, etc., and even reproducing their species. Here, matter with its passive potentialities is acted upon by the form acting as efficient cause. All these products of Nature come into being from possibility into actuality, and continue to be constituted of potency and act as really distinct principle of their beings at the essential as well as the existential levels.

Humans, while sharing some characteristics with other products of Nature, have special potentialities rooted in their intellectual make-up, which empowers them to find new ways and means of self-actualization, brought discoveries, inventions, technologies. Through their probing into the working of Nature, and into the constitution of finite beings, they can reach out to the recognition of the Absolute and Infinite Whom Aristotle calls Pure Act (Energieia), Pure Actuality, the Unmoved Mover.

---

#### 4.6 KEY WORDS

---

**Potency:** a capacity for growth or development or ability to develop.

**Essence:** the quality or nature of something that identifies it or makes it what it is.

---

#### 4.7 FURTHER READING AND REFERENCES

---

David, Ross William. **Aristotle's Metaphysics**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924.

Dominic, O'Meara, ed. **Studies in Aristotle**. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1981.

Emerson, Buchanan. **Aristotle's Theory of Being**. London: William Cloves, 1962.

Anton-Hermann, Chroust. "The composition of Aristotle's 'Metaphysics'". **New Scholasticism** (1954).

Jonatha, Barnes, ed. **The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

---

## 4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

---

### Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. *Activity, actuality and activation.*
2. *Change is the act of a being in potency, in so far as it is in potency.*

*There is local change, quantitative change, and qualitative change.*

### Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. Yes, non-living things do have active potencies, for instance, the sun.
2. Human beings, while sharing in many respects with the animals, are moved to food, pleasure, and satisfaction of needs. However, because of their rationality, they have greater capacity for self-actualization, through the free choices of their free wills.

### Answers to Check your progress III

1. Generation after generation comes into being and passes away, as history shows. This means that being is not their essence. The same is true of the cosmos, as we know it.
2. Pure Act is a metaphysical term indicating the Supreme Being, in Whom Alone is essence identical with existence, and who, therefore, cannot not be. That is the ultimate Unmoved Mover Whose Presence moves the cosmos from generation to generation, and Who has no mixture of unfulfilled potentialities.

### **BLOCK-3 INTRODUCTION**

Every material being is either an entity or a person. Entity is subsisting, distinct, complete being of certain nature; whereas person is subsisting, distinct, complete being of intellectual nature. Human person as rational animal (being of intellectual nature) is being-present-to-oneself in one's being present-to-another. In so far as one is present-to-oneself one is (being) spirit, and in so far as one is present-to-another, one is in the world. Hence, human person is 'being or spirit in the world' with the capacity to be self-conscious and intelligent. Being self-conscious and intelligent, human recognizes other persons also as self-conscious and intelligent. In intelligence and freedom one is obliged to move from every form of self-centredness to self-transcendence. Self-transcendence could induce committed communion with others who are also free social beings. This Block, which consists of 4 units, studies the metaphysical nature of finite being. Here we do not probe into the structural principles of finite being as studied in the previous Block, but with its nature, i.e, taking a finite being in its totality.

Unit 1 is on "Entity." Entity is subsisting, distinct, complete being of certain nature. Subsisting means existing by an act of existing which it has on its own and by which we can identify it as a being. Distinct means existing as individuals, as beings apart from each other. Complete being implies a being in its totality, with substantial form and accidents, and not a part or principle of a being. Certain nature refers to any given nature by which we can recognize it as belonging to a particular group. Entities are broadly divided into two: conscious or intellectual and non-conscious or non-intellectual.

Unit 2 is on "Person." Person, in classical metaphysics, is subsisting, distinct, complete being of intellectual nature. There is a difference between 'intellectual' and 'rational.' An intellectual being understands things mediately or immediately. Human person, unlike God who is thought to understand things immediately without a medium, understands things only mediately and thus is rational.

Unit 3 is on "Knowledge." Human knowledge is "self-consciousness" conditioned by "other-consciousness." Human knows oneself by knowing other things. Our knowledge is always knowledge of something, of Being. It always presupposes an object, i.e., that of which one knows. In this way, Being and knowing are intrinsically and inseparably related. They are two sides of the same coin. One cannot be without the other. Hence, metaphysics and epistemology are distinct but inseparably united.

Unit 4 is on "Freedom." Freedom is the ability to choose and decide. Freedom presupposes understanding and knowledge. Human rationality (with understanding and knowledge) is the enabling and limiting conditions of freedom. Human rationality enables one to choose and decide since rationality includes within it understanding; at the same time rationality is the limiting condition of freedom, since rational understanding, which is mediate (presupposes a medium like sense image), is limited by sense image, passions and emotions. Hence, human never enjoys unlimited freedom.

To conclude: As we have already mentioned, every material being is either an entity or a person. Entity is subsisting, distinct, complete being of certain nature; whereas person is subsisting, distinct,

complete being of intellectual nature. Intellectuality is the metaphysical basis of human's knowledge and freedom.





## UNIT 1

## ENTITY

### Contents

#### 1.0 Objective

#### 1.1. Introduction

#### 1.2. Entity as Supposit

#### 1.3. Entity as Individual

#### 1.4. Entity as Finite

#### 1.5. Entity as Historico-temporal

#### 1.6. Let Us Sum Up

#### 1.7. Key Words

#### 1.8. Further Readings and References

#### 1.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

### 1.0 OBJECTIVE

Being, as we have seen, is that which is in some way or something. That which is in some way or something is in its own way in each being. As each being is in its own way, all beings are in their own ways. As all beings are in their own ways, there would be a plurality of beings that are many entities. In this unit, you are invited to study the meaning and implication of:

- Entity as supposit
- Entity as individual
- Entity as finite
- Entity as categorial
- Entity as historico-temporal

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

Being is not something like a being. Being is what enables beings as beings, that in terms of which beings are already understood. If we grasp Being we will clarify the meaning of being, or sense of being. It means that in terms of which something becomes intelligible as something. This sense of being precedes any notions of how or in what manner any particular being or beings exist. It is pre-conceptual, non-propositional, and hence pre-scientific. At the same time, there is no access to Being other than via beings themselves—hence pursuing the question of

Being inevitably means asking about *a* being with regard to its being. A true understanding of Being can only proceed by referring to particular beings or entities.

### 1.2. ENTITY AS SUPPOSIT

Accidents belong to their substance and inhere in it. They do not exist completely in themselves. Secondary or universal substances, expressed in species and genus, are communicated to, and predicated of, the individual substances. They do not exist completely in themselves. But *supposit* or *'hypostasis'* is an individual, concrete substance which exists completely in itself, and thus incommunicable to any other being. It does not belong to another; it is the whole containing all the parts; it is the ultimate reality to which all functions, powers, and perfections of that particular being are referred; it is the possessor of its entire nature; it is self-contained and autonomous; it is that which is supposed; it is that to which all actions are referred; it is that which acts; it is the ultimate subject of actions or operations, e.g., this individual tree, this beast, this human, etc. It includes everything that can be predicated of a being. It is distinct from nature as the latter is part of supposit. It also takes in the accidents; whereas the nature does not. In other words, *supposit* or *'hypostasis'* is a *subsisting, distinct, complete being of a certain nature*. *Subsisting* means existing by an act of existing which it has on its own. It is not derived from another principle. It is that mode of existence in virtue of which a thing is self-contained and autonomous in its operations. *Distinct* means adequately distinct, i.e., not identical with any other. It is incommunicable to any other being as it already exists in act. Such a being can never be assumed by a higher supposit since their union could only be at best an accidental union. However, it is not impossible for an individual nature to be assumed by a higher supposit, and to exist, not by its own proper being, but by the being of the higher supposit. For instance, the human nature of Christ is not a human person as it does not exist by its own proper being, but by the divine being of the Word. *Complete being*: It is not a part or a principle of a being (human soul is not human supposit). It is the whole being. It is a complete individual substance which has subsistence. *Certain nature*: The supposit must be of a certain nature, i.e., it must have a root principle which gives the actions the ultimate unity which they (action) manifest, e.g., mineral, vegetative, animal, human and divine natures. Hence, all supposits are not finite persons; but all finite persons are supposits. The distinction is implicit in the traditional interpretation of 'person' by Severin Boethius and Aquinas. According to them, *'person is a subsisting, distinct, complete being of an intellectual nature'*. Supposit is of non-intellectual nature; whereas person is of *intellectual nature*. The common characteristic distinctive of God, spirits and human being is *intellectuality*. It is lacking in all beings below the level of human beings. Intellectuality is distinct from 'rationality'. The term 'rational' means 'having reason' or 'having the faculty of reasoning'; hence it cannot be applied to God. God is intellectual but not rational in this sense.

### 1.3. ENTITY AS INDIVIDUAL

The specific nature of a being is the result of the union of its proximate genus and specific difference. For instance, the specific nature of human consists of the proximate genus 'animal' and the specific difference 'rational'. The union of the two constitutes the specific nature of human who is a 'rational animal'. The specific nature is alike in all humans; for all humans possess the nature of a rational animal. From this standpoint alone there would be no difference in the concept one human and another. In an existing human this general 'specific human nature' becomes an 'individual

human nature'. This is done through the union of the 'specific nature' with 'individuality'. For instance, Napoleon, through his individuality, is not merely a man, *but this man Napoleon*.

Still the question is: What is the principle of absolute individuation which makes an individual to be individual? Is individuality a reality really distinct from the reality of the specific nature? In this case, the principle of absolute individuation would be the entity of the individuality as such, and not the nature at all. Or, are the specific nature and individuality in an existing individual entitatively identical, with merely a distinction in thought between them, so that they form a *metaphysical union*? In that case the formal principle of absolute individuation would be the entity of the individual nature or essence itself, and there would be only a virtual distinction between individuality and specific nature in an individual being. The latter view is preferred and it can be demonstrated in this way: The specific nature in itself must either be a universal or an individual nature. If it is universal, then a universal nature would exist as a universal. However, a universal nature cannot exist in the physical order of things as a universal. Therefore, the specific nature must exist as an individual nature. But if it comes into existence as an individual nature the entity of individuality is entirely superfluous and can no longer make it individual as it is already an individual nature in itself when it comes into existence. Hence the individuality of an existing nature is not really distinct (but only mentally) from the existing nature itself, and the principle of absolute individuation of an individual is the nature or essence itself. In other words, every specific nature becomes an individuated nature. Therefore, individuality is solely a manner of existence for nature. Then, the distinction between the specific nature and the individuality of an existing individual is a mental or logical distinction. They are distinct in concept because we define them differently. The question is: Is there a ground or reason or foundation in the individuals for making this distinction in concepts? It can be answered in this way: Individuality is the same for all beings. It is that which makes a specific nature to become individuated in this particular individual. But there is a great variety of specific natures among existing beings, each of which is individuated in a large number of existing individuals. Here we have the ground or foundation in the things themselves for our making a mental or logical distinction between the nature and the individuality in them. Now when there is such a foundation for making this distinction, the distinction is not real nor purely mental, but virtual. Therefore, there is a virtual distinction between the nature and its individuality.

The next question is: What is the principle which individuates a specific nature into a number of individuals or individual natures? This is the *principle of relative individuation*. The principle of relative individuation is *matter affected or signated by dimensive quantity*. It can be explained in this way: Since it is question of the plurality of individuals in the same species, the principle of individuation must be a principle of plurality. Plurality implies division and divisibility. The ground of divisibility will also be the ground or principle of plurality. Consequently, the ground or principle of relative individuation must be that ground of divisibility which enables a specific nature to be multiplied into a plurality of individual natures. Now in physical order the principle of divisibility is matter affected by dimensive quantity. When a portion of matter is separated from another, a plurality is effected in it which gives rise to a plurality of individuals of the same species.

**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 supposit?

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

2. Explain briefly the principle of relative individuation.

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

#### 1.4. ENTITY AS FINITE

A being is 'that which is in a particular way.' The Latin word for being is *ens* which in English is rendered as entity. Everything that we see around us can be termed as beings or entities. The word being assumes different significances according to the situations. In our study of the metaphysics of being it should be taken to mean ... 'anything that exists in the world.' Being primarily denotes existence. Anything that has no existence can be said to be a non-being.

Something that really exists is said to be a real being. There might be some things which do not have concrete existence, for example, I may imagine an apple tree in my garden. As long the apple tree remains an object of imagination only the being of it is merely an imaginary being. However, everything that has real existence and even the imaginary beings can be termed as beings.

The metaphysical meaning of 'being'

We shall now examine the metaphysical sense of the term being. The most important features of a being are the following:

- a. Being is referred to as something that *is*. This reference to being as something that *is* places it in contrast to *what is not* or non-being.
- b. In the language of metaphysics, being is said to be an *act*. By *act* we do not mean an action but the primordial basis of action. When we say that a being is an *act* we mean thereby that the being referred to makes its being felt by the fact of its existence. Hence, by *act* we have to understand the very act of being existent.
- c. The notion of being has a primacy over every other knowledge. The first thing that our intellect grasps with regards a thing is that *it is* or *it exists*. Without this primary notion of existence no other knowledge about a thing is possible.
- d. The notion of being is not a notion of a genus. By genus we understand the distinguishing and essential aspect of a thing. For example, man's rational nature distinguishes him from animals. When we say that the notion of being is not the notion of a genus, we mean that the word being encompasses everything; that it has maximum extension without any specification. Being embraces all realities that are real or imaginable.

Being, in so far as it embraces all realities, is an analogical term. An analogical term is a term which stresses certain similarities of a thing in relation with another object without going into the



details of characteristics or perfections of the things compared to. For instance, we may refer to God and human as beings. By this we mean both are existing in reality. The term being is analogical because it can refer to the existence of the most supreme entity as well as the most insignificant thing we can imagine.

### Finite Being as Categorical

According to Aristotle, a category is what describes the manner of a being. Substance and accidents are the basic manners of being to which all reality can be reduced. A being may be brought under 10 categories. These categories are the following: substance, quality, quantity, relation, localization, position, possession, time, action, and passion. For example, we may attribute these categories to Peter (substance), who is healthy (quality), of normal weight (quantity), son of Paul (relation), who is in his room (localization), and is seated (position), who has a pen in hand (possession), who is awake at 6 a.m (time), who is engaged in writing a letter (action), and who is now thirsty (passion). Thus nine accidents and substance together make up 10 categories. The said ten categories are considered to be the ten supreme classes (or genera) of being.

### 1.5. ENTITY AS HISTORICO-TEMPORAL

Heidegger in his most famous work “Being and Time” wants to find out what being as such means. He called it a fundamental ontology. He distinguishes between an entity (anything that is) and the being of an entity. He calls this distinction the ‘ontological distinction.’ Being of an entity is the meaningful presence of that entity within the range of human experience. Among all beings only human being is characterized with the understanding of being.

Heidegger defined ‘being’ in a different way than most other philosophers did. Traditionally, philosophers have defined being as the ground of essence and existence, that which provides the ‘foundation’ for a thing. Plato called this foundation as the eternal or universal form of things; Aristotle named it as the real substance; medieval theologians tried to define beings as things taking origin from the most superior being, the infinite. Refusing to conceive being as a kind of superior entity, an eternal foundation, ground, cause or origin of things, Heidegger argued that for something ‘to be’ means for it to disclose or to present itself. Being has to do with the “is”: what an entity is, how it is, and the fact that it is at all.

For this disclosure or self-manifesting of an entity to occur, there must be a clearing, an opening. Human existence constitutes the openness necessary for the disclosure of entities to take place. When such disclosure occurs through openness that I am, I encounter an entity as an entity, that is, I *understand* what it is. Heidegger uses the term “Dasein” to name this peculiar receptivity of human existence for the self-manifesting of being. In German the particle *da* means ‘here’ or ‘there’, while *sein* is the German verb ‘to be’. By Dasein Heidegger meant the ontological presence of man.

Human entity is distinguished by its awareness of the being of entities, including the being of itself. Heidegger names the human entity ‘Dasein’ whose being consists in disclosing and understanding being, whether the being of itself or that of other entities. In so far as Dasein’s



being is a disclosure of its own being, it is called 'existence' or 'ek-sistence'. Heidegger argues that Dasein's own being is intrinsically temporal, not in the usual chronological sense but in a unique existential sense: Dasein ek-sists (stands – out) towards its future. This ek-sistential temporality refers to the fact that Dasein is always and necessarily becoming itself and ultimately becoming its own death. When used of Dasein, the word 'temporality' indicates not chronological succession but Dasein's finitude and mortal becoming.

Heidegger argues that mortality is our defining moment, that we are thrown into limited worlds of sense shaped by our being-towards-death, and that finite meaning is all the reality we get. He claims that most of us have forgotten the radical finitude of ourselves and the world we live in. If Dasein's being is thoroughly and radically temporal, then all of human awareness is conditioned by this temporality, including one's understanding of being. For Dasein, being is always known temporally and indeed is temporal. Time is the meaning of all forms of being. The two main theses of 'Being and time' – that Dasein is temporal and that the meaning of being is time – may be interpreted thus: being is disclosed only finitely within Dasein's radically finite awareness. Since Dasein is radically finite, disclosure is radically finite.

To be human means that one is not a static entity just 'there' among other things. Rather, being human is always a process of becoming oneself, living into possibilities, into one's future. The ultimate possibility into which one lives is the possibility to end all possibilities: one's death. Human beings are essentially finite and necessarily mortal, and so one's becoming is an anticipation of death. Heidegger calls this mortal becoming 'being-unto-death'. Dasein exists finitely and thus death is essentially and intrinsically inherent in its existence. Thus, Dasein constantly faces the possibility of the impossibility of itself or Dasein.

Authentic existence is born of the experience of inherent finitude, temporality, mortality. Authentic Dasein lives in the constant anticipation of death. This calls for an authentic awareness of one's intrinsic finite nature. Being of Dasein is being-towards death. For the inauthentic Dasein, the past is over and the future is not yet and he wants to enjoy the present to forget its inherent temporality and finitude, its being-toward-death. The sign of an authentic existence is seen in the awareness of one's essential mortality.

### 1.6. LET US SUM UP

Every finite being constitutes a totality, a universe complete and closed in itself; it allows of no outside, everything can be said in it; yet this very totality is simultaneously marked by an irreducible finitude. The inner tension of a finite totality is attested by a loop that pertains to our basic attitude towards things. Spontaneously, we somehow presuppose that every entity depends on some sort of "external" reality, that it "renders" an independent state of things, yet this "external" reality is always-already disclosed through its own fundamental constitution rooted in Being, in the Being of entities.

#### **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 various meanings of Being.

.....  
.....  
.....  
2. What do you understand by authentic existence?  
.....  
.....  
.....

### 1.7. KEY WORDS

**Hypostasis:** Hypostasis (Greek) means *that which stands beneath*.

**Ontology:** Ontology (from the Greek *on*, genitive *ontos*: of being and *logia*: science, study, theory) is the philosophical study of the nature of being in general, as well as the basic categories of being and their relations.

### 1.8. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Alvira, Thomas, Claveil, Luis/Melendo, Thomas. *Metaphysics*. Manila: Sinag-Tala Publishers, 1982.
- Copelston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy, Greece and Rome*. Part, 1, Vol. 1. New York: Image Book, 1963
- Coreth, Emerich. *Metaphysics, English Edition by Joseph Donceel with a Critique by Bernard Lonergan*. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.
- Correya, Bosco. *Heidegger and Sankara: A Comparative Study of 'Thinking of Being' and 'Advaita.'* Kalamassery: Jyotir Dharma Publications, 2003
- Mercier, Jean L. *From Socrates to Wittgenstein*. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1998
- Panthanmackal, George. *One in Many*. Bangalore: SFS Publications, 1993
- Panthanmackal, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives*. Bangalore: SFS Publications, 1993
- Stumpf, Samuel Enoch. *Philosophy, History and Problems*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994.

### 1.9. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

#### Answers to Check your Progress I

1 Supposit or 'hypostasis' *is a subsisting, distinct, complete being of a certain nature. Subsisting* means existing by an act of existing which it has on its own. It is not derived from another principle. It is that mode of existence in virtue of which a thing is self-contained and autonomous in its operations. *Distinct* means adequately distinct, i.e., not identical with any other. It is incommunicable to any other being as it already exists in act. Such a being can never be assumed by a higher supposit since their union could only be at best an accidental union. However, it is not impossible for an individual nature to be assumed by a higher supposit, and to exist, not by its own proper being, but by the being of the higher supposit. For instance, the human nature of Christ is not

a human person as it does not exist by its own proper being, but by the divine being of the Word. *Complete being*: It is not a part or a principle of a being (human soul is not human supposit). It is the whole being. It is a complete individual substance which has subsistence. *Certain nature*: The supposit must be of a certain nature, i.e., it must have a root principle which gives the actions the ultimate unity which they (action) manifest, e.g., mineral, vegetative, animal, human and divine natures. Hence, all supposits are not finite persons; but all finite persons are supposits. The distinction is implicit in the traditional interpretation of 'person' by Severin Boethius and Aquinas. According to them, '*person is a subsisting, distinct, complete being of an intellectual nature*'. Supposit is of non-intellectual nature; whereas person is of *intellectual nature*. The common characteristic distinctive of God, spirits and human being is *intellectuality*. It is lacking in all beings below the level of human beings. Intellectuality is distinct from 'rationality'. The term 'rational' means 'having reason' or 'having the faculty of reasoning'; hence it cannot be applied to God. God is intellectual but not rational in this sense.

2. The principle of relative individuation is *matter affected or signated by dimensive quantity*. It can be explained in this way: Since it is question of the plurality of individuals in the same species, the principle of individuation must be a principle of plurality. Plurality implies division and divisibility. The ground of divisibility will also be the ground or principle of plurality. Consequently, the ground or principle of relative individuation must be that ground of divisibility which enables a specific nature to be multiplied into a plurality of individual natures. Now in physical order the principle of divisibility is matter affected by dimensive quantity. When a portion of matter is separated from another, a plurality is effected in it which gives rise to a plurality of individuals of the same species.

### Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. We shall now examine the metaphysical sense of the term being. The most important features of a being are the following:

- e. Being is referred to as something that *is*. This reference to being as something that *is* places it in contrast to *what is not* or non-being.
- f. In the language of metaphysics, being is said to be an *act*. By *act* we do not mean an action but the primordial basis of action. When we say that a being is an *act* we mean thereby that the being referred to make its being felt by the fact of its existence. Hence, by *act* we have to understand the very act of being existent.
- g. The notion of being has a primacy over every other knowledge. The first thing that our intellect grasps with regards a thing is that *it is* or *it exists*. Without this primary notion of existence no other knowledge about a thing is possible.
- h. The notion of being is not a notion of a genus. By genus we understand the distinguishing and essential aspect of a thing. For example, man's rational nature distinguishes him from animals. When we say that the notion of being is not the notion of a genus, we mean that the word being encompasses everything; that it has maximum extension without any specification. Being embraces all realities that are real or imaginable.

2. Authentic existence is born of the experience of inherent finitude, temporality, mortality. Authentic Dasein lives in the constant anticipation of death. This calls for an authentic awareness of one's intrinsic finite nature. Being of Dasein is being-towards death. For the inauthentic Dasein, the past is over and the future is not yet and he wants to enjoy the present to forget its

inherent temporality and finitude, its being-toward-death. The sign of an authentic existence is seen in the awareness of one's essential mortality.



---

## UNIT 2

## PERSON

---

### Contents

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Uniqueness of Human Being
- 2.3 Ontological Dimension of Human Person
- 2.4 Psychological Dimension of Human Person
- 2.5 An Integral Concept of Person
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 Key Words
- 2.8 Further Reading and References
- 2.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

---

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

We, in our day to day communication as well as understanding, use terms such as “Human” and “Person.” But, for centuries, a number of eminent thinkers have differed in their views and theories. The objectives of this unit are:

- To scan through the various theories
- Broaden our mental horizon
- And finally lead us into a better understanding of ourselves.

---

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

We live in an anthropocentric world where human person is considered as the centre, summit and measure of everything. The term ‘person’ is not used for plants and animals but it is exclusively reserved to human. Human is called a person because one is a subject and the term brings out the grandeur, dignity and nobility of person.

The word ‘person’ comes from the Greek word ‘*prosopon*’ meaning mask, to personify in a role, which became the Latin ‘*persona*’. Neither in common usage nor in philosophy has there been a univocal concept of person. In common usage ‘person’ refers to any human being in a general way. The person is distinct from a thing or material object. The term ‘person’ generally stands for a living conscious human being.

---

### 2.2 UNIQUENESS OF HUMAN BEING

All people in the world, believers or non-believers, recognize something unique in man/woman. Philosophers, psychologists and scientists have explained this uniqueness of human differently. For philosophers, it is the reason that makes human different from other beings. For scientists, it is consciousness that makes human unique among other creatures. It is precisely because of this unique status that we owe respect to every human



person. The human being alone is a person. Human has the dignity of a subject and is of value in oneself.

Human is a unique creation of the forces of nature. As a unique creation, a human being reveals this originality and uniqueness in one's development as well as in one's acts. An individual is a being who is one in itself and distinct from all other beings. Many philosophers have stressed the element of uniqueness, singularity and individuality of the human person. Even though human shares with other sub-human beings a number of qualities, one enjoys a life that is qualitatively different from other forms of life. The life of human is specifically different from that of animals and plants, because one has the unique dignity of an individual, rational and immortal being.

### ***Individuality of Human Person***

As human begins to go deeper into oneself, one becomes aware of oneself as a subject and that one is different from the rest of the universe and thus discovers one's individuality. Being an individual, one is unique, dynamic, rational, free and creative. An individual should never be considered or treated as an object or commodity. We can make use of a thing at our will because it has no will and freedom. Since it has no will, we don't require the consent of the object to use it. But a human person is quite different from an anonymous entity because one is an intelligent and free individual.

### ***Rationality of Human Person***

Human beings are different from other animals because they have the power of reason. Rationality is human's capacity to ask the 'why' of things. It is the capacity to think rationally. To think rationally implies the capacity to distinguish between what is reasonable and not reasonable in the matters we come across in our life. Reason is the natural capacity of human beings to arrive at truth in a holistic way.

Human, being rational is capable of relating oneself with other beings making them participate in one's life and promote one's true good. In order to become authentic human person, proper reasoning in our thinking and action is needed. Everything human does when executing human acts must be a manifestation of one's rationality. The power of reason helps human form concepts, pass judgements, organize them in systems and give meaning to reality. Because of one's reasoning power human emerges superior to other beings on earth. Therefore, we can rightly describe human as a rational animal as Aristotle puts it.

### ***Immortality of Human Person***

Human beings seem to be unique among other creatures of the earth because they not only are fully aware of the inevitable death but also coupled with this awareness they seem to refuse that death is the end. Human, being a unity of body and soul or matter and

spirit, death cannot be the end of everything. If I was not spirit, death would not exist for me; there would only be the corruption of my body. Therefore, death is understood as a separation of the soul from the body. For philosophers like Plato and Aquinas, human is a unity, one substance composed of body and soul. But human soul being spiritual can subsist without matter. Therefore, the soul, for Plato continues to exist even after the death of the body because soul alone is the true reality of human. Etymologically speaking *im* is non and *mortality* is death. So immortality is non-death. It is the continued and perennial existence of the human, the soul. This is a unique nature and feature of human alone.

### ***Freedom and Responsibility***

Freedom is the property of will. The object of will is the good. The will is the tendency towards or love of total good. To desire good is a value. To be free means to be able to decide freely for a specific good. It is equally openness to good or that it is implicitly oriented towards an unlimited good, which corresponds to a fundamental openness towards truth. Freedom is the power of decision of a moral object. Freedom of the individual manifests the way in which a person is made manifest, the way one acts and expresses emotions, the manner in which one is present to others and to the world.

Freedom in the hands of human is a weapon of dual stature. It can be adopted either for good, or for evil. It can serve human for the cultivation, the promotion, the elevation and the realization of one's own being. But it can also serve to obtain the opposite effect; to degrade, humiliate and annihilate one's own being. With good use of freedom human can become a hero, a saint, a benefactor of humanity. Meanwhile with its evil use one can become an addict, a terrorist, a nemesis of humanity.

Therefore, freedom in its true sense implies freedom with responsibility. Human persons are called to live in freedom and responsibility. A human of mature personality takes full responsibility for one's life- thoughts and actions. Human being a moral agent is responsible and answerable for all what one thinks, speaks and acts. One is responsible for one's life mixed with triumphs and successes, mistakes and failures. We ourselves are responsible for all our actions.

### ***Self Transcendence***

Etymologically 'transcendence' means to go over and beyond a threshold or a boundary (*transscendere*). Self transcendence has its basis in human's power of never being satisfied with finite, the limited or the imperfect. Human is spirit and lives one's life in continuous opening toward the Absolute.

### ***Different Interpretations of 'Transcendence'***

Transcendence is the movement with which man continually "overtakes" himself. This movement has a direction and points towards a goal, the Absolute. In the history of

philosophy there have been philosophers who give *egocentric*, *philanthropic* and *theocentric* meanings to transcendence.

*Egocentric Transcendence:* Human is currently in a precarious, alienated and inauthentic state. The emphasis is on human rising above what one is now and reaching a superior state of happiness. Human is in a tension to free oneself from one's misery and needs to find oneself again through a more complete actualisation of one's possibilities. Philosophers in this group include Feuerbach, Nietzsche, and Heidegger etc.

*Philanthropic Transcendence:* Human is currently confined in one's individualism. The emphasis is on the social dimension and advocates the perfection of the human community and an attempt to originate a new humanity freed from social inequality. Philosophers in this group include Marx, Comte, Bloch, Garaudy etc.

*Theocentric Transcendence:* Human is constitutionally open towards the Absolute and escapes incessantly from the confines of one's own reality. Human is the absolute opening to being in general, or human is "spirit". The transcendence toward the Absolute Being (*theocentric*) is the only fundamental structure of human. Philosophers in their group include Thomas Aquinas, Blondel, Rahner, Marcel, Lonergan etc.

### ***The Opening of Human to the Absolute is the Fundamental Constitution of Human***

Human is basically spiritual, that is, one lives one's life in a continuous tension towards the Absolute, in an opening towards it. This is revealed even in the banal actions of everyday life. One is *human* only because one is in the way towards God, whether one knows and expresses it or not, whether one wants it or not. One's opening to God is *intrinsic*. One is the finite being totally open towards the Absolute. One can accept or refute it but not destroy it.

This transcendence attests that the being of human is spiritual and cannot, therefore, be reduced to the material. The spirituality of human is, first of all, positive. One is an "I", a person that exists as a unique subject and opens to a "You", that is a pure person.

However, it is important not to define human as a negation of material. Human's spirituality does not indicate, in the first place, different properties from those materials. Intelligence and will do not exist of their own account. They are abstractions. What exists is a concrete person who thinks and wills. To think and to will are modes of being (accidental entities) of the personal being. The problem of spirituality is not regarding the immateriality of the intellectual faculties but the subsistence and unity of the person.

#### **Check your progress 1**

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

1. How does reason differentiate human person?

.....  
.....

2. How is immortality a unique nature of human?

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

---

### 2.3 ONTOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF HUMAN PERSON

---

The ontological concept of person gives emphasis to human as an individual endowed with the faculty of will, freedom and autonomy. The uniqueness of 'human person' lies in the fact that human person is first of all an individual, unique, original, irrepeatable, irrepresentable being as every human has a unique combination of qualities and talents that no one else has. For Augustine, person means, the single, the individual. To be an individual is to be one, namely being undivided in itself and distinct from all other beings. The uniqueness of person is implied in the concept of individual.

#### ***Definition of Person as given by Boethius and Aquinas***

The merit of giving an adequate first definition of person in the ontological perspective goes to Severin Boethius. He defined person as *rationalis naturae individua substantia* (individual substance of rational nature). This definition of Boethius was revised by Aquinas. Aquinas defines person as *subsistens in rationali nature* (a singular subsistent of a rational nature).

#### ***Substance***

This is the first category of Aristotle, that which is in itself. The person is a being that exists in oneself because one is complete substance. Person is a substantial and individual unity.

#### ***Individual Substance***

The substance, in the fullest sense of the word is the individual. The universal concept does not exist in reality but only in the individual. In the philosophy of Aquinas these two terms individual and substance are united in the term 'subsistent', which means a total autonomy of existence and action. The 'subsistents' is an individual substance that forms a complete whole.

#### ***Rational Nature***



While there are individual substances that are not persons, there are no persons that are not individual substances. Every person is an individual and a human person has a rational nature. The element that distinguishes human from animals and things of this world is one's rationality. To be a person one has to be capable of exercising reason. It is this rational faculty that helps the human person to distinguish between real and unreal, right and wrong and knowledge and opinion. The ontological concept of person gives emphasis to the faculty of will and the autonomy of the person. Human as a willing being is an autonomous subject who tries to transcend time and space. This means that human is an end in oneself. A person is therefore capable of deciding for oneself and of acting in accordance with one's own decisions in order to arrive at one's ultimate end. A human becomes an authentic person when one acts in a morally upright way taking responsibility for one's actions. One must creatively respond to the challenges with a spirit to change and grow, by relating oneself to God, fellow-beings and nature as free persons.

---

## **2.4 PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF HUMAN PERSON**

---

Persons are individual human beings capable of mental activities. It was Descartes who proposed a theory of mind and for him, person is not just a material body but person for Descartes is a self, a self-conscious mind which thinks, feels, desires etc. Descartes no longer defines person in relation to the autonomy of being, but in relation to self-consciousness. In his psychological sense of person, Descartes admits firstly intellectual knowledge and reason as the essential requisite of the person and secondly, self-consciousness as a distinctive mark of human.

### ***The Psychological Person***

From the psychological point of view human can be viewed as a being that has self-awareness. The person is the 'I'. The discovery of the 'I' means 'becoming aware of my individual existence, separated from that of other beings'. In the psychological understanding of person, human intellect, thinking, reasoning, knowledge and self-consciousness are emphasised.

### ***Self Consciousness***

Human differs from animals as a self-conscious being in the cognitive level. Self-consciousness and objectivity are the two elements which distinguish human from animals. In fact, animals know objects and know themselves but reach neither self-consciousness nor objectivity, because they do not succeed in separating themselves either from the knowing subject or from the known object. Human has the awareness of the 'I' (subject) and 'non I' (object).

The inter related actions of reason, volition and emotion together constitute the human mind (consciousness). By the existence of these mental functions we become self



conscious that we are subjects and not objects. The person not only acts consciously, but is also aware both of the fact that one acts and of the fact that it is one who acts. Self-consciousness is the awareness by the self of itself. Self knowledge is the basis of self consciousness.

***Human Person as a Subject***

A subject is a willing, feeling and thinking entity. Human as a subject is a unique being endowed with intellect, will and heart. Since human is a subject, no human being should be treated as an object, a thing or as a function. As a subject one is a knowing, conscious, free and self transcending being in the world.

As a thinking being I hold on to my reasonably legitimate ideas and views. As a feeling subject I seek and desire for the emotional satisfaction of my life. And as a willing being I desire to be an autonomous subject and I make myself a free person by responsible exercise of choices.

The human person is a subject and refuses to be an object. In order to become authentic human beings, we need to discover our true self, deepening and widening our consciousness, forming an integral vision, creating open attitudes and having right convictions.

**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 person according to Boethius and St Thomas?

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

2. Human differs from animals as a self-conscious being. Explain.

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

***Substantial Unity of Human: The Absolute Value and Dignity of the Person***

Human is a substance. In fact, one has all the properties of a substance; constancy, stability, identity, autonomy in being etc. Thus we can say that human or more exactly every single individual of the human species is a substance. The complete substance of the human being is neither the body, nor the soul, but the body and the soul in their profound unity.

***Person is Open to the Absolute***

In contrast to the purely material, the structure of human as a spiritual being, given intelligence and will, means that one is open to the infinite, tending to supersede every

limit. The object of intelligence is being as being. It chooses the finite within the horizon of infinite and has an infinite desire to know, as well as unbounded potential. Similarly, the will is never content with the attained good, but tends towards the greater. Since only God is infinite and unlimited Truth and Good, only God can satisfy the quest of the human person.

#### *The Person Open to the Absolute is an End in Oneself*

The human person is not a means to an end but one is an end in oneself in the sense that one is ordained by the Transcendent. In one sense the person is relative as one is dependent on the Absolute and in another sense, one is an absolute form because one is willed by the Absolute. This is the authentic dignity of human person because one has been caused in such a way as to be able to direct oneself to the absolute.

#### *Dialogical concept of person*

Philosophers like Max Scheler (1874-1928), Martin Buber (1878-1965), Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973) describe human as a being-in-relationship, a being-with-others. According to them humans are embodied self-conscious beings who stand in relationality with others and it is to be realized through dialogue. Human is not only an individual, but also a communion being. In order to lead a meaningful and authentic existence one must establish a loving and mutually reciprocal relationship with other human beings. According to Max Scheler, the human being lives first of all, and principally in others and not in oneself. One lives more in the community than in one's own individual. Therefore, dialogue attaches directly to the persons. In dialogue I enter into relationship with others and is conceivable only between persons. For dialogue, I must first recognize in the other persons as independent subject of existence, interiority, a capacity for response, and freedom- in short- subjectivity.

#### ***Martin Buber's Concept of Person***

According to Buber human existence is essentially related and relational. Human life with all its complexity finds its meaning, richness and happiness in being related to others. For Buber life is relationship with others from birth to death. According to Buber a genuine relationship can take place only in the '*sphere of between*'. The '*sphere of between*' is not something permanent, rather it is ever created whenever two human beings meet. One turns to the other and in order to communicate with each other, must reach out to a sphere beyond one's own namely the '*sphere of the between*'.

#### *The Three-fold Relation*

Human has a threefold relationship by virtue of one's very nature and situation. First one is related to the world and to things; second one is related to humans –both to individuals and to many; third one is related to the absolute. Thus we can say that human has got an I-It, I-Thou and I-Eternal Thou relationship. To be a genuine human person, one should

relate oneself with the Absolute, fellow beings and nature in mutual selfless love, sharing and co-operation. Absolute is the indispensable foundation and basis for every genuine I-Thou relationship. Without the eternal Thou human's relationship will become sterile and useless. The Absolute is the Absolute Being who makes possible every I-Thou relationship.

### ***Gabriel Marcel's Concept of Person***

Marcel's philosophy has been called in the philosophy of communion. He insists that to be genuine in our interpersonal relationships we must be totally and unreservedly available to the other. Marcel identifies selfless love and mutual openness as intersubjectivity in our relationship with others. One should place oneself at the disposal of others. Marcel calls this capacity 'availability'.

To become an available person means to be a free person. Because the unavailable person is tangled within oneself, one is limited to one's own self created world. When someone leads a 'closed' life and does not make oneself available to others, he/she leads an inauthentic life. A person leads an authentic existence only when one is making oneself 'open' to others in love and sharing. According to Marcel, "I can become myself only through the other, my friend".

The available person gives oneself without the expectation of receiving back. One is actually at the disposal of others. When one opens up oneself for others, one is open to reality itself. This enables one to grow deeper and deeper in life, whereas the self-centred, unavailable person refuses the call of others and thereby one becomes uncommitted. One is not ready to go beyond the petty circles one craves. One forgets the fact that when one gives one grows and that through self sacrifice one reaches self-fulfilment. Only a liberated, free, available person can enter into a meaningful and authentic interpersonal communion.

### ***The Intersubjective Communion***

Intersubjectivity does not merely mean collective labour or it is not merely being together either. But it calls for an interaction in a deeper level. It means that I must be willing to put myself at the disposal of the other. Here 'the other' is considered and treated not like an object, but as the subject, as the magnetic centre of presence. At the root of presence there is a being who takes me into consideration, who is regarded by me as taking me into account. Now by definition an object does not take me into account. I do not exist for it.

Let us take the example of a bus conductor. I often travel in a particular bus. Therefore, I have to deal with this particular conductor often. Now the conductor is an instrument for me. He /she gives me a ticket and I pay for it. Nothing more than that. Seeing him /her uneasy one day, I ask, "What is the matter?" Responding to my question he/she comes to me. Here originates the subject - subject relationship. In this way we really become present to each other. In this mutual presence starts the Marcelian inter-subjectivity.

This encounter or meeting or inter-subjectivity is not something accidental or happening by chance. Marcel writes: “To encounter some one is not merely to cross his path but to be, for the moment at least near to or with him. To use a term I have often used before, it means being a co-presence”. This meeting or encounter is “not mere interaction between two persons... but a reciprocal intercourse of ‘I’ and ‘Thou’ who get to know one another as persons.” My genuine individuality is found out only in relation with the other. There is no self without communion. By self-enclosure I am actually destroying myself. So, one should get out of one’s own egoistic way of being.

---

## **2.5 AN INTEGRAL CONCEPT OF PERSON**

---

The ontological, the psychological and the dialogical concepts of person include some good elements. The ontological concept of person gives importance to the will and volitive dimension. It implies that human is an ‘individual substance’ who takes free decisions. Psychological concept of person gives emphasis to intellect and cognitive dimension. It implies that human is a self-conscious being in the world. The dialogical concept stresses the heart and the affective dimension and describes person as a loving and feeling being. All these concepts and dimensions put together we can speak of human as a person who thinks, wills and feels. Human person thus is a thinking, willing and feeling entity. Human is precisely a person because one is the master of oneself and one has self control. The dignity of human too reveals that one is a person with independence, freedom and responsibility.

---

## **2.6 LET US SUM UP**

---

Human is a mystery. Millions of people have been speculating on the nature of human being for centuries. Various branches of science have attempted to explain the making of human beings. Still human beings remain a mystery. No one has ever succeeded in comprehending the nature of human beings completely. Human is an evolving being possessing the properties of autonomy, self-consciousness, selfless love and self-transcendence. One is a self-transcending being capable of never being satisfied by a given facticity, capable of transcending and projecting oneself beyond space and time. The worth of a human person lies not in what one does or what one knows, but in what one is. Human is an incarnate spirit and is made up of matter and spirit. Since one is an incarnate spirit one has a soul and is spiritual. A spiritual being is essentially intelligent. An intelligent being is essentially able to will. A being, able to will, is necessarily free. A free being is necessarily personal. Human, who is intelligent, free, spiritual and personal by nature, is able to communicate and enter into relationship with the Absolute. Human is an unfinished product. In so far as human is a conscious and free being, one is aware of oneself as a being on the way, who in freedom directs one’s ascent to the fullness of being. Thus, becoming human is a life long human process of learning to transcend our

self with love, integrity, fidelity and care. Human being is a possible possibility tending towards the Infinite and one's ultimate destiny consists in being united with the Infinite.

**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. Human being as spiritual being is open to the Absolute, How?

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

2. What do you understand by the term "Inter-subjectivity"?

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

---

**2.7 KEY WORDS**

---

**Person:** The word 'person' comes from the Greek word '*prosopon*' meaning mask, to personify in a role, which became the Latin '*persona*'.

**Transcendence:** to go beyond a limit or range, e.g. of thought or belief or to exist above and apart from the material world.

---

**2.8 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES**

---

Mondin, Battista. *Philosophical Anthropology*. Rome: Urban University Press, 1985.

Sumner, C. *The Philosophy of Man*. 3 Vols. Addis Ababa: Central Publishing Press, 1989.

Lescoe, Francis J. *Existentialism With or Without God*. New York: Alba House 1974.

Marcel, Gabriel. *The Existential Background of Human Dignity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963.

Chethimattam, J. B. and Thomas, T. M. *Image of Man*. Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1974.

Glatzer, N. N. *The Way of Response: Martin Buber*. New York: Schockens, 1966.

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologica*. Vol 1. Westminster: Christian Classics, 1981.

Van Ewijk, Thomas J. M. *Gabriel Marcel: An Introduction*. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1965.

Manimala, Varghese J. *Being, Person and Community*. New Delhi: Intercultural Publications, 1974.



---

## 2.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

---

### Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Human beings are different from other animals because they have the power of reason. Rationality is human's capacity to ask the 'why' of things. It is the capacity to think rationally. To think rationally implies the capacity to distinguish between what is reasonable and not reasonable in the matters we come across in our life. Reason is the natural capacity of human beings to arrive at truth in a holistic way.

Human, being rational, is capable of relating oneself with other beings making them participate in one's life and promote one's true good. In order to become authentic human person, proper reasoning in our thinking and action is needed. Everything human does when executing human acts must be a manifestation of one's rationality. The power of reason helps human form concepts, pass judgements, organize them in systems and give meaning to reality. Because of his reasoning power human emerges superior to other beings on earth. Therefore, we can rightly describe human as a rational animal as Aristotle puts it.

2. Human beings seem to be unique among other creatures of the earth because they not only are fully aware of the inevitable death but also coupled with this awareness they seem to refuse that death is the end. Human, being a unity of body and soul or matter and spirit, death cannot be the end of everything for human. If I was not spirit, death would not exist for me; there would only be the corruption of my body. Therefore, death is understood as a separation of the soul from the body. For philosophers like Plato and Aquinas, human is a unity, one substance composed of body and soul. But human soul being spiritual can subsist without matter. Therefore, the soul, for Plato continues to exist even after the death of the body because soul alone is the true reality of human. Etymologically speaking *im* is non and *mortality* is death. So immortality is non-death. It is the continued and perennial existence of human, the soul. This is a unique nature and feature of human alone.

### Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. The merit of giving an adequate first definition of person in the ontological perspective goes to Severin Boethius. He defined person as *rationalis naturae individua substantia* (individual substance of rational nature). This definition of Boethius was revised by Aquinas. Aquinas defines person as *subsistens in rationali nature* (a singular subsistent of a rational nature).

2. Human differs from animals as a self-conscious being in the cognitive level. Self-consciousness and objectivity are the two elements which distinguish human from animals. In fact, animals know objects and know themselves but reach neither self-consciousness nor objectivity, because they do not succeed in separating themselves

either from the knowing subject or from the known object. Human has the awareness of the 'I' (subject) and 'non I' (object).

The inter related actions of reason, volition and emotion together constitute the human mind (consciousness). By the existence of these mental functions we become self conscious that we are subjects and not objects. The person not only acts consciously, but is also aware both of the fact that one acts and of the fact that it is oneself who acts. Self-consciousness is the awareness by the self of itself. Self knowledge is the basis of self consciousness.

### **Answers to Check your Progress III**

1. In contrast to the purely material, the structure of human as a spiritual being, given intelligence and will, means that one is open to the infinite, tending to supercede every limit. The object of intelligence is being as being. It chooses the finite within the horizon of infinite and has an infinite desire to know, as well as unbounded potential. Similarly, the will is never content with the attained good, but tends towards the greater. Since only the Absolute is infinite and unlimited Truth and Good, only the Absolute can satisfy the quest of the human person.

2. Inter-subjectivity does not merely mean collective labour or it is not merely being together either. But it calls for an interaction in a deeper level. It means that I must be willing to put myself at the disposal of the other. Here 'the other' is considered and treated not like an object, but as the subject, as the magnetic centre of presence. At the root of presence there is a being who takes me into consideration, who is regarded by me as taking me into account. Now by definition an object does not take me into account. I do not exist for it.



## BLOCK-4 INTRODUCTION

Metaphysics investigates into being as being, i.e., Being which is common to all beings. In the process of investigation into Being, one has also to know the distinction and identity of Being and beings. If Being is common to all beings, then how are the beings different from one another while being distinct from each other? This question raises the most important problem of Metaphysics: the problem of one and many. There are various answers to this problem. Two important answers are that of analogy and *maya* suggested by Western and Indian metaphysicians respectively. This Block discusses the problem of one and many, analogy, and the transcendental qualities or attributes of Being – oneness, truth, goodness and beauty – which are intrinsic to and inseparable from Being.

Unit 1 is on “Being as Analogous.” Being is understood as ‘that which is in some way or something.’ There is nothing which is not in some way or something; every being is in some way or something. If it is so, Being is absolutely one without admitting of any kind of distinction. But human experience is also the experience of each being as distinct from other being. The theory of analogy would try to solve the problem by concluding that every being is “somewhat same and somewhat different” since Being is common to all beings while allowing each being to be on its own. Thus, Being is analogous.

Unit 2 is on “Being as one.” Although Being is analogous in its relation to other beings, Being is one in itself, in its transcendental nature. Transcendental is the notion which applies to each and every being by underlying, penetrating, transforming and unifying all beings. Being (which is one) underlies, penetrates, transforms and unifies all beings, and hence is transcendental. In other words, Being, considered in itself (in its transcendental nature), is one, but Being in its relation to other beings is analogous (and thus one and many / one in many).

Unit 3 is on “Being as True.” Truth is an undeniable fact of human experience. No denial of truth is possible without resulting in contradiction. For instance, if someone says, ‘there is no truth,’ a question will be posed, ‘Is it true that there is no truth?’ In this way, one implicitly admits truth in the very denial. Ontologically speaking, ‘everything is true’ as every being is rooted in Being that conforms to and coheres with every mind.

Unit 4 is on “Being as Good.” No being ever desires evil. Every being moves towards what is good. Hence, “good is what all desire.” Every being desires what is good, because every being is intrinsically good. Every being is intrinsically and fundamentally good, because Being, the most intrinsic and most fundamental to all beings, which is also one and true, is good in itself.

Unit 5 is on “Being as Beautiful.” Beauty is proper combination of oneness, truth and goodness. Where there is oneness, truth and goodness in proper order and proportion, there is beauty. It is ‘the splendour of order by which a being can delight a cognitive faculty.’ For instance, the characterization of a person as ‘beautiful,’ whether on an individual basis or by community consensus, is often based on some combination of *inner beauty*, which includes psychological factors such as personality, intelligence, grace, congeniality, charm, integrity, congruity and elegance, and *outer beauty*, (i.e. physical attractiveness) which includes physical factors, such as health, youthfulness, sexiness, symmetry, averageness, and complexion. In the same way,

ontological beauty is the proper or right combination of the attributes of Being, which is the ultimate principle of all inner and outer beauty too.

To conclude: Metaphysics investigates into Being which is fundamental and common to all beings. This Block has discussed analogy and the transcendental qualities or attributes of Being, which are intrinsic to and inseparable from Being. Being is Analogous since every being is somewhat same and somewhat different. Being is one as it is undivided in itself while distinct from all other beings. It is true in so far as everything conforms to and coheres with Being. It is good in so far as every being, that proceeds from Being, is intrinsically good in itself. It is beautiful in so far as it is the source of oneness, truth, and goodness, and combines them in their proper order and proportion as manifested in beings.



---

**UNIT I**

---

**BEING AS ANALOGOUS**

---

**Contents**

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Analogy in Philosophy and its Sources
- 1.3 Theories of Analogy
- 1.4 Divisions of Analogy
- 1.5 Analogical Use of the Term Being
- 1.6 Reasons for the Analogy of Being
- 1.7 Three Divisions of Analogy Accepted in Contemporary Discussions
- 1.8 Criticism of the Theory
- 1.9 The Thomist's Sentence
- 1.10 Cardinal Cajetan: A New Approach
- 1.11 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.12 Key Words
- 1.13 Further Readings and References
- 1.14 Answers to Check Your Progress

---

**1.0 OBJECTIVES**

---

The term Analogy is used in different disciplines with different connotation and denotation. Our focus in this unit is

- To get a historical basis for the term Analogy
- Take into account the various views and the criticisms put forward and
- Very precisely, to get to know the Metaphysical usage of the term

---

**1.1 INTRODUCTION**

---

The root of the English term “analogy” must be sought in the Greek language, and especially in the Greek mathematical language, where the term *analogia* was used to designate the identity of the relation occurring among the members of a proportion. In Greek, *analogia* meant: to be in a corresponding relation to something, to correspond to something. The etymological meaning of the term indicates some kind of duplication or multiplication of content or relations. The term analogy is used to designate some relation or group of relations. In everyday language, we usually use the term analogy wherever there occurs some rather imprecisely defined similarity, although we distinguish the meaning of the word ‘similar’ from ‘analogical’. We say for example that two Keralites are similar to one another and not analogical, whereas we speak of



analogy existing between the wings of a bird and the wings of an aeroplane, or between the human family and the family of the animals.

However, in different disciplines the word had different connotation. The Latin term '**analogia**' in scriptural exegesis, according to Aquinas, was the method of showing that one part of scripture did not conflict with another. In rhetoric and grammar analogy was the method of settling a doubt about a word's form by appeal to a similar and more certain case. Several twelfth-century theologians use the word in this sense. In translations of Pseudo-Dionysius the term had a strictly ontological sense, for it refers to a being's capacity for participation in divine perfections as this relates to lower or higher beings. In logic, authors were aware that the Greek word 'αναλογία', sometimes called '**analogia**' in Latin, but often translated as '**proportio**' or '**proportionalitas**', referred to the comparison between two proportions. However, by the 1220s the word came to be linked with the phrase "in a prior and a posterior sense" and by the 1250s terms said according to a comparison of proportions were normally separated from terms said according to a prior and a posterior sense.

The word 'analogical' soon became linked with the word 'ambiguous' in Latin authors. In his commentary on Aristotle's **Posterior Analytics**, written in the 1220s, Robert Grosseteste says that Aristotle's use of analogy to find a common term produces ambiguous names said according to a prior and a posterior sense, and he uses the phrase "**ambiguum analogum**". In the same decade, the **Glossa** of the theologian Alexander of Hales links being said in a prior and a posterior sense with ambiguity and (in one possibly unreliable manuscript) with analogy, and the writings of Philip the Chancellor also link being said in a prior and a posterior sense with analogy. In logic textbooks, the word 'analogy' in the new sense appears in the **Summe metenses**, once dated around 1220, but now thought to be by Nicholas of Paris, writing between 1240 and 1260. The new use of 'analogy' rapidly became standard in both logicians and theologians.

---

## 1.2 ANALOGY IN PHILOSOPHY AND ITS SOURCES

---

The use of analogy in philosophy originated in the context of two problems in philosophy. On the one hand it is related to the problem of one and the many or unity and multiplicity and on the other it is related to the problem of identity. From Medieval period on it has a theological background too. If one is to look for the sources of the use of analogy one can identify three, namely Logic, Metaphysics and Theology.

It is a matter of our experience that everything existing is either individually or specifically distinct from others. For example, Peter is distinct from Paul individually and man is distinct from cat specifically. However, there is no complete diversity in nature because under the aspect of existence or being everything is united. Therefore, being is the basis of unity among things. This unity as we have seen is called the formal unity. But it does not take away the diversity among things. The individual and the specific diversity are founded on something which is in the existential order or is a being. Therefore, the basis of diversity is also being. Hence the problem of being is one and many and consequently we ask how this term “being” can be applied to the inferiors?

We find three different answers to this problem:

- There are some philosophers who admit only unity of being and their system is known as monism. According to them reality is one and what we call multiplicity is nothing but the manifestation or the participation or the projection of this one and the same reality. According to some of them this one reality is material and is known as materialistic monism while others say that it is something divine and their theory is known as pantheistic monism.
- There is the other extreme theory which denies the unity of beings and exaggerates the multiplicity. This theory is known as pluralism in philosophy.
- The third theory takes a via media and defense the unity as well as multiplicity of being. This is known as analogy of being.

From Logical principles it is clear that a term can be predicated in three different ways, namely **univocally, equivocally and analogously**. Every term has thought content and when it is found in a uniform manner in different things then it is called univocal predication. In other words, in a univocal predication the predicates have an absolute meaning and can be accurately and distinctly defined in themselves. The univocal terms arise by a complete abstraction from the particular subjects in which the perfection is present so that the difference in the subject does not enter into their meaning. E.g. the term man is applied to Peter, Paul, and Thomas etc in a uniform manner.

On the other hand, the term remaining the same can be applied in a diverse sense to the inferiors. Then it is called equivocal predication. eg. Post can mean a pole or where letters are mailed etc. One source for the theory of analogy is the doctrine of equivocal terms found in logic texts. Until the early twelfth century, the only parts of Aristotle's logic to be available in Latin were the **Categories** and **On Interpretation**, supplemented by a few other works including the monographs and commentaries of Boethius. The **Categories** opens with a brief characterization

of terms used equivocally, such as 'animal' used of real human beings and pictured human beings, and terms used univocally, such as 'animal' used of human beings and oxen. In the first case, the spoken term is the same but there are two distinct significates or intellectual conceptions; in the second case, both the spoken term and the significate are the same. We should note that equivocal terms include homonyms (two words with the same form but different senses, e.g., 'pen'), polysemous words (one word with two or more senses), and, for medieval thinkers, proper names shared by different people. By the mid-twelfth century the rest of Aristotle's logic had been recovered, including the **Sophistical Refutations** in which Aristotle discusses three types of equivocation and how these contribute to fallacies in logic. For writers throughout the later middle ages, the discussion of analogical terms was fitted into the framework of univocal and equivocal terms provided by Aristotle and his commentators.

Finally, the thought content of a term can be applied partly in the same sense and partly in a diverse sense to the inferiors and it is known as analogous predication. Strictly analogous predicates cannot be defined accurately and distinctly because their meaning is proportional to the subjects of which they are predicated. In contrast to univocal and equivocal terms analogous terms arise by the incomplete abstraction known as separation, but they retain a relation to the primary subject. eg. The term health is strictly applied to the living beings and it is applied to air, water, food, etc., because they contribute to the health of the living beings.

Among the first metaphysical principles the **principle of Identity** has a distinctive place. All other metaphysical principles presuppose it and take their meaning from it. The principle of identity logically introduces us to the reflection on analogy, already present, in a vertical line; in the hierarchy of existents it makes concrete, in its way, the perfection of being, according to *more* or *less*. Every existent of a superior grade realizes being more perfectly than that of an inferior grade. "Analogy is identity that flowers in diversity, it is diversity harmonized and founded by identity and on identity".

### **Metaphysics**

A second source for doctrines of analogy is metaphysics. The philosophical relevance of the concept of analogy is very evident in the context of the problem of monism, of dualism, and of radical pluralism. The point is, all these issues depend on the solutions before this paradox: how can be explained the identical and the diverse, the one and the multiple, similarity and dissimilarity in the things of this world. The first part of Aristotle's **Metaphysics** had been translated by the mid-twelfth century, though the full text was recovered only gradually. One crucial text is found in **Metaphysics** 4.2 (1003a33-35): "There are many senses (**multis modis**) in which being (**ens**) can be said, but they are related to one central point (**ad unum**), one definite kind of thing, and are not equivocal. Everything which is healthy is related to health....

and everything which is medical to medicine....” In this text, Aristotle raises the general problem of the word ‘being’ and its different senses, and he also introduces what is known as **pros hen** equivocation or focal meaning, the idea that different senses may be unified through a relationship to one central sense. Another foundational text is from Avicenna’s **Metaphysics**, also translated into Latin during the twelfth century, where he writes that being (**ens**) is neither a genus nor a predicate predicated equally of all its subordinates, but rather a notion (**intentio**) in which they agree according to the prior and the posterior. As we shall see below, this reference to the prior and the posterior is particularly important.

### **Theology**

Twelfth-century theology is another important source for the doctrine of analogy, for twelfth-century theologians such as Gilbert of Poitiers and Alan of Lille explored the problem of divine language in depth. Their work initially sprang from works on the Trinity by Augustine and Boethius. These authors insisted that God is absolutely simple, so that no distinctions can be made between God’s essence and his existence, or between one perfection, such as goodness, and another, such as wisdom, or, more generally, between God and his properties. New attention was also paid to Greek theologians, especially Pseudo-Dionysius. These theologians insisted on God’s absolute transcendence, and on what came to be called negative theology. We cannot affirm anything positive about God, because no affirmation can be appropriate to a transcendent being. These theological doctrines raised the general problem of how we can speak meaningfully of God at all, but they also raised a number of particular problems. Must we say that “God is justice” means the same as “God is just”? Must we say that “God is just” means the same as “God is good”? Can we say that God is just and that Peter is just as well? For our purposes, this last question is the most important, for it raises the question of one word used of two different realities. In other words, how can one use the word *being* both for God the creator and human being the creature?

#### **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 analogy?

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

2. What is Analogy in Metaphysics?

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

---

### 1.3 THEORIES OF ANALOGY

---

In order to understand the way in which theories of analogy developed, one needs to consider the divisions of equivocation found in medieval authors. It was Boethius who presented a series of divisions in his commentary on the **Categories**. The first division was into chance equivocals and deliberate equivocals. In the first case, the occurrences of the equivocal term were totally unconnected, as when a barking animal, a marine animal, and a constellation were all called ‘**canis**’ (dog). Chance equivocation was also called pure equivocation, and it was carefully distinguished from analogy by later writers. In the second case, that of deliberate equivocation, some intention on the part of the speakers was involved, and the occurrences of the equivocal term could be related in various ways. Boethius himself gave four subdivisions. These are found in various later sources, including Ockham’s commentary on the **Categories**.

The first of Boethius’s four subdivisions was *similitude*, used of the case of the noun ‘animal’ said of both real human beings and pictured human beings. Medieval logicians seem to have been totally unaware of the fact that the Greek word used by Aristotle was genuinely polysemous, meaning both animal and image, and they explained the extended use of ‘animal’ in terms of a likeness between the two referents — a likeness which had nothing to do with the significate of the term ‘animal’, which picks out a certain kind of nature, but which was nonetheless more than metaphorical in that the external shape of the pictured object does correspond to that of the living object. Those medieval authors whose discussion of equivocation was very brief tended to use this example, and they often claimed that Aristotle introduced it in order to accommodate analogy as a kind of equivocation. On the other hand, authors whose discussion was more extensive tended to drop both the example and the subdivision of *similitude*.

Boethius’s second type of equivocation is ‘**analogia**’ in the Greek sense, and the standard example was the word ‘**principium**’ (principle or origin), which was said to apply to unity with respect to number and to point with respect to a line, or to both the source of a river and the heart of an animal. ‘**Principium**’ is a noun and, as such, might be expected to pick out a common nature, but although a unity, a point, a source and a heart can all be called ‘**principium**’ with equal propriety, there is no common nature involved. Mathematical objects, rivers, and hearts, represent not merely different natural kinds, but different categories, in that mathematical objects fall under the category of quantity, and hearts at least under the category of substance. What allows these disparate things to be grouped together is a similarity of relations: a source is to a



river as a heart is to an animal — or so it was claimed. While theologians, including Aquinas himself in **De veritate**, and the fourteenth-century Dominican Thomas Sutton, occasionally make use of this type of analogy, most logicians do not even mention it.

The last two subdivisions found in Boethius are ‘of one origin’ (**ab uno**), with the example of the word ‘medical’, and ‘in relation to one’ (**ad unum**), with the example of the word ‘healthy’. These subdivisions correspond to Aristotle’s **pros hen** equivocation. The example ‘healthy’ (**sanum**) as said of animals, their diet, and their urine is particularly important here. ‘Sanum’, like other adjectives, was classified as a concrete accidental term. As such, it did not fall within an Aristotelian category, since its primary signification had two elements whose combination was variously explained. On the one hand, some kind of reference is made to the abstract entity health, which belongs to the category of quality; on the other hand, some kind of reference is made to an external object which belongs to the category of substance. This dual reference precludes the term from picking out a natural kind, though in the case of other adjectives, such as ‘brown’, no problem is caused thereby. Brown things may not form a natural kind, but at least they are all physical objects, and ‘brown’ is used in the same sense of each one. ‘Healthy’, however, is more complicated. To say that Rover is healthy is to say that Rover is a thing having health, and obviously this analysis can’t be applied to diet, which is called healthy only because it causes health in an animal, or to urine, which is called healthy only when it is the sign of health in an animal. Whatever the properties which characterize urine and food, they are different from those characterizing the animal.

---

#### 1.4 DIVISIONS OF ANALOGY

---

Boethius’s subdivisions had one major failure: they did not seem to accommodate the different uses of the word ‘being’ (**ens**). As a result, many authors used a new threefold division which included Boethius’s last two subdivisions and one more. They presented the division as a division of deliberate equivocals, and they identified deliberate equivocals with analogical terms. This threefold division of analogy was established in the thirteenth-century, in response to a remark by Averroes in his commentary on the **Metaphysics** to the effect that Aristotle had classified ‘healthy’ as a case of relationship to one thing as an end, ‘medical’ as a case of relationship to one thing as an agent, and ‘being’ (**ens**) as a case of relationship to one subject. It is found in Thomas Aquinas’s own commentary on the **Metaphysics**. An analogical term is now seen as one which is said of two things in a prior and a posterior sense, and it is grounded in various kinds of attribution or relationship to the primary object: food is healthy as a cause of a

healthy animal, a procedure is medical when applied by a medical agent, a quality has being by virtue of the existent substance that it characterizes.

A second threefold division of analogy has its origin from reflection on the relationship between equivocal and analogical terms. Analogical terms were said to be intermediaries between equivocal and univocal terms, and the standard view was that analogical terms were intermediary between chance equivocals and univocals, and hence that they were to be identified with deliberate equivocals. The notion of an intermediary term, however, is open to more than one interpretation, and some authors went further in suggesting that at least some analogical terms were intermediary between univocals and deliberate equivocals, so that they were not equivocal in any of the normal senses at all. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, an anonymous commentator on the **Sophistical Refutations** gives the following classification. First, there are analogical terms which are univocal in a broad sense of 'univocal'. Here reference was made to genus terms such as 'animal'. Human beings and donkeys participate equally in the common nature animal, but are not themselves equal, since human beings are more perfect than donkeys. This type of analogy was routinely discussed in response to a remark Aristotle had made in **Physics VII** (249a22-25) which, in Latin translation, asserted that many equivocations are hidden in a genus. Medieval logicians felt obliged to fit this claim into the framework of equivocation and analogy, even if the consensus was that in the end the use of genus terms was univocal. Second, there are those analogical terms such as 'being' (**ens**) which are not equivocal, because only one concept or nature (**ratio**) seems to be involved, and which are not univocal either, because things participate this one **ratio** unequally, in a prior and a posterior way. It is these terms which are the genuine intermediaries. Third, there are those analogical terms which are deliberate equivocals, because there are two concepts or natures (**rationes**) which are participated in a prior and a posterior way. The example here was 'healthy'. This second threefold division was much discussed. Duns Scotus bitterly criticized it in his earlier logical writings. Walter Burley claimed that both the first and the second kinds of analogical term could properly be regarded as univocal in a wide sense. The division was popular in the fifteenth century with such Thomists as Capreolus, who realized its closeness to the account given by Aquinas in his **Sentences** commentary.

---

### 1.5 ANALOGICAL USE OF THE TERM 'BEING'

---

In the contemporary discussion use of analogy is first and foremost applied in *Metaphysics* and is used primarily in the case of being. The point is how the term being is to be applied? According to monist it is univocal while the pluralist say that it is equivocal but the moderates

call that it is analogous. The philosophical meaning of analogy is inseparably connected with the theory of being. Being is also predicated of various subjects in an analogical manner. The term 'being' is attributed to everything which is, but it does not apply to everything in the same way. As in the case of other predications, the ultimate basis of analogy lies in the very realities to which the analogical term refers: they are partially the same and partially different. Hence being is attributed to God and to creatures analogically, because there is a certain similarity between the Creator and the creatures, but it goes with a dissimilarity which is equally clear: God and creatures *are*, but God *is* by essence, whereas creatures *are* by participation. Even within the realm of categories, being is attributed analogically to substance and accidents. They both are and can be, and therefore called, 'beings'; the substance, however, *is* by itself, whereas the accidents always *are* in something else, namely in a substance.

---

### 1.6 REASONS FOR THE ANALOGY OF BEING

---

It is very easy to demonstrate that being is analogous. There are two different approaches:

#### **By way of exclusion**

In this argument we show that being is neither univocal nor equivocal. Consequently by exclusion we conclude that being is analogous. **Being is not univocal.** As we know in the univocal predication the thought content of a term is applied in the same sense. But it is not the case with being. If it were so we could call God and Man and other things 'beings' without any distinction but it is not the fact.

**Being is also not equivocal.** In the equivocal predication there is no basis for using the same term to two different things. eg. the term post for pole and for the place where letters are mailed. But it is quite different with the application of the term being to two different objects. Because there is a common basis namely reference to existence. Therefore, being is not equivocal. As a result it follows that being should be analogous because there is no other type of predication.

#### **By means of Application**

In this argument we give as the major the definition of the analogous predication and then we show that this definition is verified in the case of being. Consequently being should be analogous.

A term is said to be analogous when it is applied partly in the same sense and partly in a different sense. One can say that the application of the term being is done in this manner. It can be proved from our own experience. The different things are called beings only because they exist or have a reference to existence. Therefore, in relation to existence there is the same sense in the application of the term being. But it is not a uniform application because though different things

are called beings on account of their relation to existence, they are not completely identical. Therefore, some different sense is also implied by the term being. Hence being is analogous.

---

### **1.7 THREE DIVISIONS OF ANALOGY ACCEPTED IN CONTEMPORARY DISCUSSIONS**

---

It is easy to demonstrate that being is analogous. But when we discuss about the type of analogy that is to be applied to being there comes the real problem in metaphysics. Before entering into this problem we have to keep in mind the three different types of analogy namely analogy of attribution, metaphorical analogy and analogy of Proportionality. To understand these three types of analogy we should know first what we understand by the term analogate. It means something to which an analogous term is applied. It can be primary or secondary according to the preference we give in the question of predication.

- **Analogy of Attribution**

In this analogy the term is found intrinsically in the primary analogate while it is found in the secondary analogate in relation to the primary analogate. Eg. Health is found intrinsically in the living beings but food, water, air, etc., are said to be healthy in relation to the living beings.

- **Metaphorical Analogy**

Here the term is found intrinsically and formally in the primary analogate while in the secondary analogate there is only a virtual existence and not intrinsic. example with regard to study someone is called the Lion of the class. What makes a lion or the essence of a lion is found intrinsically and formally only in the animal known as lion. Now lion is understood to be the king of animals because of its energy or force. Applying this force in the matter of study, some one, is called lion of the class. This force is intrinsically in this person. But the form of a lion is not found in him but the virtue is expressed by means of his studies. Therefore, because of this virtue in the intellectual order metaphorically one is a lion.

- **Analogy of Proportionality**

In this analogy the term is found intrinsically and formally in all the analogates. But according to a proportional similarity, the only example is of being.

This analogy of proportionality is distinct from:

1. analogy of attribution where the term is found intrinsically only in the primary analogate. But in the case of analogy of proportionality it is intrinsically found in all the analogate.

2. Metaphorical analogy: where the term is applied intrinsically and formally only to the primary analogate. But here in the case of analogy of proportionality the term is intrinsically and formally applied to all the analogate.
3. Distinct from Univocal Predication: in the univocal predication the term is found intrinsically and formally in all the subjects in a uniform manner while in the case of the analogy of proportionality the term is found in a proportional similarity.

All those who agree that being is analogous admit that it cannot be metaphorically analogous. Because in that case only the primary analogate will be being and all other things will be called beings just metaphorically. Therefore, metaphorical analogy is excluded in the case of being. Consequently one has to decide between analogy of attribution and proportionality. According to Suarez S.J., and the Jesuit school it is analogy of intrinsic attribution. They divide analogy of attribution into extrinsic and intrinsic. It is extrinsic when the term is found in the secondary analogate because of an extrinsic relation. The example is the same as that of health. On the other hand, the analogy of intrinsic attribution consists in an intrinsic relationship of the secondary analogate with the primary analogate. The only example is that of being.

Suarez gives the following argument in favour of his theory. For him we can find only two groups of being in nature namely either being in itself or in another and being by itself or by another. In both these groups the being by itself and being in itself are the primary analogates while the being by another and being in another are the secondary analogates. They are being only because they are intrinsically related to a being by itself or being in itself. This is what he calls the analogy of intrinsic attribution.

---

## 1.8 CRITICISM OF THE THEORY

---

The above seems to be very reasonable, but the following objections are raised against it:

1. The above argument is based on the causal dependence of the secondary analogate on the primary analogate. But in defining a thing this causal dependence is never expressed. Eg. to the question what a man is we never say that he is a being created by God and having so many qualities. On the contrary, we say he is a rational animal. But here in the argument of Suarez he bases his theory of intrinsic attribution on the causal dependence. Therefore, we cannot accept it.
2. According to Suarez's argument the secondary analogates are beings only because of the intrinsic relationship with the primary analogate. Therefore, the being-hood of the analogate consists in the intrinsic relationship, i.e., the constitutive element of the secondary analogate is a relationship which is very absurd.



3. He says that being is analogous by means of intrinsic attribution because there are only two different groups of beings namely being by itself or by another and being in itself or in another. If such a distinction is taken into account in the application of being then there is no more problem of analogy because only diversity is stressed here. Consequently we cannot agree with the theory of Suarez.

---

### 1.9 THE THOMIST'S SENTENCE

---

The Thomists follow the other sentence, namely Being is analogous by analogy of proportionality. To prove this theory they apply to the notion of being the three requisites of analogy of proportionality. They do not distinguish between the primary and the secondary analogates. They argue as follows: All beings are intrinsically related and therefore analogy of attribution has nothing to do with beings where only the primary analogate is intrinsically being while others are beings because of the relationship with the primary analogate. In the same manner all the beings are formally beings and as a consequence it is not metaphorical analogy. However it is not univocal predication because different beings are called beings due to a proportional similarity. Hence being is analogous by analogy of proportionality.

#### *Criticism*

The Thomistic theory seems to be very appealing because the very essence of being is found intrinsically and formally in all the analogates and in reality it should be so. Otherwise it would follow that only the primary analogate is really being. However, the theory of proportional similarity is very hard to be accepted. The reason is it would imply that the nature of each individual being is already existing - to make the proportional similarity independent of existence which seems to us to be very absurd. Therefore, it is difficult to accept the Thomist theory too.

---

### 1.10 CARDINAL CAJETAN: A NEW APPROACH

---

In 1498 Thomas de Vio, Cardinal Cajetan, wrote a little book called **On the Analogy of Names** which he intended to supplement his commentary on Aristotle's **Categories**. The book rapidly became very popular, and it had a significant effect on subsequent discussions of analogy. Part of the work is devoted to formal and objective concepts and ways in which the latter can be ordered, but Cajetan also offered a new account of types of analogy. He began by presenting the second threefold division. He called the first type of analogy, the case of genus terms, the analogy of inequality, and dismissed it as unimportant, indeed, not properly analogy at all. He called the second type the analogy of attribution, and here he made two changes. First, he gave a new account of its subdivisions by adding Boethius's subdivision, similitude, to the first threefold

division involving attribution to one efficient cause, one end, and one subject. He described the resulting four subdivisions in terms of Aristotle's four causes. Second, he claimed that attribution involved only extrinsic denomination. That is, in each case of attribution, only the prior object is intrinsically characterized by the property in question, e.g., health.

He called the third type of analogy the analogy of proportionality. It included metaphor and what he called proper proportionality. The latter, he said, is analogy in the Greek sense of the word, and is the only true kind of analogy. Moreover, it involves only intrinsic denomination: both the primary and the secondary object referred to are characterized by the property in question. While the word 'being' can be used in accordance with attribution, Cajetan claimed that it, and all other metaphysically significant analogical terms, principally belonged in this last division. Both in his insistence on the priority of the analogy of proper proportionality and in his use of the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic denomination, Cajetan departed from earlier medieval discussions of analogy. Unfortunately, many later commentators have been misled into taking his account as a typical one, and, even more unfortunately, as a useful summary of the doctrines of Aquinas.

**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 is Being analogous by way of exclusion?

.....  
.....

2. How does Aquinas bring out the analogy of Being?

.....  
.....

---

**1.11 LET US SUM UP**

To summarize our discussion on one of the very highly debatable topic, we are drawn towards a number of conclusions. The discussion on the Analogy of Being has emerged from the very ancient time itself, from Aristotle and it has continued down the centuries even up to this day. Very many of the eminent philosophers have contributed their share as and when they were challenged by this term. The contribution of St. Thomas, although in a theological and spiritual sense, is really note worthy.

---

**1.12 KEY WORDS**

---

**Analogy:** a comparison between two things that are similar in some way, often used to help explain something or make it easier to understand.

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

---

### 1.13 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

---

- Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologica*. Tr. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947.
- Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. (In: *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle by Thomas Aquinas*.) Tr. John P Rowan. Vol. I. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961.
- Bittle, Celestine. *The Domain of Being*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1950.
- Coreth, Emerich. *Metaphysics*. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.
- Maritain, Jacques. *A Preface to Metaphysics*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1943.
- Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives*. Bangalore: ATC, 1999.
- Peters, John A. *Metaphysics*. Louvain: Duquesne University Press, 1963.

---

### 1.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

---

#### Answers to check your progress I

1. The root of the English term “analogy” must be sought in the Greek language, and especially in the Greek mathematical language, where the term *analogia* was used to designate the identity of the relation occurring among the members of a proportion. In Greek, *analogia* meant: to be in a corresponding relation to something, to correspond to something. The etymological meaning of the term indicates some kind of duplication or multiplication of content or relations. The term analogy is used to designate some relation or group of relations. In everyday language, we usually use the term analogy wherever there occurs some rather imprecisely defined similarity, although we distinguish the meaning of the word ‘similar’ from ‘analogical’. We say for example that two Keralites are similar to one another and not analogical, whereas we speak of analogy existing between the wings of a bird and the wings of an aeroplane, or between the human family and the family of the animals. However, in different disciplines the word had different connotation.

2. The philosophical relevance of the concept of analogy is very evident in the context of the problem of monism, of dualism, and of radical pluralism. The point is, all these issues depend on the solutions before this paradox: how can be explained the identical and the diverse, the one and the multiple, similarity and dissimilarity in the things of this world. The first part of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* had been translated by the mid-twelfth century, though the full text was recovered only gradually. One crucial text is found in *Metaphysics* 4.2 (1003a33-35): “There are many

senses (*multis modis*) in which being (*ens*) can be said, but they are related to one central point (*ad unum*), one definite kind of thing, and are not equivocal. Everything which is healthy is related to health... and everything which is medical to medicine..." In this text, Aristotle raises the general problem of the word 'being' and its different senses, and he also introduces what is known as *pros hen* equivocation or focal meaning, the idea that different senses may be unified through a relationship to one central sense. Another foundational text is from Avicenna's *Metaphysics*, also translated into Latin during the twelfth century, where he writes that being (*ens*) is neither a genus nor a predicate predicated equally of all its subordinates, but rather a notion (*intentio*) in which they agree according to the prior and the posterior. As we shall see below, this reference to the prior and the posterior is particularly important.

### Answers to check your progress II

1. **Being is not univocal.** As we know in the univocal predication the thought content of a term is applied in the same sense. But it is not the case with being. If it were so we could call God and Man and other things 'beings' without any distinction but it is not the fact.

**Being is also not equivocal.** In the equivocal predication there is no basis for using the same term to two different things. Eg. The term post for pole and for the place where letters are mailed. But it is quite different with the application of the term being to two different objects. Because there is a common basis namely reference to existence. Therefore, being is not equivocal. As a result it follows that being should be analogous because there is no other type of predication.

2. The Thomists follow the other sentence, namely Being is analogous by analogy of proportionality. To prove this theory they apply to the notion of being the three requisites of analogy of proportionality. They do not distinguish between the primary and the secondary analogates. They argue as follows: All the beings are intrinsically and therefore analogy of attribution has nothing to do with beings where only the primary analogate is intrinsically being while others are beings because of the relationship with the primary analogate. In the same manner all the beings are formally beings and as a consequence it is not metaphorical analogy. However it is not univocal predication because different beings are called beings due to a proportional similarity. Hence being is analogous by analogy of proportionality.

## UNIT 2

## BEING AS ONE

### Contents

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 From Unity of Plurality to the Problem of One and Many
- 2.3 From the Problem of One and Many to One in Many
- 2.4 From Being as One in Many to the Oneness of Being
- 2.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.6 Key Words
- 2.7 Further Readings and References
- 2.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

### 2.0. OBJECTIVES

Being is both analogously and transcendently related to beings. In the previous unit we have seen how Being is related to beings analogously. In this unit and in the next units we will study the transcendental properties of being: oneness, truth, goodness and beauty. In this unit you are guided to:

- Understand the Problem of One and Many
- Reflect on a possible solution to the problem
- Explain the meaning of oneness and its convertibility with Being

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

Unity is the process by which a being is not divided in itself, but divided from everything else. The meaning of unity presupposes that it comes from the comparison of two or more *different* things. It is the coherence of an intrinsically plural being. Hence unity too presupposes plurality. A being is all the more united in itself, and so distinguished from others, the more intimate its connection with others is. Unity and plurality, 'unism' and pluralism are inseparably related. There is no unity without plurality, and no plurality without unity. They found and sustain each other. One is in the other; the other is in the one. They are the two sides of Being which is in some way or something.

### 2.2. FROM UNITY OF PLURALITY TO THE PROBLEM OF ONE AND MANY

The problem of one and many is fundamental to human experience. Both poles seem to be equiprimordial to any intelligent awareness. 'The many' is inescapable for any experience which is spatio-temporal in its form consisting in the manifold of sensations that are spread out in space and that succeed one another in time. But to a human experience there belongs also from the beginning a unity, which allows the manifold items in it to be ordered and related among themselves; if this did not happen, there would be only a chaotic flux of impressions comparable to the flux which briefly passes through consciousness when we are overcome by dizziness or



are about to lose consciousness. Is this unity of experience imposed entirely by the human mind giving an illusion of unity? That might be the Kantian epistemology, in which it is the human mind which imposes unity upon the given forms of space and time by unifying the spatio-temporal data brought together under the categories of the Understanding in the unity of apperception. However, it would be impossible for the mind to impose a unity on the manifold of sensations unless the conditions for such a unity were already there in the sensations themselves. If the flux of sensations were endlessly varied, we could never emerge from the state of dizziness, leaving us helpless to construct any kind of unity. But in fact the same sensations keep coming back, and we are able to recognize them. It is the repetition, the recurrence of what has been, that makes possible the construction of a unified experience; this repetition lies in the given, the raw data of experience. Unity then is not a creation of the human mind, but a discovery of what has already been there, a discovery which is never complete.

There has also been in many individuals and schools of thought a metaphysical awareness of this discovery of the underlying unity of all things. Such persons and schools have been seized of an awareness of a single Reality embracing all the manifestations of the manifold in itself and expressing itself in them. The metaphysical vision of an all-embracing unity has found expression in various monistic philosophies. The most illustrious representative philosopher of monism in ancient Greece was Parmenides. For him reality is one and unchanging. That which changes is that which is not, and thus unreality. The thought of Parmenides may be compared with that of Sankara. For him too, there is one unchanging reality, Brahman.

But from the earliest times there have been also philosophers who are openly pluralist. In ancient Greece, the priority of the multiple and the changing over the one has usually been ascribed to Heraclitus. But the typical pluralist philosophy has also been empiricist, in contrast to the rationalistic approach of monism, evident in modern and contemporary times reaching its most extreme form in Nietzsche and the postmodernists who championed pluralism and contingency. For them there is no beginning, no end, no absolute centre, but just the endless proliferation of contingent occasions. This view lies at the opposite extreme of Parmenides, Sankara and the like.

Perhaps, it is difficult to find anywhere a thoroughgoing monism or pluralism. Most advocates of monism have thought of the One implying at least some sort of differentiation in itself. They are in tacit agreement with Radhakrishnan's view that the One is so far from being empty that it is characterized by a fullness that it surpasses comprehension. At the other extreme, is it possible to find a thoroughgoing pluralism? Here even Nietzsche, who denied that there is either beginning or end or middle, nonetheless taught a doctrine of eternal recurrence. Thus we have to conclude that the extreme forms both of monism and of pluralism are untenable. In the words of John Macquarrie, "The highest unity is that which already conceals within itself the richest diversity, while sheer diversity devoid of anything unifying is unthinkable. The one and the many do not stand in stark opposition to each other, for each implies the other". But how do they imply each other? The question of their mutual implication calls for further ontological analysis. For the philosophical position of monism, of dualism, of radical pluralism, all depend upon the ontological solution offered to the problem of one and many: how can Being be *identical and diverse* at the same time? In order to answer this question we shall turn our attention to the core teachings of classical western metaphysics.

### 2.3. FROM THE PROBLEM OF ONE AND MANY TO ONE IN MANY

The classical western metaphysics, beginning with Aristotle, interpreted it as *the science of being as being*. According to its traditional meaning, science is *sure and evident knowledge of things from their causes or systematic body of knowledge*. In this sense metaphysics seems to be supremely a science; for metaphysics arrives at the first efficient cause and the ultimate final cause of all things. From the viewpoint of causal explanation, metaphysics is the highest type of science. Its starting point that ‘there is something’ is immediately known. From its immediately known starting point the procedure of metaphysics is demonstrative with a further reflection on the sensitivo-rational experience of the being or ‘something’ of sensible things which has both necessary and contingent characteristics. The reasoning of metaphysics bases itself only on the necessary features. The being of any sensible thing is necessarily dependent on a prior efficient cause, on the ultimate subsistent Being. Hence the reasoning of metaphysics is never based upon the accidental character of a sensible thing’s being. Of course, metaphysics lacks the incomparable advantage enjoyed by the experimental sciences, verification through further sensible experience. For instance, molecules were reasoned to form transference of odours and diffusion of gases. Their activity was verified in numerous experiments, and in recent years very large molecules became visible through the electron microscope. No such double check for its conclusions is possible in metaphysics. It has only the much harder way of checking each link in the demonstration through reflection. Accordingly, the agreement among astronomers or chemists or physicists is enviable, while the agreement among metaphysicians at any historical period is notoriously lacking. Therefore, metaphysical doctrines are neither ‘theories’ in any modern acceptance of the term, nor are they conjectured hypotheses proposed for experimental verification, but demonstrated conclusions resting solely but evidently upon the immediacy of their starting points and the cogency of reasoning processes which qualify them to be scientific. Besides, metaphysics as science, which provides us with sure and evident knowledge of things from their causes, has also its own material and formal object. *The material object of metaphysics* includes all things which fall under the notion of being, such as actual or possible, abstract or concrete, material or immaterial, finite or infinite. *The formal object of metaphysics* is the study of ‘*being as being*’. “There is a science which investigates being as being, and is different from the sciences that investigate special parts of being”. That is to say, metaphysics does not restrict itself to any particular being or part of that being, but rather treats of what is *common to all beings*. It investigates the *general nature* of anything insofar as it has some kind of being. The general nature is Being in beings as it is never apart from beings. It is the one Being in many beings. The one in the many, evident in the following analysis, is intrinsically and inseparably related to each other in varying modes. Being can be shown as one in many by analysing and establishing action as one in many, as ‘action follows being’ (*agere sequitur esse*).

#### Action as One in Many

“Yes or no [Blondel asks in his introduction to *L’action*], has human life a meaning, has human a destiny? I act, but I do not know what action is. I have not wished to live, and I do not know exactly who I am or even if I am... and yet my actions carry within themselves an eternal responsibility... Shall I say, then, that I have been condemned to live, condemned to die, condemned to eternity! How is that possible, and by what right, since I did neither know it nor will it? ... The problem is inevitable; human inevitably resolves it; and this solution, right or

wrong, each one carries out in one's own actions. That is why one must study action". For Blondel action is a complex term of one in many that stands for the entire human experience conceived within the framework of human's basic needs and tendencies. It is the activity of the whole human, the synthesis of thought, will, and being itself. The greater and the nobler is human's activity, the greater and the nobler is one's action. Action is the most universal and unavoidable fact in human life. It is also a personal obligation that may demand a hard choice, a sacrifice, and even death [even suicide itself is an act]. In other words, *to refuse to choose is to make a choice*. One always wills something; for otherwise one's act of willing would be a purely negative one. Now the minimum object we can assign to the will, after it has been proved that it is impossible for the will not to will, is to will nothing or nothingness (*le néant*). But is it possible to will nothing or to make nothingness, i.e., non-being the term of our act of willing? Evidently not, because a negation is only conceivable in terms of an affirmation. Every negation implies an affirmation of something. Thus the *human will always tends towards something or Being* which underlies, penetrates, transforms, and unifies every action composed of two elements: exercise and determination. *Exercise* is the inner element of the operation which accounts for its taking place. *Determination* is the inner element of the operation which specifies or distinguishes the operation from other operations.

#### A Finite Being as One in Many

A finite being is as structured as one's operation is. "As the operation is, so the being is". The operation is composed of exercise and determination – a one in many. Hence a finite being (person) must also be composed – a one in many. The finite being is composed of Being (*esse*) and essence (*essentia*). Essence is composed of substance and accidents. Substance is composed of prime matter and substantial form. The prime matter is in potency; whereas the substantial form is in act.

#### Being in Essence

The finite being has to be identical with Being; for Being is immanent in this finite being because this being *is*. This identity is not perfect because alongside *this* being, there are also other finite beings. Being, in so far as it is immanent in this being through a certain identity, is not unlimited Being. For unlimited Being transcends *this* particular Being. The immanent Being is a modified, finite or limited Being. It is the *proper* Being of the particular being. The limiting principle (essence) is neither Being nor being. Nevertheless, the limiting principle constitutes *this* being as this *being*, and expresses a modification of the unlimited Being into a limited *being this* and nothing else. Whatever essence has it derives from the relative opposition to Being, to which as a modifying principle it refers by its whole nature and from which it has also its modifying capacity. Hence, Being lets itself be modified or limited, and according to the limitation the finite being participates in unlimited Being. The unlimited Being, which transcends all modes, does not fully coincide with the *proper Being* of each being which is only in a limited way. The finite being is through *participation* in unlimited Being. To explain this participation, we must admit that within the finite being there is a distinction between its *proper Being* and the principle through which Being becomes its own limited Being, i.e., its own modifying and limiting essence.

The relativity of essence and Being cannot be fully reciprocal. Being as being transcends all modes of being and therefore all modifications through essence, while the essence is fully relative to Being. However, in the finite being, Being has let itself be modified. In a sense, the essence is prior to being in so far as the mode modifies Being into *being this*. But this priority is not absolute; for the mode also arises from Being which includes in itself the possibility of being-finite, becoming 'incarnate' in the finite. Hence, Being is prior to essence; for Being makes the mode a mode of Being. Perhaps, the unlimited Being points to a ground which is transcendent not only relatively to finite beings but absolutely.

### Being as the Principle of 'Unlimitation' of Beings

Should something possess no Being, but only an essence, then it is a mere possible and not real. The real differs from the possible because of Being. In other words, Being is that in a being which makes it real, distinguishing it from a merely possible being. It is the principle of perfection or unlimitation of all beings. Being is the inner principle or universal ground of that which really is and through which beings are in themselves.

### Essence as the Principle of Limitation

When we ask about something what it is, we suppose that we know already that it is a certain *what*. In this way it differs from the whatness of all other beings. If it differs in this way from that which it is not, then beings possess Being not to its fullest extent, but only within determined limits that through which a being is that which it is. Essence is that through which a being is posited in a determined, limited manner of being. Of course, essence implies a negation of Being. It is not a negation which suppresses the Being of a being and reduces it to nothing; but it is a negation which limits its Being and reduces it to a finite being. It is not total or absolute but a partial and relative negation which refers to certain determinations and denies their presence in this Being. Such a relative negation is also a negative relation as it refers one being to all others and distinguishes it from them. A relative negation is a determined negation, determined by that which it refers. Hence the finiteness is always and necessarily determined finiteness.

### Substance in Accidents

#### Substance

Finite beings are composed of a relatively permanent principle which remains primarily the same throughout secondary changes and secondary principles which may come and go without producing a change in the primary mode of being. The relatively permanent principle is called 'substance' and secondary principles are called 'accidents'. The notions of 'substance' and 'accident' may be acquired from the analysis of an external experience. For instance, our external senses reveal to us an unripe orange as a concrete whole which is extended in space, green coloured, sour etc. The intellect conceives the qualities which may come and go as determinations which affect something underneath these changes and modified by them. The difference between the determinations and their subject is expressed by the notions 'accidents' and 'substance' which correspond to a reality existing in the extramental world. Thus we may interpret substance as the being-in-itself of a finite essence which is the basic inner principle of



permanence or continuity of that being which becomes. A being is originally constituted by its act of existing and essence. It is posited as a limited but a real being which exists in itself autonomously as a substance. It is Being-in-itself and not in another. *Accident*, on the other hand, is that which is not in itself but in another. It is a mode of being, but not autonomous. It does not exist in itself, but in another. It is whatever is added in anyway to another determined in it's being.

### Form in Matter (Hylomorphism)

*Hylomorphism* is derived from the Greek words 'hyle' (matter) and 'morphe' (form). It is the theory of matter and form. This theory of Aristotle seeks to explain the essential constitution of a corporeal substance in terms of a twofold principle: prime matter and substantial form. Prime matter is material and indeterminate, and substantial form is formal and determining.

#### Prime Matter

All material beings possess a principle of materiality. It is not a being at all but a principle of material beings as such. Hence it cannot be known scientifically (empirically), but metaphysically. This principle of materiality is prime matter. It is the common substantial principle found in all material bodies. It is wholly without determinateness in itself. It cannot exist itself. It is substantial, but an incomplete substantial principle. It requires another substantial principle to exist, or rather to give it existence in a determinate body. The other substantial principle (with the exception of human soul) is also an incomplete substantial principle. The prime matter is the determinable element and the substantial form is the determining element. It is also pure potentiality as it is a pure capacity for existence in a material body. It is a capacity which must be filled up, determined, made into the only existible body by a substantial principle other than itself. Since the result of the union of this determining principle with prime matter is a single bodily substance, the union itself must be a substantial union, the substantial fusing of two substantial principles into an actuality which is a third thing. This third thing is neither prime matter alone nor substantial form alone, but an existing body of a specific kind. It is that which makes any body a body, not actively but passively receiving the impress and union of the substantial form. For the whole character of prime matter is its passivity, its inertness, its indifference to become this particular kind of body rather than another, in a word, its indeterminateness, its *potentiality*. In this way we can affirm the classical Aristotelian assertion: 'Prime matter is that constitutive principle of corporal substance which of itself is quite indeterminate and hence can be determined to form corporeal substance.'

#### Substantial Form

To illustrate the various senses in which the term *form* is used we shall consider a few instances of its use: Form is frequently used as a synonym for outline or shape. We speak of the oval form of a race-course, of the symmetrical form of a drawing. It also means a plan or program, a record, or a form-sheet to be filled. It is often used for *good condition*, and a golfer is said to be 'in form' or 'at the top of his form'. The adjective of form (i.e., formal) is often employed to indicate a certain dignity, or a certain decorum invoking precise details of dress or conduct. Thus we speak of 'formal dress', 'formal occasion', 'formal introduction' etc. To a philosopher form may mean that which *determines* a thing, sets it in its being, in its essence, in its substance, in its accidents, in its actuality. Any determining element is a being in form. When it is spoken of corporeal substance the term refers to *substantial form* which makes a bodily substance an



existing reality (actuality). It is the substantial form of human which makes the one bodily being a human being. That which sets and determines a substance in its actual being, and makes it a substance of this precise kind or essential nature, is its substantial form.

#### Act in Potency

The concepts of act and potency historically have delineated the dramatic antinomy felt by Greek thought with Heraclitus and Parmenides. Heraclitus held that everything is fleeting, transient, ephemeral, becoming; whereas Parmenides was of the opinion that the sensible, mutable, contingent and phenomenal world is pure illusion which requires of critical intelligence a judgment in favour of the unique, absolutely immutable Being, absolute perfection and fullness. The efforts of Plato succeeded only in fragmenting the Being of Parmenides, multiplying it as many times as there are Ideas in his World of Ideas. The multiple and becoming were reduced to mere appearance, to a shadow of the true and single Being of the Ideas. The Aristotelian proposal of *act and potency* finally offered a solution taking a middle position between the Parmenidean rigid immobilism and the fluent becoming of Heraclitus. The proposal has saved the *permanence* of reality and its uninterrupted *flux and becoming, giving and receiving*. Later on, Christian philosophers accepted the same proposal on account of its conformity to biblical realism which is both static and dynamic.

#### Act

The term 'Act' comes from the Latin root '*Actus*' which means an entity of whatever kind which perfects and determines a thing in its being or perfection itself. It includes the power or faculty, operations of the faculty, accidents, essence, substance, form, act of existing. Whatever a being *has* or *is* in a positive manner is an act. It is perfection itself. There are as many kinds of acts as there are kinds of 'being'; for every being as such is a perfection.

#### Potency

Potency comes from the Latin root '*potentia*' which means power. Potency is the capacity for act. It is the capacity or aptitude in reference to something which a being is not or has not, but which it can be or can receive. For example, hydrogen has the 'act' of hydrogen; Oxygen has the 'act' of oxygen; but both have the 'potency' of water. They are actually hydrogen and oxygen but 'potentially' water. Water on the other hand, is actually water; but it is potentially hydrogen and oxygen, since the water has the aptitude to be resolved into them. There are two main kinds of potency: Active Potency and Passive Potency. *Active potency* is the capacity to communicate act or perfection to another. It is a power of action such as the power of hearing. Since such a power in itself already confers a certain perfection upon its subject, it is an act with respect to its subject. Hence it may also be called first act. *Passive potency* is the capacity to receive act or perfection from another, e.g., a child has the capacity for acquiring knowledge from parents and teachers. There are two kinds of Passive potency: Determinate Passive Potency and Indeterminate Passive Potency. *Determinate passive potency* is that which contains an act and is in potency to some further act, e.g., substance for accidents or the complete essence for the act of existing. *Indeterminate passive potency* is the principle of an act, but which itself contains no act. It is pure potency, e.g., prime matter.

We have already seen action and finite being as one in many. If finite being is one in many, unlimited Being – from which the finite being proceeds and in which every finite being is – could also be one in many.

### Unlimited Being as One in Many

In reality, monism, dualism and pluralism, are extreme positions that create the illusion of solutions to *the problem of one and many* which can be briefly explained in this way: Every being belongs to Being. Everywhere Being reveals itself as an absolute. Every finite being is a whole being, a complete being; yet it is not the whole of Being. For it does not contain all reality, since there are beings outside of it. A particular being participates in Being. The particular being that participates in Being is a complete being, a subsistent whole unlike a part which is not a complete whole. The particular being, which is limited, is an imperfect being. It does not contain other particular beings; nor does it possess their perfection. Hence it does not contain all perfection. Consequently, it is imperfect. It does not mean that it is unfinished in itself. The perfection of every particular being belongs itself wholly to Being, and by that token it is to be distinguished from every other being. In this way Being possesses an absolute character. It is not opposed to anything. Consequently, it penetrates and envelops everything. Nevertheless, Being manifests some relativity, since the real is broken up into multiple unities which participate in Being. In other words, the participation of beings in Being is an undeniable fact. But how can we explain the fact that the distinct beings in Being preserve their autonomy? This is the fundamental metaphysical problem of one and many that calls for fresh attempts aiming at a solution. Being as one-in-many can be the result of such an attempt: *Being is one*: being is that which is in some way. Insofar as it is in some way, it is one. *Being is many*: being is that which is in some way. Insofar as being is in some way, each being is in its own way. Insofar as each being is in its own way, all beings are in their own ways. When all beings are in their own ways, there would be a plurality of beings that are many. In this sense, being is many. *Being is one-in-many*: being is that which is in some way. Insofar as being is in some way, it is one. However, each being is in its own way. Insofar as each being is in its own way, all beings are in their own ways which are many. In other words, being which is in some way is also in its own way. Being is in beings, i.e., one is in many. Therefore, being is one-in-many. In this way, being, considered in its relation to other beings, is one in many. Now, what about Being which is transcendently considered, i.e., being in itself?

### Check Your Progress I

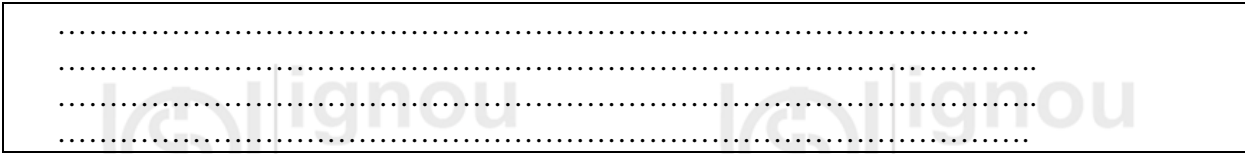
Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) What do you understand by unity of plurality?

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

2) How do you resolve the problem of One and Many?



#### 2.4. FROM BEING AS ONE IN MANY TO THE ONENESS OF BEING

Being, which is transcendental, is One. *One is that which is undivided in itself and divided from all others.* *Undivided in itself* means that there is no need of comparing a thing with another in order to speak of its oneness. A thing would be ‘one’ even if no other being were in existence or possible. Because a thing is undivided in itself it follows that it is *divided from all others*. Since a thing, according to the Principle of Identity, is what it is, it must primarily be undivided in itself. Then, since the thing, according to the Principle of Contradiction, cannot simultaneously be both itself and not itself, it must also be divided from every other. Hence a ‘part’ of a thing cannot truly be one as it is not actually divided from the other part. A part is united with the other part or parts to form the unity of the whole. The whole is one, not the part. One signifies interior indivision and distinction from other beings. The more easily divisible a being is, the less consistency it has in itself. The tendency to divisibility is an ontological weakness. It is a tendency to be no longer itself – to be alienated. In fact, every being tends to conserve its own *unity*, as it tends to conserve its own *being*.

**Kinds of One:** Perfectly One and Imperfectly One.: *Perfectly One* is one of simplicity without any inner real distinction. A thing is ‘simple’ when it is not a ‘compound’. A compound is a unit made up of a number of parts. In other words, a compound is one and undivided in such a manner that it can be resolved into a number of components called its parts. Hence a compound is actually undivided (a unit) but divisible. On the other hand, what is ‘simple’ is neither divided nor divisible. Simplicity is defined as *the absence of composition in the reality of a being*. This definition is negative in form but positive in content. The reason for this negative form of the definition lies in the fact that what human perceives in this world are affected by composition in some way. Human arrives at the notion of simplicity by denying composition. Since it is some ‘reality’ which is devoid of composition, the definition is positive in content. The denial of composition in a being implies the affirmation of simplicity in that being. Since a simple being is undivided in itself and indivisible, there are two kinds of simplicity: *absolute and relative*. *Absolute simplicity* excludes all parts of whatever nature, be they real or conceptual. An absolutely simple being is not only actually undivided but also potentially indivisible since it is devoid of all parts. A compound being is actually undivided (because it is a unit) but potentially divisible since it consists of parts, which make it to be a compound, and into which it can be divided. *Relative simplicity* excludes parts of one kind but has parts of another kind. The relatively simple being is indivisible in one respect but divisible in another. For instance, human has a composite nature consisting of body (matter) and soul (form). Human body is a compound made up of different parts (head, trunk, arms, legs, etc.); whereas human soul is simple because it does not consist of substantially different parts. Thus human possesses relative simplicity in the simple substance of one’s spiritual soul; but in many other respects one is a composite being. In no case can human be absolutely simple. For only God is absolutely simple. *Imperfectly One* is one of composition with a real distinction of the principles of a being, e.g., all corporeal beings. A being of this kind has parts within itself, but these parts are so united that they form a unit, a whole, and a totality. For instance, a human’s body is composed of

head, trunk, and extremities, and each of these consists of various minor parts. These parts are not separated from each other as they form an organism, and an organism is a whole or unit.

**Convertibility of Being and One:** Being and one are convertible. Being is one in so far as it is. Every being is one or a unit, and everything that is one or a unit is a being. First, *every being is one or a unit*: Every being is either simple or compound in its nature. A being is simple when it does not consist of parts. It is compound when it consists of parts. Whatever is simple is undivided actually and potentially; for it has no parts into which it can be divided. Consequently, a simple being is undivided in itself and thus a unit or one. In the same way, a compound is a compound only in so far and only so long as its parts are united and not actually divided. Consequently, a compound being is undivided in itself and therefore a unit or one. Whether simple or compound, the being of every thing is characterized by indivision. In other words, every being is a unit or one. Second, *every unit or one is a being*: To be a unit or one means to have the unity of simplicity or the unity of composition. That presupposes that some thing has this unity of simplicity or unity of composition. Unity of simplicity necessarily implies the concept of a reality consisting of no parts. If the simple unit were not Being, it would be nothing, and nothing cannot be a unit of any kind whether simple or compound. Unity of composition necessarily involves the concept of a reality consisting of parts, and these parts must be real in the whole. Otherwise, they would be nothing, and nothing cannot be distinguished into parts. From this it follows that Being, considered transcendently (being in itself), and One are convertible as they are fundamentally identical.

## 2.5. LET US SUM UP

Unity is the process by which a being is not divided in itself, but divided from everything else. Unity presupposes plurality. Unity and plurality are inseparably related. There is no unity without plurality, and no plurality without unity. The experience of unity and plurality poses the problem of one and many. The problem of one and many resolves itself when one discovers that Being is one in many. Being is one in many in its relation to other beings, but, when considered in itself, transcendently, it is One.

### Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) What do you mean by one?

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

2) Being and One are convertible. Explain.

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



## 2.6. KEY WORDS

**Plurality:** Plurality is the state of being distinct but united.

**Pluralism:** Pluralism denotes a diversity of views and stands in opposition to one single approach or method of interpretation.

**Transcendental:** Transcendental is the notion which applies to each and every being.

## 2.7. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Bogliolo, Luigi. *Rational Theology. Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1987*
- Composta, Dario. *History of Ancient Philosophy. Tr. Myroslaw A. Cizdyn. Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1990.*
- Frolov, I., ed. *Dictionary of philosophy.* Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1984
- Lonergan, Bernard. *Insight.* New York: Longmans, 1965.
- Loux, Michael J. *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction.* London: Routledge, 1998.
- Maritain, Jacques. *A Preface to Metaphysics.* London: Sheed and Ward, 1943.
- Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives.* Bangalore: ATC, 1999.
- Panthanmackel, George. *Society in Being: Metaphysical Foundation of Sociology.* Bangalore: ATC, 2002.
- Sharma, Chandradhar. *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Pvt. Ltd, 2000

## 2.8. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

### Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Unity is the process by which a being is not divided in itself, but divided from everything else. The meaning of unity presupposes that it comes from the comparison of two or more *different* things. It is the coherence of an intrinsically plural being. Hence unity too presupposes plurality. A being is all the more united in itself, and so distinguished from others, the more intimate its connection with others is. Unity and plurality, 'unism' and pluralism are inseparably related. There is no unity without plurality, and no plurality without unity. They found and sustain each other. One is in the other; the other is in the one. They are the two sides of Being which is in some way or something.

2. *Being is one-in-many:* Being is that which is in some way. Insofar as being is in some way, it is one. However, each being is in its own way. Insofar as each being is in its own way, all beings are in their own ways which are many. In other words, being which is in some way is also in its



own way. Being is in beings, i.e., one is in many. Therefore, being is one-in-many. In this way, being, considered in its relation to other beings, is one in many.

### Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. **One** is that which is *undivided in itself and divided from all others*. *Undivided in itself* means that there is no need of comparing a thing with another in order to speak of its oneness. A thing would be 'one' even if no other being were in existence or possible. Because a thing is undivided in itself it follows that it is *divided from all others*. Since a thing, according to the Principle of Identity, is what it is, it must primarily be undivided in itself.

2. Being and one are convertible. Being is one in so far as it is. Every being is one or a unit, and everything that is one or a unit is a being. First, *every being is one or a unit*: Every being is either simple or compound in its nature. A being is simple when it does not consist of parts. It is compound when it consists of parts. Whatever is simple is undivided actually and potentially; for it has no parts into which it can be divided. Consequently, a simple being is undivided in itself and thus a unit or one. Second, *every unit or one is a being*: To be a unit or one means to have the unity of simplicity or the unity of composition. That presupposes that some thing has this unity of simplicity or unity of composition. Unity of simplicity necessarily implies the concept of a reality consisting of no parts. If the simple unit were not Being, it would be nothing, and nothing cannot be a unit of any kind whether simple or compound. Unity of composition necessarily involves the concept of a reality consisting of parts, and these parts must be real in the whole. Otherwise, they would be nothing, and nothing cannot be distinguished into parts. From this it follows that Being, considered transcendently (being in itself), and One are convertible as they are fundamentally identical.

## UNIT 3

## BEING AS TRUE

### Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Historical Sketch
- 3.3 Truth and Being
- 3.4 Kinds of Truth in Relation to Being
- 3.5 Implications of Ontological Truth
- 3.6 Problem of Falsity
- 3.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.8 Key Words
- 3.9 Further Readings and References
- 3.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

Philosophers hold that anything that exists is a being and, that which exists is true. Our attempt in this section is:

- to understand the notion and implication of truth, especially in relation to being, i.e., in the metaphysical context.

### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

‘What is truth?’ - it is the classical question we see in the Holy Bible, a question posited to Jesus by Pontius Pilate during his trial before the crucifixion. *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* is the autobiography of M.K. Gandhi, the father of our nation, who held that ‘Truth is God’. Everywhere people posit questions like, ‘what is truth?’ or ‘is it true?’ and so on. It seems that all have some idea of truth. But if in a Socratic style we seek further the depth of their understanding of truth, the response may not be very promising and so we may feel frustrated. Hence is the necessity of a precise elucidation of the notion of truth and its implications in relation to the question of being.

### 3.2. HISTORICAL SKETCH

Two separate ways served the development of the ‘notion of truth’ in the Western thinking. One is that of the Bible. In the Old Testament the term ‘emeth’ (a Hebrew word) is used for truth; it means, to be firm, reliable and faithful. In relation to God truth refers to His fidelity, sincerity and constancy; he is a sure refuge. As regards the humans, truth (or true way of living) is walking in the law of God. As a whole, the main Old Testament thrust as regards truth is the correspondence of assertion and reality. On the other hand, in the New Testament, where the teachings of Jesus are recorded, we see the Greek word ‘aletheia’ for truth; it refers to the reliability and fidelity of God. The main emphasis here is that, truth is that which is revealed, communicated and transmitted through Christ. It is the disclosure of the one, who always exists. In our time, the philosopher Heidegger develops the doctrine of truth akin to this: truth is the

disclosure of being in and through the questioner of being, Dasein (which means, there-being; it refers to the human).

The second path can be traced from the Greek antiquity. It goes to the credit of *Parmenides*, a pre-Socratic philosopher, that the first treatise on truth is ascribed. From his “didactic poem” we learn that truth is something revealed to him by the goddess (according to Heidegger, this goddess is ‘truth’). The road of truth is that of ‘that which is’ (that is to say, of existence or being). It is one without beginning, without end; it is solid, indivisible, changeless; it is finite and complete; it lacks or needs nothing, etc. Ordinary humans or mortals may simply adhere to what is appearing or seeming and thus cherish different opinions. On the other hand, Parmenides was given here a superior knowledge of truth, which the ordinary people do not possess (it is superior in the sense that he knew the truth and contradicted the false views; he could trace the defects of the mortals and explain the reasons of their errors).

Greek antiquity surged ahead with the problem of truth and reality. The *Sophists*, the wise men of ancient Greece, undertook the responsibility of educating the youth through persuasion. In fact it was at the cost of neglecting truth that they promoted achievements and successes. Against this background *Socrates* appeared on the arena and inculcated the necessity of true and profound knowledge to be gathered with all humility. Socrates’ dialectical approach revealed the fact that the hearers’ claims of knowledge are not very profound and truth is to be sought further in each department of knowledge.

For *Plato* ideas are real; they are more real than that which is presented to our senses, that which can be seen, heard, etc. Ideas are thus more real than the things we habitually consider as the one and only reality. This is beautifully presented in the famous *Allegory of the Cave*. Those prisoners would think that reality is nothing else than the shadows of the artificial objects. Slowly one will rise from the shadows projected on the wall to the objects themselves whose shadows were on the wall, and then to the light of the fire which projected those shadows and finally to the sun which is far brighter or more luminous than the fire (See *Republic* 514a – 516 c). Thus in Plato truth was thought of as a coming out of concealment. For him the real is the form or idea; as one gets this idea, he gets the truth. His famous disciple *Aristotle* placed truth in judgement because it is in judgement concepts are referred to reality. In short, these classical paths paved the foundation for the discussion of truth in Western thinking. Accordingly truth consists in a kind of self-manifestation of reality in and through judgements. This takes us to the systematic exposition of truth, especially in the context of our understanding of being as true.

### 3.3. TRUTH AND BEING

Philologists see that the English word ‘true’ takes its origin from the German word ‘*treu*’, which is related to the Indo-germanic word for tree. Hence the English word refers to something firm and solid. Now, in Greek language, it has a different connotation. The Greek word for true is ‘*alethes*’ (which means, what is not hidden and thus unconcealed and disclosed in the discourse). Accordingly, true is that which is real, as it is revealed in the disclosure. In Greek thought, real and true are identified. Hence Aristotle wrote in his famous book on *Metaphysics*, “Truth is to say what is, is; what is not, is not”. For the Greeks truth and reality are identical, for the real (its

Greek word is 'on') could also mean true and the true (its Greek word 'alethes') could mean real. More than a transcendental property, they therefore held that being and truth are identical.

Now, truth is a relation of knowing and being. It is usually associated with knowledge, which is expressed in judgements. Thus we say, knowledge or judgement is true. For example, the ideas like snow, white, cold, warm, etc., are neither true nor false. But if somebody says, 'snow is white', this judgement will be true, because it agrees with the fact. On the other hand, if there is no agreement, we would say, it is a false statement. However, we can still observe that people use the word 'truth' in some other contexts too. They speak of 'true gems' or 'true friendship' instead of 'false gems' or 'false friendship'. Here we see truth / falsity as ascribed to things or events. The meaning here is that people cherish certain ideas or standards as regards things and events; if the given things / events agree with those standards, they say that they are true. Here it seems that truth is residing as a quality of things themselves.

How is being true? How is it a transcendental property? What are the implications of this doctrine? In the earlier section, we have studied that being is undivided; it is one; it is set apart from all, especially from that which destroys its unity (i.e., its negation or non-being). Thus any reality has unity; it is a being; it is identical with itself. Thus the property of unity is derived from the consideration of being-in-itself. However, we have to consider being in relation to others, for we see being not in isolation; we meet with many beings. The property of truth is found in the context of relation of being to knowing or to the intellect that knows (here intellect is taken in its most general sense). What kind of a relation is that?

It is a relation between mind / intellect and being. For example, we cannot think of a mind / intellect that does not have any relation to reality; if there is such an intellect that would not have knowledge of any reality. As we speak of an intellect, we speak of it as knowing something (being); this knowledge must be true also, for a false knowledge is no knowledge at all. Again, we can find this relation in another way. Suppose there is an order of things and no mind / intellect to know this order. In this context also we cannot speak of the truth of reality. The property of truth is thus traced against this background. Accordingly we can say, truth is the conformity of intellect to being or of being to intellect. Based on the relations of being and intellect we see different kinds of truth.

### **3.4. KINDS OF TRUTH IN RELATION TO BEING**

There can be a relation of intellect to being or a relation of being to intellect. On the basis of this, philosophers speak of three types of truth. 1. *Logical truth*. It refers to the truth of our knowing, i.e., our knowing is as the being is. Here the relation is of the intellect to being. It is the conformity of our intellect to being or it is the agreement of our intellect to the object known. There are various things in the world. In the process of knowing these objects, our intellect forms their ideas; then, those ideas are brought in judgements (e.g., roses are beautiful or S is P). Now, if our judgement (of the intellect) corresponds to or agrees with the reality, then we have logical truth, i.e., we have true knowledge. These judgements are expressed in affirmative or negative statements. Thus logical truth is concerned with the truth of our knowing (there are different theories of truth like correspondence theory, coherence theory, pragmatic theory, semantic theory, performative theory, etc. as discussed in epistemology or theory of knowledge).

2. *Ontological Truth*. There can be another kind of relation between intellect and being (reality). It is the conformity of being to the intellect. If the being conforms to the intellect or to the ideas in intellect, then we have *ontological or transcendental truth*. This truth is in being. Let us take an example. An artist draws a picture on the canvas. He does it in accordance with the idea he has in his mind. If the drawn picture agrees with the idea in artist's mind then there is ontological truth. It is the truth of the reality. In other words, reality or being is conformable to the intellect; it is the agreement of being to intellect. It is conformity of being to the conditions of its being. Thus any being as conformable to the intellect is ontologically true.

It is in fact the intrinsic intelligibility of being. Here being comes out of hiddenness and gets revealed. Heidegger would write, "Entities [beings] get snatched out of their hiddenness". Since being has this quality of getting disclosed (an understanding we derive from the Greek word for truth – aletheia), we can say, being is intelligible. Accordingly, the statement 'being is true' refers to the ontological truth, i.e., to the intelligibility of being. The very possibility of logical truth, which is the truth of our knowing, depends on this truth. Thus ontological truth serves as the prerequisite for logical truth.

3. *Moral truth* is the agreement of speech with thought. For example, we make a judgement in our mind with regard to some facts and then we express those thoughts in words. If our speech agrees with our thought, then we have moral truth. Any discrepancy will lead to moral falsity or lie. Now, some writers view moral truth as a kind of ontological truth. It is because, in the latter, to the intellect's knowledge the being is conformable; in the same way in thought also mind's knowledge is there and to this knowledge our verbal statement or speech must conform. Since in metaphysics the discussion of being as true refers to the ontological truth, let us focus more on this theme now.

**Check Your Progress I**

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) How did the discussion of truth develop in the West?

.....

2) Explain the different kinds of truth,

.....



### 3.5. IMPLICATIONS OF ONTOLOGICAL TRUTH

Being is true; it means that being is intelligible. Here being is conformable to the intellect. Now the question here arises is, to which intellect must being conform? It is self-evident that there are a lot of things to which no human intellect is related. Again, things in the world are true even before human intellects began to perceive their truth. Neither do our intellect make things to be what they are, nor it make them be; on the other hand, our intellect only discovers them. Hence here comes the need of an intellect, other than human.

In the philosophy of Plato, Augustine and Aquinas, we see that God created the world through His divine ideas. His intellect cherishes the original ideas of the things in the universe. It is to this Intellect, that has the type-ideas of everything that exists, must the beings in the world conform. Thus the Divine intellect serves as the ultimate foundation of all truth. The Divine mind has the idea of the things in the world; He gives beings their existence through creation (but the produce of an artist is not considered as a creation). As the being is conforming to the divine knowledge, there is ontological truth.

There are philosophers who see a further division in ontological truth. *Exemplary ontological truth* is that in which the intellect possesses an idea of the being; this idea is taken as the standard of the being. A being must agree with this type-idea. Insofar as being agrees with this standard or pattern that the intellect possesses, then it is ontologically true. For example, Michael Angelo tries to produce a statue. He has the idea of the statue; he produces it after the type-idea or exemplar of that statue in his mind. If the produced statue is in conformity with the type-idea, then there is exemplary ontological truth. *Identical ontological truth* refers to the original identity of being and knowing. It is an identity of being and truth. Knowledge is the self-presence of being. Both knowing subject and known object are being and intelligible.

Since being is intelligible or true, it is conformable to intellect and so we come to know it; but it is not our knowledge of being that renders being intelligible. Accordingly, everything that exists is intelligible. Hence we can say, there is nothing outside intelligibility. This is a very promising truth for humankind. Since everything is understandable or intelligible, all researches are possible. If that was not the case, neither science nor discovery was possible in the universe. Hence we can say that intelligibility of being (i.e., being as true) as a transcendental property – property which is applicable to everything that exists - is the ground of human progress in wisdom and knowledge. Since no generation of mankind possesses this wisdom exhaustively, it is the duty of the humans of all time to seek truth, which is accessible to all, for being is always intelligible or true.

In the history of Western philosophy, however, there were attempts to deny the intelligibility of being. For Descartes (1596 – 1650), things haven't any truth in themselves; they are not measured by our ideas but are measured by the arbitrary decree of God's will. Because God willed so, things are as they are. For example, two and two make four is so because God wills so. All the truth of our knowledge depends on the veracity of God Himself. In Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804), it is our intellect that 'makes' things intelligible by applying the a priori thought-

forms to them; thus things (phenomena) are not intelligible in themselves. Even some thinkers belonging to pragmatic school (e.g., William James 1842 – 1910) hold that beings are not intelligible. Things are made true by us; we give ‘meanings’ to things; ideas are true only when they are useful or when we are able to make use of them for the realization of certain purposes. All truths are like the ‘artistic truth’, a kind of our making. For Sartre (1905 – 1980) and Camus (1913 – 1960), reality is absurd or not intelligible. However, this Western mind-set is a self-defeating ‘syndrome’; it simply undermines human knowledge itself. In fact, intelligibility of being or being is true shows the potency in things to be known by some intellect.

‘Being is intelligible’ implies more. By knowing the beings in the world (i.e., through our logical truth) we indirectly come to know the divine mind or divine ideas; this, in turn, is bringing our knowledge in conformity with the divine knowledge (or with divine ‘logical truth’). Again, the truth in its profound nature as conformity must be viewed as a manifestation (disclosure, as the Greek word *‘aletheia’* implies); it is a coming to light of being in its depth, or reality in its deep interiority gets revealed or dis-concealed.

Since truth of being is a transcendental property, we can convert it and say, truth is being. How is it possible? When we say being is true, it means that it is intelligible. Now, in order to be intelligible, there must be something which has existence. Something that which exists is being and as an existing being it is conformable to the intellect. Therefore we can conclude that anything that is intelligible or conformable has existence; it is a being. With regard to something that has no existence, we cannot speak of intelligibility, for it is simply not; it is not anything. Thus, truth as a property (here it is a transcendental property) is indeed something, not nothing. Now, as something it is being and so truth is being.

The transcendental property of truth is the ground of the fundamental principle of sufficient reason. It means that any being has in itself the sufficient reason for its intelligibility, i.e., it can explain itself. It itself is the sufficient explanation of its being. Hence Leibniz (1646 – 1716) wrote, “Nothing exists without a sufficient reason why it exists, and why it exists in this way rather than in some other.” Accordingly, everything which is, possesses a sufficient reason for its being, i.e., it is grounded in being and so it is capable of explaining itself to the intellect (however, we have to note that Leibnizian articulation of this principle may lead to a universal determinism, which does not take into account the possibility of liberty!).

Do evidences have any relevance in the appropriation of truth? We often hear people asking, ‘is it true?’, ‘what is the evidence?’ etc. These questions suggest that evidences have significant role in the appropriation of truth. That something is true must be established through evidences, i.e., so that our judgement will be objective. Evidence is objective, when reality is present or made available to the perceiver. Here the intellect apprehends the reality in its self-revelation, self-manifestation (a-letheia); it is indeed a disclosure to the intellect. Thus the knowing intellect can make true judgements. Hence evidence serves as the criterion of truth; it is the ground of intelligibility.

### **3.6. PROBLEM OF FALSITY**

A discussion of truth inevitably takes us to the consideration of falsity also. Falsity is not a simple negation of truth, but a distortion of truth. If truth is conformity between intellect and being, falsity will be its opposite. Since there are three types of truth, we can speak of three kinds of falsity too. Logical falsity is error; it is the non-agreement of intellect to the reality. This is expressed in mistakes, changing views, confused opinions, doubts, etc. Here the judgements are not correct. Moral falsity is the disagreement or nonconformity in speech and thought. It is falsehood or lie. Now, what about ontological falsity?

Since every being as long as it is, is intelligible and so it is true. As regards the relation of being to the Divine intellect, there cannot be ontological falsity. Thus as intelligible, being is always true and so there is no ontological falsity as such in an absolute sense. However in relation to the human intellect there can be relative ontological falsity. For example, an artist in his attempt of producing an artefact may not be able to bring out the perfection expected of it because of various reasons. Here the thing is in nonconformity with his intellect or with the type-idea in artist's mind. It can be counted as a relative ontological falsity.

A false appearance (that may take place in the level of self-manifestation of being and so it is concerned with ontological truth) is the deformity of the externality of a being from its internal structures (i.e., from its truth). Accordingly, falsity (as in the case of false speech) can refer either to the lack of manifestation of a being in its profound nature or to the intervention in the process of manifestation of some elements that have impeded it (and thus it got falsified). Hence a simple non-manifestation does not constitute a non-truth, but it may open to us the new vistas of the liberty of truth, liberty of being.

### **3.7. LET US SUM UP**

Being is true; it is a transcendental property. As transcendental it is applicable to every being both finite and infinite. It is traced in the context of being in relation to the mind or intellect. There can be a relation of intellect to being and through such a relation one gets the knowledge of beings; it is known as the truth of our knowledge or logical truth. Another type of relation is that of being to the intellect. Here the being has to conform to the mind's (intellect's) ideas or knowledge. Such conformity of being to the mind is the ground of determining ontological truth. Therefore ontological truth refers to the quality of being to conform or agree with the intellect; it is the intelligibility of being. Here being discloses or manifests itself.

Since being is intelligible that we come to know being. Hence ontological truth is the basis of the truth of our knowing or of logical truth. That beings are knowable or being is conformable to intellect in general (it need not be our intellect) is the basis of all researches, scientific discoveries and human progress. Thus this metaphysical position is an ever valid principle for the hopeful engagement into the mysteries of being.

### **3.8. KEY WORDS**

**Aletheia:** it is the Greek word for truth. Literally it means non-concealment. Truth is the 'coming to light' of being or manifestation of being to the knower or to the intellect. In the philosophy of Heidegger, truth is presented as un-covering of being.

**Ontological Truth:** it is found in the relation of being to the intellect. A picture drawn by an artist has ontological truth as it is in conformity with his ideas. Here the object relates itself to the mind of the artist for its being. Analogously, that which is (being) is in the mind of God, the creator and He has created them after these divine ideas; the created beings are in relation to His intellect and thus they are ontologically true. Thus a being is ontologically true as it is conformable to the intellect. Accordingly, ontological truth refers to the very intelligibility of being; on this ground all logical truths (i.e., the truth of our knowing) depend.

**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 you convert being and truth?

.....  
.....

2) How does the theme of 'intelligibility of being' help humankind?

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

**3.9. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES**

Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. (In: *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle by Thomas Aquinas*.) Tr. John P Rowan. Vol. I. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961.  
Bittle, Celestine. *The Domain of Being*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1950.  
Lonergan, Bernard. *Insight*. New York: Longmans, 1965.  
Maritain, Jacques. *A Preface to Metaphysics*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1943.  
Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives*. Bangalore: ATC, 1999.  
Peters, John A. *Metaphysics*. Louvain: Duquesne University Press, 1963.

**3.10. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

**Answers to Check Your Progress I**

1. Two paths can be traced in the development of the notion of truth in Western thinking. One is derived from the biblical background, where the Hebrew word 'emeth' is used for truth. It refers



to god's firm and steadfast faithfulness. In the New Testament truth refers to the self-revelation (its Greek word is 'aletheia') of God through Christ. In general the Bible attaches the meaning of agreement between assertion and reality to truth. Other path is of Greek antiquity. Parmenides saw the road of truth as that of existence and it is the path to be treaded by the mortals, who are often in error. Refuting the Sophist's style of mere persuasion for success, Socrates inculcated the profound means of attaining truth in various realm of knowledge. For Plato, true was the idea and it is this world of ideas or forms that must be sought by the humans. In Aristotle, truth is expressed in the judgment. These two ways of considering truth paved for the discussion of truth in the Western history.

2. We have seen three types of truth. 1. *Logical truth*. It is the truth of our knowing or our knowing is as the being is. Here we see a relation is of our intellect to the being known. Thus it is the conformity of our intellect to being or it is the agreement of our intellect to the object known. Here our intellect forms the ideas of the objects; then, those ideas are brought in judgements. Now, if our judgement corresponds to or agrees with the reality, then we have logical truth. Such judgements are expressed in affirmative or negative statements. 2. *Ontological Truth*. This derived from the relation of being to intellect. It is the conformity of being to the intellect. If the being conforms to the intellect or to the ideas in intellect, then we have *ontological or transcendental truth*. Here we see the truth of the reality. Any being as conformable to intellect refers to its intelligibility; it is the intrinsic intelligibility of being. Here being comes out of hiddenness and gets revealed to the intellect (it is the meaning of the Greek word aletheia). This ontological truth is a condition for logical truth; thus the former enjoys certain priority over the latter. 3. In *moral truth* we see an agreement of speech and thought. As we make a judgement we make it first in our mind and then we express those thoughts in words. If our speech conforms to our thought, then there is moral truth.

### **Answers to Check Your Progress II**

1. Being is true. Its conversion is 'the true is being'. The former means that being is intelligible. It is intelligible only as a being, i.e., as something having existence. As something having existence it is conformable to the intellect. Again, as property (here as transcendental property) truth is indeed something (not nothing) and so truth is being.

2. Denying intelligibility is undermining human knowledge. If so, intelligibility of being is principle behind our searches, researches, inquiries, scientific discoveries, etc. That something can be dis-covered (a-letheia) is the hope all the scientists cherishes in the background of their painstaking efforts. Since the universe as a whole is a being and since no generation of mankind has exhaustively perceived it as a whole, this metaphysical position of the 'intelligibility of being' is a source of perennial hope for humanity. Moreover, discovering the truths of nature or being (i.e., our logical truths) is a way to trace the 'divine ideas' perpetuated in and through being and beings. Thus we can way the divine mind is pursued in and through the intelligibility of beings.



**CONTENTS**

- 4.0. Objectives
- 4.1. Introduction
- 4.2. Being as the Object of Will
- 4.3. Goodness of Being and Finite Wills
- 4.4. Goodness of Being and the Infinite Will
- 4.5. Goodness, Appetite and Knowledge: A Relation of Mutuality
- 4.6. Hierarchy of Appetites and Nature of Man as a Transcending Being
- 4.7. Value and the Problem of the Relativity of Good
- 4.8. Unqualified Goodness
- 4.9. Evil: The Opposite of Goodness
- 4.10. Kinds of Evil
- 4.11. Cause of Evil
- 4.12. Let Us Sum Up
- 4.13. Key Words
- 4.14. Further Readings and References
- 4.15. Answers to Check Your Progress

---

**4.0 OBJECTIVES**

---

Being is the term that is the most expansive. Anything and everything that is or exists can be classified under this umbrella concept. Indians stretch its denotation to the extent of including within it even possible beings which do not exist now in the real sense. Hence for them, only things that involve a self-contradiction are absolutely non-existent (*atyantabhava*) and are outside the purview of being. It follows then that being includes all beings.

Is existence the only aspect that a being shares with all other beings? One of the foremost things we notice when we observe beings is that they are heterogeneous. But even the heterogeneous beings share certain attributes or properties with all the rest primarily because these attributes flow from the very essence of their existing. We call them transcendental properties of beings because with such properties the varied beings transcend their differences. Unity, truth and goodness are the transcendental properties of beings.

After a survey of the transcendental properties of unity and truth, we now come to the third property of goodness.

---

#### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

---

While the transcendental property of oneness or unity concerned a being's relation to itself, the transcendental property of truth concerns a being's relation to an intellect. Moving further, we are going to examine being as an object of will. Will is the desiring faculty or the faculty of appetite in man. It will be seen that every being by the fact of its sheer existing can serve some appetite of a will. Put differently it can be said that every being has a capacity to arouse an appetite in a will. Therefore, every being will also be regarded as good. It is by virtue of its goodness that a being becomes the object of a willing faculty.

---

#### 4.2. BEING AS THE OBJECT OF WILL

---

A being comes to be regarded as good only insofar as it becomes the object of a will. Will is the faculty of appetite or desire. The word "appetite" is derived from the combination of two Latin words - *ad+petere*, meaning 'to incline towards,' 'to tend to,' etc. Appetite is an inclination or a movement from within towards something. Accordingly there are a moving out (of the desiring subject to the desired object) and a corresponding moving in (of the object desired towards the desiring subject) respectively termed "inclination" and "fruition." In the stage of inclination, a restlessness or disquietude marks the subject; this restlessness gives way to rest and fulfillment in the stage of fruition where the subject has already attained the object it desired. Appetite must be understood as involving both the stages of inclination and fruition. We may then define goodness as conformity of one's appetite with the thing. Depending upon the conformity, a being is lovable, desirable, joy-giving, etc., which are further characterizations of being good.

---

#### 4.3. GOODNESS OF BEING AND FINITE WILLS

---

Our conclusion so far is that the goodness of a being is dependent on its lovability or desirability or joy-giving ability with respect to an inclining or desiring will. This immediately leads us to the question, Can a being not exist at all as necessarily good without being desired or loved? Our answer is that although the goodness of a being is necessarily related to its lovability, it can nevertheless exist as good without being loved by the finite wills of us humans. Being outside the domain of our knowledge and hence being not loved and desired does not cancel a being's existence as a good being. Things exist even as unknown to human beings. In the same manner, beings can exist as good beings even as unloved and undesired.

However, every being insofar as it is good and is judged to be good moves a will towards it. There is a complementarity between a being and a will. Thus a thing elicits responses in two faculties of a subject (i.e., human being). While it moves the intellect to judge it (i.e., to assent to its presence) and lets itself be rendered true, on the other hand it moves the will to incline to it and lets itself be rendered good. Not surprising then, Indians called being *sat*. *Sat* primarily means existent. It also means true as well as good. *Sadguru* is a true guru as well as a good guru.

*Sadsangha* is the company of good people. Accordingly Indians regard being as existent, true and good.

---

#### 4.4. GOODNESS OF BEING AND THE INFINITE WILL

---

It is to be emphasized that our will does not make a being good, nor does our intellect make it true. That does not, however, mean that a being is good independent of any will. A being is lovable and hence good to the extent it is existent, to the extent it has being. Every finite existence receives its existence from another efficient cause. Traditionally such an efficient cause is referred to as God. It follows then that any being is good insofar as God wills its existence. Existence is the highest perfection for a being. The higher the degree of its existence, more perfect and more lovable it is.

Existence is the highest perfection for a being. Higher the degree of its existence, more perfect and more lovable it is.

---

#### 4.5. GOODNESS, APPETITE AND KNOWLEDGE: A RELATION OF MUTUALITY

---

It is already seen that goodness has a necessary relation to the will and hence to its appetite. Going further, we will now see that goodness can vary depending upon the quality of the appetite. Quality of the appetite is determined in tune with the knowledge of the person that wills.

Although when speaking of appetite, we are concerned with the appetite of intelligent beings like human beings and even God, even unconscious beings can be thought of as having appetite. For example, every being has the appetite to continue in existence. This is an unconscious appetite requiring no preceding knowledge. Appetite with preceding knowledge can be classified into sensible appetite and intellectual appetite. Sensible appetite is preceded by sensible knowledge. Animals have only sensible knowledge and hence sensible appetite.

Human beings stand out from the rest of the beings in that even as they share with other beings unconscious appetite, and with animals, sensibly conscious appetite, they have also intellectual appetite. The intellectual appetite is superior to sensible appetite not only in degree but also in kind. Its superiority is expressed in its being an elicited appetite. Elicited appetite as the very name suggests is elicited or aroused by a judgment of the object or the thing in question as good. Once the intellect judges an object as good, the will follows it up by pursuing it or by inclining towards it.

---

#### 4.6. HIERARCHY OF APPETITES AND NATURE OF HUMAN AS A TRANSCENDING BEING

---

It has been shown that appetites differ according to the nature of beings. Non-conscious beings have non-conscious appetite; sensibly conscious beings have sensible appetites; intellectually conscious beings intellectual appetites. Human will and its appetite is a unique case; as the only

being in the world having a spiritual nature and hence with a spiritual appetite, he is the most perfect of all the beings in the world. Man is a unique case because he finds in himself a multiplicity of appetites ranging from non-conscious appetite to spiritual appetite. The appetites in man can be enumerated in a well-defined hierarchy. Since man shares his spiritual nature with God, the creator being, the spiritual appetite should be deemed the most superior.

Although we spoke of the hierarchy of appetites in human being, the appetites are not so found in him arranged in a well-ordered hierarchy. Such a hierarchy is not a fact in man; it is rather a responsibility for him. It is a project to be completed at any given time in man. This responsibility is an unenviable one since the different appetites in a human being are often in conflict with each other for supremacy. As mentioned above, human beings share their spiritual nature with God. Hence it is with their spiritual appetites that human beings transcend above their mere natural level. The lower appetites in man are not to be denied outright. Human responsibility is to prioritize the various appetites in such a way that there is no blind pursuing of lower appetites at the cost of the higher ones.

---

#### 4.7. VALUE AND THE PROBLEM OF THE RELATIVITY OF GOOD

---

If human responsibility involves saying 'no' to certain appetites for some good, it would mean that the good of a being is relative to the willing will. A being is good only relative to a will that wills it. A being is not good intrinsically. Not good in itself. It amounts to saying that a being has no value in itself. Any being is valuable only in so far as its value is constructed by a will. Here, one is at the heart of relativism propounded by Protagoras when he said that "man is the measure of all things." Such an understanding opens up a technological understanding of all beings. That is, a being is good only insofar as it works for another. The theory or stand that denies intrinsic good to a being or thing would lead to **ontological nihilism**.

There is a double relativism here. First, good of a being is relative to a willing will, namely human beings; second, there is no univocal goodness for a being with respect to all human beings. What is good for one need not be good for another. What *is good for you* is good *for you*; what *is good for me* is good *for me*.

Ontological nihilism goes against the stand that good is a transcendental property of being. Good can be a transcendental property only if every being is good in all circumstances. The final position regarding this issue is that being is good always and everywhere and therefore good remains being's transcendental property. This is justified because the primary goodness of being lies in its existing. To be is to be good, or inversely, to be good is primarily to be.

The Bhagavad Gita offers some strong arguments against the relativism of good. There, Krishna is the charioteer for Arjuna and so will lead the battle from the front. But he does not only steer the chariot and offer tips to Arjuna. After each day's battle he would tend the horses, wash them and take care of them. Goodness of a thing is not relative to his status. Whatever be his status, all things remain good for him. Secondly, when Arjuna wavers in his dharma as a fighter for righteousness because he tries to read his dharma relative to his relation with those who are arrayed against him in the battle field, Krishna advocates a non-relativist reading of dharma.

So we conclude that ontological nihilism in the sense of denying the intrinsic goodness of beings is unacceptable. It was shown that good of beings cannot be relative to finite wills. But what about the infinite will? Is something good because God wills it or does God will a particular thing because it is good? Descartes was more inclined to the former position. But Leibniz, on the other hand, was favorably disposed to the latter position. God, according to Leibniz, was faced with many potential or possible worlds at the moment of creation. God did not whimsically choose any one from among them to confer to it existence. Rather, he grants existence to that particular world which has the potency for maximum perfection. This reinforces the view that goodness of a being is inherent to it.

---

#### 4.8.UNQUALIFIED GOODNESS

---

The primary sense of goodness of any being is, as seen already, its existence. That does not, however, make it unqualifiedly good. Existence grants it only its primary perfection, namely, the perfection of its substantial existence. A thing can be called unqualifiedly good only if it has the perfection of all the accidents which are due to it. A person has qualified goodness insofar as he or she exists. But it is almost always the case that the perfection of at least some of the accidents like intellectual capacity, health, talents, right aptitudes and attitudes, ideals, etc. are absent in that person. That leads to the conclusion that finite or limited beings are only qualifiedly good. An infinite and unlimited being alone, for example, is unqualifiedly good and therefore, absolutely lovable.

---

#### Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1. Explain why goodness can be called a transcendental property of being showing the relation between the goodness of beings and wills, both finite and infinite.

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

2. The plurality of appetites in a human being invests in him/her with a responsibility. Explain.

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

3. Show how metaphysics dismisses the problem of the relativity of good.



---

#### 4.9.EVIL: THE OPPOSITE OF GOODNESS

---

Everything that exists is good, at least qualifiedly. So the primary metaphysical attitude towards any being should be one of optimism and gratitude. Before something good, one can only be optimistic and grateful. But the presence of evil has been a problem we have had to grapple with from time immemorial. A central concern of religion and philosophy and many human initiatives was to explain and resolve the problem of evil in the world. Metaphysics is called upon to reconcile these two conflicting positions namely, that every existent thing is good and that there is evil in the world. There are fundamentally three possible positions regarding evil.

- i) Evil is a positive entity
- ii) Evil is purely negative
- iii) Evil is privation of a necessary good

**Evil as a Positive Entity:-** The greatest proponent of this position was Zoroaster, a Persian philosopher who suggested that there are two primary principles – a principle of good and a principle of evil. The ultimate cause of goodness in the world is *Ormazd* and that of evil, *Ahriman*. These principles are in continuous strife with each other for supremacy. Zoroaster predicted that the final victory will be of the principle of good. What is important for the issue here is that according to the Zoroastrian conception evil in the world is directly generated by the primary principle of evil and is hence very much a real entity.

Evil as a positive entity is a position that is not philosophically tenable because such a position directly contradicts the premise that any thing on account of its existence itself has a claim to be good.

**Evil as Purely Negative:-** If regarding evil as a positive entity was an extreme position, another equally extreme position is to regard it as purely negative. This means, any absence of perfection will be evil. This position is also philosophically not sustainable. For, any being will be less or differently perfect relative to other beings. For example, not all human beings are as intelligent as Einstein was and that lesser intelligence will be evil in them! Or, human beings cannot fly as birds do. And this lesser good about human beings will be evil in them! The fact is that any absence cannot be regarded as evil. The untenability of these two extreme positions lead us to a middle position that evil is the lack of a necessary perfection in a being.

**Evil as the Privation of a Necessary Good:-** This is to say that evil is the absence of a perfection for which a being has a potency and need. It is apparent that evil, according to this conception, is not a mere absence of any perfection. Only those absent perfections will be called evil for which

the being in question has a real potency and demand. Absence of intelligence in a block of rock is not evil because it did not at all have a potency or capacity for intelligence in the first place. But the absence of intelligence in a human person must be viewed as evil because a human person has a potency for it. Or, we may say that intelligence is a necessary perfection in a human being lack of which must be regarded as evil.

In short, it can be said that evil is not a positive entity. Evil does not exist in a positive sense. Only beings exist. They are good insofar as they exist. Existing beings can lack some perfections which are accidents which they should generally have. Such a lack makes them deficient beings. It is this deficiency that is referred to when we say that they are evil.

---

#### 4.10. KINDS OF EVIL

---

Evil is generally divided into two – physical and moral. Physical evil is the privation of a perfection for which the nature of a being has a potency. Blindness or deafness in a person is a physical evil. Here, physical is not to be equated with corporeal or physiological. Theoretically speaking, even beings which have no material bodies (like angels) can have physical evil if their nature lacks a perfection for which it has a real potency. The term ‘physical’ is derived from the Greek word, *physis*, meaning “nature.”

Moral evil is the absence of a moral perfection in human beings. Lack of sincerity and honesty can be counted as examples of it. Moral evil is called sin. An action becomes sinful when it does not serve the total goodness of man. We have seen above that man is a complex entity with sensual, intellectual and spiritual appetites. In selecting goodness, one should keep in mind all one’s appetites in their proper order and priority. Pursuing lower appetites at the cost of higher ones retards the *total* goodness of man. This is sin.

Can there be ontological evil? Ontological evil will mean a positively evil entity. But we have already shown that any position regarding evil as a positive entity is philosophically untenable.

---

#### 4.11. CAUSE OF EVIL

---

One last issue that remains to be discussed in this section is the issue of the cause of evil. It is undeniable that there is evil in the world, although not as a positive entity. If there is evil, who or what causes it? Cause is generally classified into four – efficient cause, material cause, formal cause and final cause. There can be no direct (*per se*) efficient cause of evil since no agent intends evil as such. However, there can be an indirect (*per accidens*) efficient cause of evil since a defect in the agent can result in the deficiency of the action. An old and physically frail carpenter in spite of his best intentions and efforts may manage to shape furniture that falls short of perfection. There can be a material cause for evil. A deficient material cause may thwart the action of the efficient cause resulting in an imperfect result. Evil has no formal cause since what we call evil does not have a form originally intended for it. Finally, there cannot be a final cause of evil as final cause is always the good intended. In evil the intended final cause does not materialize.

## Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1. What are the three possible philosophical positions regarding evil?

.....

.....

.....

2. Distinguish between physical evil and moral evil. Why cannot God be the cause of evil?

.....

.....

.....

---

### 4.12. LET US SUM UP

---

From the above exposition of the transcendental property of goodness, it becomes all too apparent that goodness is not a cosmetic quality of a thing. Any thing that makes an appearance on the stage of existence is necessarily good because goodness is not something merely attached to it as if from outside but flows from its essence itself. This calls for a positive and creative attitude towards all beings. Hence metaphysics encourages everyone to shed all cynical attitudes or approaches to anything.

---

### 4.13. KEY Words

---

**Evil:** Evil is the privation of perfection due to a being.

**Privation:** Privation is the absence of perfection expected of a being.

**Negation:** Negation is the absence of perfection not expected of a being.

---

#### 4.14. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

---

- Neiman, Susan. *Evil in Modern Thought*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Phillips, D.Z. *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005.
- Vaske, Martin O. *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1963.
- Vineeth, V. Francis. *Foundations of World Vision: A Guide to Metaphysics Eastern and Western*. Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1985.
- Wood, Robert E. *A Path into Metaphysics*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1990.

---

#### 4.15. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

---

##### **Check Your Progress I**

1. Goodness can be called a transcendental property of being because as far as this property is concerned, the beings which are many and diverse, transcend all their differences. Goodness flows from the very essence of every being irrespective of the differences in their mode of existing. The proof of the goodness of every being consists in its capacity to satisfy the appetite of a will. As far as the wills of the finite beings are concerned, the agreement between a thing and the will may not be evident. But in the case of the will of the infinite being, the agreement is total and evident because without such an agreement the things will not come into existence.
2. Human beings are complex entities since there are sensible, intellectual and spiritual faculties in them. There are as many appetites as they are faculties too since the appetites are controlled by these different faculties. As a result there is a conflict of interests in a person and calls for a right decision or choice. With this one is in a domain of ethics. The ethical responsibility of man is to arrange his different appetites in a hierarchy giving each its due. Man would fail in his responsibility if he were to serve his lower appetites at the expense of higher appetites.
3. The problem of the relativity of good has its root in the philosophical supposition that the goodness of a being is determined by its serviceability. In other words, a thing is good only insofar as it serves the appetite of a will. This position deprives the beings of their intrinsic goodness or value and thereby makes redundant as well the premise that goodness is a transcendental property of being. Metaphysics dismisses this problem of the relativity of the good altogether by the emphasis that goodness of a being lies primarily in its existence itself rather than in its lovability. Any being is good on account of its sheer existing. Any being is lovable and desirable because it exists. To be good is to be and conversely, to be is to be good.

##### **Check Your Progress II**

1. We experience evil in its manifold expressions. Nevertheless evil defies a univocal explanation. In philosophy, there have been mainly three explanations of evil. The first understands evil as a positive entity. But if evil is a positive entity, at least some of the beings (which we call evil) will not be good. So goodness cannot be called a transcendental property of

being. The second explanation shows evil as a negative entity. Evil is the absence of a perfection. This explanation will render every being that is not the infinitely perfect being evil because only an infinitely perfect being can claim all perfections in itself. Hence the need of a third explanation. According to it, evil is the absence of a perfection for which the being has a real potency.

2. Physical evil refers to the absence of a perfection for which the nature of particular being has a claim or potency. Moral evil, on the other hand, consists in a choice that a person makes which is detrimental to his/her total goodness.

A cause of evil has to be its material, efficient, formal or final cause. Such causes imply a deficiency in the material, agency, form or intention giving rise to the thing. Since God is a being with all possible perfections, regarding him as the material, efficient, formal or final cause of evil would imply a contradiction. God cannot be the cause of evil unless he has evil in himself, physical or moral.



## UNIT 5

## BEING AS BEAUTIFUL

### Contents

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 History of the Concept of Beauty
- 5.3 Definition of Beauty
- 5.4 Beauty in aesthetics: Emmanuel Kant
- 5.5 Relationship between Truth, Beauty and Goodness
- 5.6 The Basis of Beauty
- 5.7 Fundamental Requirements for a Being to be Beautiful
- 5.8 Degrees of Beauty
- 5.9 A Note on Ugliness
- 5.10 Let us Sum Up
- 5.11 Key Words
- 5.12 Further Readings and References
- 5.13 Answers to check your Progress

### 5.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to study the transcendental property of beauty. Beauty is a word which is very much in vogue in our daily vocabulary. Things, persons are titled as beautiful. Very often beauty is limited to the experience of the sense perception. Although this sort of beauty viewed from the sense experience is fascinating and meaningful, beauty is not limited only to the sense experience, it goes beyond. Hence the purpose of this lesson is to perceive beauty beyond the sense experience and gauge beauty from a deeper perspective and this can be done when we study beauty as the transcendental property of being. This property of being penetrates into the inner dimension of a being and discovers that every being when its purpose is realized is beautiful even though it may not always please the senses. Hence beauty as the transcendental property of being is an inner discovery of being and ultimately an inner discovery of the truth of every being.

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

To have the fundamental meaning and definition of beauty

To be able to differentiate beauty from the aesthetic and transcendental point of view

To know the different elements that constitutes beauty

To have knowledge on the various degrees of beauty.

To know, whether we can speak of ugliness.

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The transcendental properties of being are those properties that constitute the very being. They are ontological in the sense that every being possesses these properties as part and parcel of its existence. These properties are four in number. Unity: that is, every being possess an internal unity by which it is united in itself and divided from all other beings. Truth: Every being is knowable, it is intelligible, it manifests itself to the intellect. Goodness: Every being possess certain amount of perfection which is proper to its own nature thus this perfection draws attention towards it and thus pleases the mind. This

property is called the transcendental goodness. Besides these three properties, we have another which is closely linked with goodness and that is called as the transcendental beauty. This property could be said as a combination of all the above mentioned properties. Thus when a thing possess internal unity; that it can be known; and that it becomes desirable for it has certain amount of perfection, it brings delight and pleasure to the person, who beholds them. This property of bringing delight and pleasure is called the transcendental beauty.

## 5.2 HISTORY OF THE CONCEPT OF BEAUTY

Beauty has been recognized as a core value throughout history and in diverse cultural traditions. While beauty has cross-historical and cross-cultural recognition, the senses and the standards of beauty differ from one period to another, as well as from one cultural tradition to another. Hence in order to understand the transcendental property of beauty, it is but proper that at the outset we try trace back a little history of this concept in the Greek philosophical tradition.

The Greek word *kalos* ("beautiful") was used in ancient Greek societies, not only for the descriptions of sensibly beautiful things, but also morally admirable character and conduct, noble birth, high social status, and technically useful things. The Greek word *kalokagatia* ("beauty-good"), combining two terms "beauty" and "good," was a natural combination in the Greek context. Greek philosophy was built upon the presupposition that happiness (*eudaimonia*) is the highest good. Philosophers differed in their interpretation of what happiness is and the best method for achieving it, but shared the same conviction that it is ultimate goal of life. Accordingly, the Greeks were concerned with understanding beauty, and how beauty can contribute to the highest good. They would investigate beauty in association with truth and goodness, which also pointed to the divine. Thus, the study of beauty was not an autonomous discipline. It was not "aesthetics" in the sense of a "study of human sensibility," which emerged after Kant.

Pythagoras and Pythagoreans understood that harmony is an objectively existing principle that constitutes the cosmos as a unified body. Harmony is built upon mathematical order and balance, and beauty exists as the objective principle in beings which maintain harmony, order, and balance. They recognized that aesthetic experiences in arts such as music are closely tied to mathematical ratios of tones and rhythms. The Pythagorean connection between beauty and mathematics remains a touchstone of scientific thought to this day. Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans understood experiences of beauty and contemplations of the mathematical as central to their religious exercises to purify the soul. Aesthetic experiences and exercises of reason were understood as a necessary process and training to cultivate the soul, which they understood to be immortal. They built a theory of beauty within the framework of their religious thought. Their conviction of the immortality of the soul, as well as the relationship between beauty and mathematics, had a strong impact on Plato.

Plato conceived "beauty," "good," "justice," etc. as eternal, immutable, divine existences. They are Ideas—not mental images or psychological objects of mind, but

objectively existing, unchanging, permanent, and eternal beings. They belong to a divine realm. For Plato, the idea of beauty exists in a perfect form for eternity in the realm of immortal gods, manifested in imperfect forms on the material plane of humanity. Plato referred to the world of humanity as a "shadow" of the perfect world of ideas. Thus, the basis of earthly beauty was built into Plato's metaphysics. Human souls are immortal. Every human being is born with implicit understanding of the Idea of beauty and all other Ideas. Upon entering into the body at birth, a human being temporarily "forgets" these Ideas. Throughout his life course, he seeks to familiarize herself with these Ideas. This process is a recollection of Ideas the soul has temporarily forgotten.

The process of ascent through the experience of beauty begins with beauty manifested in human bodies. It is gradually elevated to the beauty in the soul, beauty of character, and other incorporeal realms. Beauty manifested in bodies and physical materials is less perfect for Plato, and hence the soul is naturally led to seek permanent and perfect beauty. For Plato, the power of 'eros' is the driving force for the quest of perfect Ideas in humans. Plato conceived the Idea of good as the supreme one, with all other Ideas, including beauty, existing under it. In his ontology, beauty, good, truth, and other virtues are all tied together. Accordingly, "to be beautiful," "to be virtuous," and "to have true knowledge" are inseparable.

Plotinus who developed the Neo-Platonic tradition, also held that good and beauty are one in the realm of thought, and that the soul must be cultivated to see good and beauty. In both Platonic and Neo-Platonic traditions, concepts of "being," "good," and "beauty" are always understood to be inseparable. The experience of beauty is therefore also inseparable from that of being and good.

From the above history, we come to know that beauty was closely associated with some sort of harmony which would please the intellect. However, we do not see a systematic definition of beauty being drawn. This task was carried out by Aristotle and later on by the medieval philosopher St Thomas Aquinas.

### **5.3 DEFINITION OF BEAUTY**

The question of beauty as the transcendental property was discussed by Aristotle. In his treatises on Poetry and Rhetoric he lays down a theory of art, and establishes principles of beauty. His philosophical views were in many respects opposed to those of Plato. He does not admit an absolute conception of the beautiful; but he distinguishes beauty from the good, the useful, the fit, and the necessary. He resolves beauty into certain elements, as order, symmetry, and definiteness. A distinction of beauty, according to him, is the absence of lust or desire in the pleasure it excites. Beauty has no utilitarian or ethical object; the aim of art is merely to give immediate pleasure; its essence is imitation.

This idea of beauty was elaborated by a 6<sup>th</sup> century monk named Pseudo-Dionysius who speaks about beauty in his book "*De divinis nominibus*" the divine names. Here, he writes a chapter on God as the beautiful. All things it says even the least of

material beings are beautiful by participating in the beauty of God. They do so by analogy, that is in their own way, up to their own capacities and according to their merits. The divine beauty is essentially an efficient cause and exemplar and a final cause. The features of the beautiful that stem from the causal power of God are: 1. the **selfhood**, identity or perfection that comes from the participation according to one's capacity in the beauty of God. 2. The **harmony** that orders the universe in a hierarchy. 3. **Radiance**, fundamentally a spiritual quality, an enlightenment of the mind of which visible clarity is but an image.

St Thomas Aquinas, a medieval philosopher was very closely influenced by the idea of beauty as it was enunciated by Aristotle and Pseudo-Dionysius. He makes an attempt to give a systematic definition of beauty. Thus in his book "*Summa Theologica*", St Thomas describes beauty (*pulchrum*) from its effects saying, that "the beautiful is that which pleases when seen" or the beautiful is that which is pleasing to behold". (*Summa Theologica*, Book, I. q.5, a.4) Beauty thus is a transcendental property which results from the act of being of things and the richness and variety of its diverse forms stem from the different degrees and modes of being. It is to be noted that not everything which pleases is considered to be beautiful for a person may take pleasure also in things which are simply agreeable without being considered beautiful. Money for instance, which pleases yet it is not considered to be beautiful because the beauty spoken as the transcendental property has nothing to do with the question of its usefulness nor the gain it brings either in the financial or at other levels. The beauty spoken here is the pleasure experienced in the contemplation of the beauty that flows directly from the "contemplation" and not from the possession or the usefulness of the object. It is to be also noted that the beauty that we speak here could also accompany pleasure derived from its possession or its usefulness. But beauty should not be identified with this type of pleasure or usefulness. The beauty spoken here is 'disinterested', that is, it does not seek possession, but satisfied with contemplation.

Concerning the above definition, let us clarify certain points. In the definition "the beautiful is that which pleases when seen", "when seen" does not mean only to the sense perception it refers primarily to the intellectual perception for it is only the intellect which is capable of formally apprehending the conformity of an object with a cognitive power because 'conformity' is a relation and therefore can be apprehended only by the intellect. Although the external senses especially sight and hearing are used in the perception of material beauty, they perceive it only insofar as they are "tool" of the intellect because of themselves they are not capable of formally perceiving the conformity of their object with a cognitive power.

#### **5.4 BEAUTY IN AESTHETICS: EMMANUEL KANT**

Beauty as the transcendental property of being stresses its ontological character. It is seen as the very constituent dimension of being itself. Besides this ontological dimension, beauty is also perceived from an aesthetic point of view. Here the best example could be that of Emmanuel Kant. Hence we shall briefly make survey of Kant's idea of beauty.

Kant in the *Critique of Judgment* begins with an account of beauty. The initial issue is: what kind of judgment is it that results in our saying, for example, "That is a

beautiful sunset'. Kant argues that such aesthetic judgments (or 'judgments of taste') must have four key distinguishing features. **First**, they are disinterested, meaning that we take pleasure in something because we judge it beautiful, rather than judging it beautiful because we find it pleasurable. The latter type of judgment would be more like a judgment of the 'agreeable'.

**Second and third**, such judgments are both *universal* and *necessary*. This means roughly that it is an intrinsic part of the activity of such a judgment to expect others to agree with us. Although we may say 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder', that is not how we act. Instead, we debate and argue about our aesthetic judgments – and especially about works of art - and we tend to believe that such debates and arguments can actually achieve something. Indeed, for many purposes, 'beauty' behaves as if it were a real property of an object, like its weight or chemical composition. But Kant insists that universality and necessity are in fact a product of features of the human mind (Kant calls these features 'common sense'), and that there is no objective property of a thing that makes it beautiful.

**Fourth**, through aesthetic judgments, beautiful objects appear to be 'purposive without purpose' (sometimes translated as 'final without end'). An object's purpose is the concept according to which it was made (the concept of a vegetable soup in the mind of the cook, for example); an object is purposive if it appears to have such a purpose; if, in other words, it appears to have been made or designed. But it is part of the experience of beautiful objects, Kant argues, that they should affect us as if they had a purpose, although no particular purpose can be found.

**Check Your Progress I**

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) Give a brief account of the notion of beauty according to Pythagoreans and Plato

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

2) What is the understanding of beauty according to Aristotle and St Thomas Aquinas?

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

3) Give a brief account of beauty according to Emmanuel Kant

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

**5.5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRUTH, BEAUTY AND GOODNESS**



Beauty is very closely associated with truth and goodness. Both truth and beauty express a relationship of 'conformity' with the intellect, both the 'good' and the 'beautiful' express 'suitability' for the appetite. Yet the 'beautiful' is not identical concept with either the 'truth' or the 'good'. As regards the 'truth' the 'beautiful' adds an element of pleasure to the conformity, whereas the 'truth' as such does not imply that pleasure is derived from it. On the contrary, the truth can be very unpleasant. Regarding the 'good' the beautiful expresses suitability for the appetite of the intellect which comes to rest in its possession by contemplation, whereas the 'good' expresses suitability for appetite in general.

## **5.6 THE BASIS OF BEAUTY**

Although the contemplation of the beautiful is always accompanied by delight, beauty is not the pleasure or delight itself, but rather those properties which are pleasing to behold. St Augustine said : "I will ask whether things are beautiful because they are pleasing, or if they are pleasing because they are beautiful. Undoubtedly the answer will be that things please me because of their beauty" (Augustine, *De Vera Religione*, ch 32.) Just as goodness is not an attribute arising from the will of the subject which desires it, rather a perfection of the desired object, so too, things are beautiful whether or not there are men capable of appreciating their beauty. Thus the beauty arises from the act of being itself and not in the beholder.

## **5.7 FUNDAMENTAL REQUIREMENTS FOR A BEING TO BE BEAUTIFUL**

Although we have said that the beauty of the things comes from the thing and not the beholder. Nevertheless in order that a thing to be beautiful it is not just sufficient that it exists but it must have certain perfection. Thus something is beautiful in the fullest sense if it possess all the perfections that correspond to its own nature. For example, we say that the cow is a beautiful animal to the extent that it has the harmony and perfection proper to its nature and not just because it has the act of being. Thus the beauty of a thing comes only if it has certain fundamental aspects which are attached to the being concerned. St Thomas a medieval philosopher speaks of three features of beauty:

- a) A certain "harmony" or proportion in the object itself. Proportion does not exclude variety, it does not mean monotony. Thus when an object possesses all the things that are supposed to be there for its existence then we say that that particular object has a certain amount of harmony. Thus for example the nature is said to possess a harmony.
- b) In order that a thing to be beautiful it should possess the "integrity" or completeness of the object with regard to the perfections required by its substantial form or by its accidental forms. A beautiful thing is complete not only in the principal meaning of the word, but also in the sense of receiving the finishing touch that transforms a moderately good or tolerable work into an accomplished work of art.
- c) A third characteristic is "clarity". For the intellect clarity means intelligibility. Clarity is also known by certain philosophers as 'splendor'. A certain 'splendor' is the essential characteristic of beauty. Splendor is always splendor of intelligibility: Splendor *veri* said Platonists; splendor *ordinis* said St Augustine,

splendor *formae* said St Thomas. “Form” according to St Thomas is the proper principle of intelligibility, the proper clarity of everything. Clarity is a characteristic which touches the intellect the most. The intelligence delights in the beautiful because in the beautiful it finds itself again and recognizes itself and makes contact with its own light. Every sensible beauty implies a certain delight of the eye itself or of the ear or the imagination: but there is beauty only if the ‘intelligence’ also takes delight in some way.

The beautiful is essentially delightful. It stirs desire and produces love. It is for its beauty that Wisdom is loved. Love in turn produces ecstasy that is to say it puts the lover outside of himself. Thus this love is pure for it does not have any self-centered motive.

### **5.8 DEGREES OF BEAUTY**

Beauty could be varying according to the type of being we are referring to. Here we can consider in general two types of beings: the material and the spiritual beings. Spiritual substances whose forms are not limited by matter have the full beauty which pertains to their degree and mode of being. Spiritual substances such as angels or pure spirits for example. To the extent that they have existence they are beautiful. Since they are spiritual beings they do not lack anything hence they possess totality of beauty. The beauty in its most pristine form could be fully found in the divine, God himself. Here there is total beauty for God is the author of all beauty and thus possesses the totality of beauty. He is the perfection in its fullest form. Hence God by his very nature or substance is called beautiful. He does not suffer from any sort of imperfection for he is completely spiritual. Hence Beauty in its totality could be found in God alone.

Beauty in the material substances is fragmentary and scattered. It is because the substantial form is limited by the matter. No material being manifests beauty in all of its extension, not even all beauty which pertains to its genus or species since in different individuals the substantial form is affected by various accidental forms which are adapted to its nature in different degrees. Besides, any given individual will hardly be beautiful in every respect. A horse for example may have a marvelously elegant figure and may show astonishing gracefulness in racing or jumping and yet the color may leave much to be desired. A poem may have very suggestive stanzas and still have relatively less accomplished rhymes. Hence beauty in the material beings is said to be relatively beautiful compared to the spiritual beauties and the divine being. According to scholastic philosophers, material beauty is only a ‘shadow’ of the divine beauty. The material things only ‘share’ a glimpse of the divine beauty. They ‘participate in the divine beauty who is the beauty itself, beauty in its totality. When we apply the religious language to the question of beauty, the beauty of material substances that is the beauty of human person is corrupted due to ‘sin’. The sinful nature in man makes him gullible and go against the author of beauty that is God himself and thus destroy the beauty that is ingrained in him. Hence beauty is disrupted due to sin against God.

#### **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 are the fundamental requirements for a thing to be beautiful?

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

2) What are various degrees of beauty ?

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

3) What is ugliness ?

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

### 5.9 A NOTE ON UGLINESS

We have been talking about the transcendental property of beauty, hence it is but very pertinent that we speak a word about ugliness which is very much used in our daily parlance. If every being is beautiful can we talk about ugliness ? Our daily life tells us that we often speak of ugliness. Can we talk about ugliness at all?

Yes, we do and can speak of ugliness. Although everything is beautiful according to its own form human intellect is not always capable of perceiving this beauty. This incapacity may be due to subjective or objective reasons.

The subjective reason is that the one who perceives the object does not appreciate it because he is not habituated to see such objects or the objects do not suit his tastes. As a result everything which does not suit his tastes or his preconceived ideas he considers to be ugly. When it comes to objective reasons, this flows from the nature of human knowledge. To appreciate beauty, the intellect must contemplate an object, that is, it must be able to come to rest in the vision of the thing; hence if anything prevents this contemplation, man cannot see the beauty of the object. There may be certain reasons which prevent the intellect to pay sufficient attention:

- a) The perfection in the object is mutilated. Here the attention of the intellect is drawn towards what does not exist than what exists. Over and above when the defect is more striking the attention towards the defect is drawn keenly. For example, someone comes with a broken leg then the attention is drawn on the brokenness of the leg than other sane members of the body.
- b) Certain beings remind us so much of others that we consider them as caricatures of the latter. We for example compare the monkeys face with human face and consider

the former as defective or ugly compared to the latter. Hence we consider the face of monkey as ugly.

- c) Man is so used to see things in one way that any other way of seeing the same object may irritate or may not draw his attention to contemplate that object. For example he is so used to see the structure of a church, temple or mosque in a particular architectural style that any other style would not be able to please his attention. Hence he may consider them as ugly.

Hence ugliness, we could say, does not exist as such, it is more an absence than presence. It is a privation of a perfection which should have been present in an object and which does not exist and hence such absence instead drawing attention and bringing pleasure to the mind brings a sort of repulsion. Thus we could understand in this way transcendental ugliness.

We can certainly speak of ugliness in an aesthetic sense. It implies an aesthetic disvalue. Instead of bringing aesthetic pleasure an object causes repulsion and prompts the mind to negate it. We could also speak of moral ugliness. It consists in the inconsistency that exists between man's conscience and his action. When a person goes against the demands of his conscience and does moral harm to himself and to others then it is said to be moral ugliness. In religious terms, we call it as 'sin' wherein we go against the commandments of God and lead a life unworthy of God's design.

### 5.10 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have made an attempt to understand beauty as the transcendental property of being. Beauty like the 'Truth', 'Good' and the 'One' is a transcendental property of a being. It is not an accident superadded to being, it adds to a being only a relation of reason: it is being considered as delighting, the mere intuition of it as an intellectual nature. Thus everything is beautiful just as everything is good. And as being is everywhere present and everywhere varied, the beautiful likewise is diffused everywhere and is everywhere varied. Like being and other transcendental properties, it is essentially analogous, that is to say it is predicated for diverse reasons of the diverse subjects of which it is predicated : each kind of being is in its own way is good, is beautiful in its own way.

### 5.11 KEY WORDS

**Substance** : Is that to whose nature is due a to be in itself and not in another (it exists in itself)

**Truth** : Correspondence of the mind to the intellect.

**Goodness** : Is that attribute in an object which makes it desirable.

**Aesthetics** : A critical reflection on [art](#), [culture](#) and [nature](#).

### 5.12 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Alvira, Tomas, Luis Clavell/Tomas Melendo. *Metaphysics*. Manila: Sinag-Tala Publishers, INC., 1991.

Koren, Henry, J. *An Introduction to the Science of Metaphysics*. London: B. Herder Book CO. 1955.



- McCormick, John F. *Scholastic Metaphysics*. Chicago : Loyola University Press, 1940.
- Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going*. Bangalore : ATC., 1999.
- Rosenberg, Jean R. *Readings in Metaphysics*. Westminster: The Newman Press, 1965.
- Stolnitz Jerome. "Ugliness", in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (Ed.), Donald M. Borchert, New York: Thomson Gale, 2006, 561-564.

### 5.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

#### Answers to Check your Progress I

1. Pythagoras and Pythagoreans considered that beauty exist in Harmony. Harmony is built upon mathematical order and balance, and beauty exists as the objective principle in beings which maintain harmony, order, and balance. They recognized that aesthetic experiences in arts such as music are closely tied to mathematical ratios of tones and rhythms. Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans understood experiences of beauty and contemplations of the mathematical as central to their religious exercises to purify the soul. They built a theory of beauty within the framework of their religious thought. Plato conceived "beauty," "good," "justice," etc. as eternal, immutable, divine existences. They are Ideas—not mental images or psychological objects of mind, but objectively existing, unchanging, permanent, and eternal beings. They belong to a divine realm. For Plato, the idea of beauty exists in a perfect form for eternity in the realm of immortal gods, manifested in imperfect forms on the material plane of humanity. Plato referred to the world of humanity as a "shadow" of the perfect world of ideas. Thus, the basis of earthly beauty was built into Plato's metaphysics. Human souls are immortal. Every human being is born with implicit understanding of the Idea of beauty and all other Ideas. Upon entering into the body at birth, a human being temporarily "forgets" these Ideas. Throughout his life course, he seeks to familiarize herself with these Ideas. This process is a recollection of Ideas the soul has temporarily forgotten. Beauty manifested in bodies and physical materials is less perfect for Plato, and hence the soul is naturally led to seek permanent and perfect beauty. For Plato, the power of 'eros' is the driving force for the quest of perfect Ideas in humans. Plato conceived the Idea of good as the supreme one, with all other Ideas, including beauty, existing under it. In his ontology, beauty, good, truth, and other virtues are all tied together. Accordingly, "to be beautiful," "to be virtuous," and "to have true knowledge" are inseparable.
  
2. Aristotle considers beauty as the transcendental property of being. He does not admit an absolute conception of the beauty like Plato but he distinguishes beauty from the good, the useful, the fit, and the necessary. For him beauty consists into certain elements, as order, symmetry, and definiteness. A distinction of beauty, according to him, is the absence of lust or desire in the pleasure it excites. Beauty has no utilitarian or ethical object.



St Thomas Aquinas makes an attempt to give a systematic definition of beauty. “The beautiful is that which pleases when seen” or the beautiful is that which is pleasing to behold”. Beauty thus is a transcendental property which results from the act of being of things and the richness and variety of its diverse forms stem from the different degrees and modes of being. It is to be noted that not everything which pleases is considered to be beautiful for a person may take pleasure also in things which are simply agreeable without being considered beautiful.

3. Beauty in aesthetics: Emmanuel Kant in the *Critique of Judgment* begins with an account of beauty. The initial issue is: what kind of judgment is it that results in our saying, for example, ‘That is a beautiful sunset’. Kant argues that such aesthetic judgments (or ‘judgments of taste’) must have four key distinguishing features: **First**, they are disinterested, meaning that we take pleasure in something because we judge it beautiful, rather than judging it beautiful because we find it pleasurable. **Second and third**, such judgments are both *universal* and *necessary*. This means roughly that it is an intrinsic part of the activity of such a judgment to expect others to agree with us. Although we may say ‘beauty is in the eye of the beholder’, that is not how we act. Instead, we debate and argue about our aesthetic judgments – and especially about works of art – and we tend to believe that such debates and arguments can actually achieve something. Indeed, for many purposes, ‘beauty’ behaves as if it were a real property of an object, like its weight or chemical composition. But Kant insists that universality and necessity are in fact a product of features of the human mind **Fourth**, through aesthetic judgments, beautiful objects appear to be ‘purposive without purpose’ (sometimes translated as ‘final without end’). An object’s purpose is the concept according to which it was made (the concept of a vegetable soup in the mind of the cook, for example); an object is purposive if it appears to have such a purpose; if, in other words, it appears to have been made or designed.

### Answers to Check your Progress II

1. In order that a thing to be beautiful it is not just sufficient that it exists but it must have certain perfection. Thus something is beautiful in the fullest sense if it possess all the perfections that correspond to its own nature. A thing is said to be beautiful if it possesses three features :

A certain “**harmony**” or proportion in the object itself. When an object possesses all the things that are supposed to be there for its existence then we say that that particular object has a certain amount of harmony.

In order that a thing to be beautiful it should possess the “**integrity**” or completeness of the object with regard to the perfections required by its substantial form or by its accidental forms.

A third characteristic is “**clarity**”. For the intellect clarity means intelligibility. Clarity is also known by certain philosophers as ‘splendor’. Splendor is always splendor of intelligibility: Splendor *veri* said Platonists; splendor *ordinis* said St Augustine, splendor *formae* said St Thomas. Clarity is a characteristic which

touches the intellect the most. The intelligence delights in the beautiful because in the beautiful it finds itself again and recognizes itself and makes contact with its own light.

2. Concerning the degrees of beauty, it could be varying according to the type of being we are referring to. Here we can consider in general two types of beings: the material and the spiritual. Spiritual substances whose forms are not limited by matter have the full beauty which pertains to their degree and mode of being. Since they are spiritual beings they do not lack anything hence they possess totality of beauty. The beauty in its most pristine form could be fully found in the divine, God himself. Here there is total beauty for God is the author of all beauty and thus possesses the totality of beauty.

Beauty in the material substances is fragmentary and scattered. It is because the substantial form is limited by the matter. No material being manifests beauty in all of its extension, not even all beauty which pertains to its genus or species since in different individuals the substantial form is affected by various accidental forms which are adapted to its nature in different degrees.

3. Although everything is beautiful according to its own form, human intellect is not always capable of perceiving this beauty. This results in ugliness. This incapacity may be due to subjective or objective reasons. The subjective reason is that the one who perceives the object does not appreciate it because he is not habituated to see such objects or the objects do not suit his tastes. As a result everything which does not suit his tastes or his preconceived ideas he considers to be ugly. When it comes to objective reasons, this flows from the nature of human knowledge. To appreciate beauty, the intellect must contemplate an object, that is, it must be able to come to rest in the vision of the thing; hence if anything prevents this 'contemplation', man cannot see the beauty of the object. There are a few reasons which prevent the intellect to pay sufficient attention such as: a) The perfection in the object is mutilated. b) Certain beings remind us so much of others that we consider them as caricatures of the latter. c) Man is so used to see things in one way that any other way of seeing the same object may irritate or may not draw his attention to contemplate that object. Hence ugliness, we could say, does not exist as such, it is more an absence than presence. It is a privation of a perfection which should have been present in an object and which does not exist and hence such absence instead drawing attention and bringing pleasure to the mind brings a sort of repulsion. Thus we could understand in this way transcendental ugliness.