

Indira Gandhi National Open University  
School of Interdisciplinary and  
Trans-disciplinary Studies

**MPYE – 008**

**Metaphysics**

**Block 1**

**INTRODUCTION TO METAPHYSICS**

**UNIT 1**

**Etymology, Definition and Scope**

**UNIT 2**

**Fundamental Notions and Principles**

**UNIT 3**

**Brief History of Western Metaphysics**

**UNIT 4**

**Brief History of Indian Metaphysics**

**Expert Committee**

Prof. Gracious Thomas Director, School of Social Work IGNOU	Dr. Jose Kuruvachira Salesian College & IGNOU Study Centre Dimapur, Nagaland
Prof. Renu Bharadwaj School of Humanities IGNOU	Dr. Sathya Sundar Sethy Dept of Humanities IIT, Chennai.
Prof. George Panthanmackel, Senior Consultant, IGNOU	Dr. Joseph Martis St. Joseph's College Jeppu, Mangalore – 2
Dr. M. R. Nandan Govt. College for Women Mandya - Mysore	Dr. Jaswinder Kaur Dhillon 147, Kabir park Opp. GND University Amristar – 143 002
Dr. Kuruvila Pandikattu Jnana-deepa Vidyapeeth Ramwadi, Pune	Prof. Y.S. Gowramma Principal, College of Fine Arts, Manasagangotri Mysore – 570 001
Dr Babu Joseph CBCI Centre New Delhi	
Prof. Tasadduq Husain Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh	
Dr. Bhuvaneswari Lavanya Flats Gangai Amman Koil St. Thiruvanmiyur Chennai – 600 041	
Dr. Alok Nag Vishwa Jyoti Gurukul Varanasi	

**Block Preparation**

Units 1-4

Prof. George Panthanmackel  
Suvidya College,  
Electronic City, Bangalore.

**Content Editor**

Dr. V. John Peter  
IGNOU, New Delhi.

**Format Editor**

Prof. Gracious Thomas  
IGNOU, New Delhi.

**Programme Coordinator**

Prof. Gracious Thomas  
IGNOU, New Delhi.



---

## BLOCK INTRODUCTION

---

Metaphysics which is the science of being as being, is the most suitable designation of the first philosophy, a concept presumably based on the orthodox tradition from Aristotle and his immediate followers. Metaphysics is a science, since it is a systematic body of knowledge with its own certain and definite starting point that 'there is something' which is indubitably and immediately known. From its immediately known starting point, the procedure of metaphysics is demonstrative with a further reflection on the sensitive-rational experience of the being or 'something' that has both necessary and contingent characteristics which enlarge its scope to include both material and formal objects.

**Unit 1** explains the etymology of the term 'metaphysics' from both the Western and Indian perspective, the classical definition of 'metaphysics' as the science of being as being and the general scope of 'metaphysics' which includes both material and formal objects. Metaphysics as the core and ground of all knowledge and philosophy underlies logic, mathematics, and all other sciences.

**Unit 2** briefly elucidates the fundamental notions and principles of Metaphysics in Western and Indian traditions such as the notion of Being, of action and of self; the principles of truth and affirmation, identity and distinction, non-contradiction and excluded middle, and causality and relation.

**Unit 3** gives a survey of the major developments in Western metaphysics, highlighting the relevant metaphysical reflections in the individual thinkers. In the West, one system grew out of another, as development, or as criticism, or as both. Greek legacy of free thought rooted in the purely rational and human approach to various problems continued in the West up to contemporary times. Every metaphysician in the West developed a somewhat distinct standpoint and system, thereby contributing to the total understanding of reality.

**Unit 4** provides an overview of the main metaphysical trends in Indian traditions, enabling the students to appreciate the metaphysical heritage of India. Indian metaphysics has developed over more than three thousand years expressing a plurality of the ways of understanding Being at various levels and in different contexts; in debates on soul, God, substances, universals, time, change, permanence / impermanence, one and many, etc.

---

## COURSE INTRODUCTION

---

The traditionally it is held that the term 'metaphysics' was coined by Andronicus of Rhodes (C. 70 B.C) for those collected works of Aristotle placed 'after physics' (*ta + meta + ta + phusika*). Equivalent meaning of the term 'metaphysics' in Indian philosophy could be traced to notions like *Brahmodya*, *atmavidya*, *paravidya*, *brahmavidya*, *drshiti*, *adyatmavidya*, and *sidha-darsana*. General Metaphysics or Fundamental Ontology, the core and ground of all knowledge and philosophy, is the science of being as being. Metaphysics is the core and ground of human knowledge as it underlies, penetrates, transforms, and unifies all other departments of knowledge. No knowledge is possible without Being. Being is the core and ground of knowledge itself, and hence of all knowledge. Metaphysics, which is the science of being as being, is implicit in all knowledge. As it is the core of all knowledge, it is also the core and ground of philosophy. In both Western and Indian traditions all philosophical systems have developed their thought pattern on certain metaphysical position.

The metaphysical question is the reflexive articulation of the question about Being which pervades the ground of human existence itself. The transcendental question does not merely place something asked about in question, but also the one questioning and the question itself. Hence, absolutely everything is placed in question. For, human can avoid asking a particular question. The horizon of our questioning is the Unconditioned. The horizon of Being within which we ask the question as question is unlimited.

**Block 1** introduces metaphysics as a science of everything. As knowledge is a primary fact of human life and experience, no knowledge seems to be possible without Being. Knowledge takes place in Being, through Being, and by Being. Here Being appears as the core and ground of knowledge itself, and hence of all knowledge, whether empirical or philosophical. Hence, metaphysics is implicit in all knowledge, in the structure of all judgments, all questions, and all desires which imply the 'affirmative experience of something'.

**Block 2** deals elaborately with the structure of Finite Being, in terms of Being and Essence, Substance and Accidents, Matter and Form, Act and Potency. In the world the finite things and finite persons are distinguished by their unique relationship to Being. Though both things and humans participate in Being according to their essence, the things cannot distinguish Being from its concretization in essence and remain blank for themselves and for other things. Human participation in Being through their essence enables both distinguishing Being from essence and also attaining to Being itself. In other words, the human person is capable of complete reflection on oneself.

**Block 3** describes the relation of Being and Beings metaphysically. '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), which is always the object and subject of knowledge. Clarifying in the beginning about Being and Relation, the block proceeds to principle of causality, analogy and specifically deals with the problem of one and many.

**Block 4** enumerates various notions of Being, such as Categorical notion, Agapeic notion, Transcendental notion and Absolute notion.

---

## 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
- 1.5. Let Us Sum Up
- 1.6. Further Readings and References

---

### 1.0. OBJECTIVES

---

This unit explains to you:

- The etymology of the term ‘metaphysics’ from both the Western and Indian perspective
- The classical definition of ‘metaphysics’ as the science of being as being
- The general scope of ‘metaphysics’ which includes both material and formal objects

---

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

---

Knowledge is a primary fact of human life and experience. There are three elements that constitute knowledge: subject, object, and the act of knowing (cognition). The subject *is* the one who knows; the object *is* the thing that is known; and cognition *is* the mental act which makes this object known to the subject. The subject *is*, the object *is*, and the cognition *is*. In other words, the subject is a being insofar as it is ; the object is a being insofar as it is; and the cognition is a being insofar as it is. They are beings insofar as they *are in Being* which is the Being of beings. No knowledge seems to be possible without Being. Knowledge takes place in Being, through Being, and by Being. Here Being appears as the core and ground of knowledge itself, and hence of all knowledge, whether empirical or philosophical. Hence, metaphysics is implicit in all knowledge, in the structure of all judgments, all questions, and all desires which imply the ‘affirmative experience of something’. Such an affirmative experience of something covers the whole range of actuality and possibility, of what is and what remains to be, of the whole and part, of one and many.

---

### 1.2. ETYMOLOGY OF METAPHYSICS

---

**Western:** The traditional explanation is that the term ‘metaphysics’ was coined by Andronicus of Rhodes (C. 70 B.C) for those collected works of Aristotle placed ‘after physics’ (*ta + meta + ta + phusika*). The term thus had only a methodic value. It was only a coincidence that this section placed after physics, treated of realities *beyond* the physical properties of beings. Hence in the course of time ‘metaphysics’ (*ta+ meta + ta + phusika*) came to mean that department of philosophy which deals with those features of beings that are hyperphysical, super sensible, and immaterial. This seemingly reasonable explanation, though uncritically accepted by most philosophers and historians, appears to be a little far-fetched. For it would have been too much of a coincidence for the concept of metaphysics to be successfully adapted so as to contain the science of transcendent reality. Kant actually declared his suspicion saying that the expression is too felicitous to be regarded as the result of chance. Hans Reimer deserves the highest praise for pointing out the misinterpretation and explaining the real origin of metaphysics. According to Reimer, Eudemus (Aristotle’s immediate disciple, the author of the *History of Theology* and the first editor of the



teacher's works) must have invented the name *ta + meta + ta + phusika*. When Eudemus edited the works, the science - which from a Platonic standpoint Aristotle called the 'first philosophy' - was attached to other relevant treatises, and was given this title. Andronicus followed Eudemus and preferred the same name because he too considered the original name 'first philosophy' to be unsuitable for an educational purpose. Hence, Reimer concludes that we must reject the hypothesis of the accidental bibliographical origin of the term, since it was a deliberate use for educational purposes. The word did not originate from somebody's being at a loss as to what to call a book, but rather is the most suitable designation of the first philosophy, a concept presumably based on the orthodox tradition from Aristotle and his immediate followers.

**Indian:** Though the term 'metaphysics' is of Western origin, there are terms in Indian philosophy that have equivalent meaning of the Western understanding of the same. Perhaps, the oldest term used in the Vedic literature to communicate it is *Brahmodya* (c. 9th century B.C). *Brahmodya* means speculative discussion about *Brahman*. In the Upanishads (800-600 B.C) it came to be denoted by the words *atmavidya* (science or knowledge of the self), *paravidya* (supreme science or transcendental knowledge), and *brahmavidya* (science or knowledge of *Brahman*). In the oldest books of the Buddhist Pali canon, the word *ditthi* (*drshti*) stands for the metaphysical viewpoint. In the *Gita*, metaphysics is *adyatmavidya* (science of the self). The *Gita*, by bringing together the science of the self and dialectic (*vada*), indicates the close connection between the two. The *Vaiseshika Sutra* (1st century A.D) mentions *sidha-darsana* (perfected vision of all existing things arising from merit). Prasastapada (6th century A.D) understands it as the vision of the perfected, and considers it as a kind of perception achieved by enhancing the power of the senses through certain techniques, or by inference, or by intuitive knowledge present in all.

---

### 1.3. DEFINITION OF METAPHYSICS

---

General Metaphysics or Fundamental Ontology, the core and ground of all knowledge and philosophy, is the science of being as being. Metaphysics is the core and ground of human knowledge as it underlies, penetrates, transforms, and unifies all other departments of knowledge.

*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.

*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.

*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.

*It unifies all other departments:* For, other departments respond to particular ranges of questions, whereas metaphysics deals with the original and total question. In this way it moves to the total answer, transforming and putting together all other answers. “Metaphysics, then, is the whole in knowledge but not the whole of knowledge.” A whole is whole with all its parts and dependent on them; but it is not identical with the parts. So, the principles of metaphysics are prior to all other knowledge, and metaphysics presses them together in the unity of a whole.

*Metaphysics as the Core and Ground of Philosophy:* Rene Descartes wrote to Picot who translated the *Principia Philosophiae* into French: ‘Thus the whole of philosophy is like a tree: the roots are metaphysics, the trunk is physics, and the branches that issue from the trunk are all the other sciences....’ In 1949, Martin Heidegger, in his lecture *The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics*, analysed the thought of Descartes and came to the conclusion that the roots should have a ground for their support and nourishment. Such a supporting and nourishing ground of metaphysics is Being itself or ‘Nothing’. Heidegger's brilliant analysis of the Cartesian metaphor ignores the vast difference between the roots of a tree and metaphysics, and between the roots of a tree and the ground in which the roots are. One can easily uproot a tree, separating it from the ground in which it is rooted. In the same way, one cannot separate metaphysics from its so-called ground, ‘Being’ itself. For the roots of metaphysics are identical and inseparable from its ground, since it is the latter which constitutes and distinguishes metaphysics from all other sciences, i.e., Being itself is the formal object of metaphysics. Hence metaphysics is not only the root of philosophy but its ground too.

*Metaphysics as Science:* Human is never permanently satisfied with a superficial knowledge of things. One seeks to penetrate the veil of phenomena and grasp the *noumena*. This is due to Human's insatiable craving for knowledge. The increased knowledge in widely separated fields calls for unification and systematization of the scattered items of knowledge. This is the origin of science. According to its traditional meaning, science is the *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, which is verification through further sensible experiences. 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 acceptation of the term, nor are they



conjectured hypotheses proposed for experimental verification. In fact they are 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. Metaphysics as science, which provides us with sure and evident knowledge of things from their causes, also has its own object, starting point, fundamental notions and principles, method, and justification.

---

#### 1.4. SCOPE OF METAPHYSICS

---

The scope of metaphysics includes both its material and formal objects. Generally, matter (in philosophy) indicates the indeterminate but determinable element, and 'form' the determining element. These relative meanings of 'material' and 'formal' are also found in the theoretical sciences, especially when there are 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 of the various aspects of the object. The material object so considered in a definite aspect is thus called the 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 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. That which is not particular is still *something or in some way*. Hence, *Being is that which is in some way*.

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 and is 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, 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 again adds the aspects which were left behind through abstraction to the central characteristic of a being. 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, or 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 the 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.

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 also include 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 content. Being transcends every genus and all differences: it contains in an eminent way not only the highest abstract concepts or genera 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 yet does not 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 / explicit rendering of the notion of Being. Thus 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 absolute 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*'. The function of the starting point of metaphysics is to supply the basic data concerning the object of metaphysics, i.e., science of being as being (which is also analogous).

The scope of metaphysics also includes its starting point. 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 *anthropological and cultural sciences* have a broader starting point. It is constituted not only by sense experience but also by man's intellectual reflection upon himself. The *mathematical sciences* have their starting point in number, line, surface, or body. The starting point of *philosophical sciences* is intellectual reflection on the general data of experience, with respect to the being of man and things outside man. *The theological sciences* have the data of revelation as their starting point.

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. We can already identify some significant views on the starting point of metaphysics among the metaphysicians. Some of them are the following:

***Judgment as the Starting Point of Metaphysics (Advocated by Joseph Marechal)***

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*. *Judgment* 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? This question is raised on the basis of a series of previously accepted suppositions. For instance, if the question refers to the 'what' or 'how' of a person or a thing, it presupposes that they *are*. If it is concerned with the actual occurrence of a particular event, it assumes a framework of successive events. If it aims at essential relationships, e.g., between certain numbers, it assumes that a world of numbers is possible. All such presuppositions when put into the form of questions again, allow more profound assumptions to reveal themselves. Ultimately, they all point to one and the same most fundamental presupposition which excludes all other suppositions: *something* (no matter what) *is* (no matter how).

Judgments are of two kinds: Direct judgment (immediate judgment) and indirect judgment (mediate judgment). *Direct judgment* is an act of the intellect in which we say something of an object, empirically or transcendently. *Empirical direct judgement* is an act of the intellect in which we say something of an object as presented to our senses, e.g., this is a pen. *Transcendental direct judgment* is an act of the intellect in which we say something of 'something' which is directly and immediately but implicitly present in all human experiences, e.g., 'this is something'. *Indirect or mediate judgment* is an act of the intellect in which we say something of an object derivatively, e.g., 'all men are mortal'. Every judgement also has two aspects: concrete synthesis and affirmative synthesis (objective synthesis). *Concrete synthesis* is a synthesis which joins a predicate of itself universal with an individual subject, and thus restricts the concept to this individual alone, e.g., *this is a pen*. *Objective synthesis* (affirmative synthesis) is the position of correspondence between ourselves, as possessing the complex totality of sensible and intelligible signs, and the thing which is represented or signified by them, e.g., *this is a pen*. *Objection*: Every judgement presupposes at least an implicit awareness of the one who judges. Notion of self is a priori to judgement itself. Hence judgement cannot be that which comes first before everything else, and from which we begin.

***Question as the Starting Point of Metaphysics (Advocated by Martin Heidegger, Karl Rahner, Emerich Coreth, Otto Muck)***

'Human Questions': Question is something final and irreducible. Every attempt to question the question is itself another question. This question is a metaphysical question. The metaphysical question is the reflexive articulation of the question about Being, which pervades the ground of human existence itself. In this way, it is the transcendental question which does not merely place something asked about in question, but also the one questioning and his question itself. It is the starting point of metaphysics. 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 was itself improper or meaningless, then questioning the meaninglessness of the question concerning the starting point of metaphysics would be another question. *Objection*: No one can raise a question about something of which one does not know anything at all, as question is the quest for the unknown from the known. Every question presupposes some knowledge of the questioned, and at least some ignorance of it. Knowledge and ignorance imply affirmation and negation (denial) which are the characteristics of



judgement. Hence question cannot be that which comes first before everything else, and from which we begin.

***Pure Desire to Know as the Starting Point of Metaphysics (Advocated by Bernard Lonergan)***

*Being* is the objective of the pure desire to know. The *Desire to know* is the dynamic orientation manifested in question for intelligence and for reflection. It is the inquiring and critical spirit of man. It moves man to reflect, to seek the unconditioned. It prevents him from being content with untested theories and legends. By raising questions for intelligence and reflection, it excludes complacent inertia. For, if the question goes unanswered, man cannot be complacent; and if the answers are right, man is not inert. The *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. *Objection:* The objective of the pure desire to know is Being. Being is the motivating force of the desire. The pure desire already presupposes Being, which is known and remains to be known. Hence the pure desire to know cannot be that which comes first before everything else, and from which we begin.

***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. Experience means a special form of knowledge derived from the immediate reception of the given or of the impression in contrast to discursive thought, mere concepts, authoritatively accepted opinions, or historical tradition. When experience presents itself, it is a special kind of supreme certitude of irrefutable evidence. It is concerned with facts. It tends to experiential evidence. It can never reach apodictic evidence. For it does not know whether or not its opposite is wholly unthinkable because of its absolute impossibility. Nevertheless, in its own way it can reach indubitableness, i.e., if it is affirmed in its very negation. It does not mean that the content of the act denying such an experience implies the affirmation, but that the very exercise of this act implies it. Experiences which in this way are inevitable and undeniable may nonetheless be said to be apodictic to a certain extent; for they are present as soon as one is there, experiencing and observing. They may be called *primordial experience*. Their apodicticity is based only on one’s experience of one’s Being and of whatever is given together with one’s *being* as one experiences it. To deny such experience is not the same as to negate the unqualified Something or Being, but to negate the ‘being’ of the negating ‘I’.

Hence it is certain that everyone has this 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 thus: ‘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 other forms too.

In other words, the experience of 'something' constitutes the cognitive ground of the absolutely necessary, which presents itself as the foundation or the 'why' of the facts, as the condition of their possibility, their reality, and their hypothetical necessity. However, the fact which is experienced is not *in itself* the ontological ground of the absolutely necessary; for the necessary is necessary even in the hypothesis. Only the insight that the necessary is independent of the facts is a metaphysical insight; for it arrives at truths which are true of necessity, even if the world of experience would not exist or would be entirely different. Thus we may speak in a twofold way of the starting point of metaphysics: First of all, insofar as the pursuit of metaphysics is concerned, the starting point lies in the undeniable but necessary affirmation of *Something* or *Being* of the experienced real being that I am and that of the other real beings, if there are any, with whom I find myself together. This necessity is only hypothetical, for it is based on my own experience. It consists in the undeniability of whatever is implied in the act by which I experience that I am. Secondly, the starting point lies in the absolute, essential necessity of 'something' or *being* as *being* which reveals itself to some extent, but only imperfectly and inadequately, in the reality of my *being*. This necessity consists in the undeniable absolute identity of *Being* with *beings* while *Being is in beings*. This most undeniable fact of Being with beings while Being is in beings, is the starting-point of all other fundamental notions and principles.

### Check Your Progress

**Note:** Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Explain the etymology of metaphysics and define it.

-----  
 -----  
 -----

2) What is the scope of metaphysics?

-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----

### 1.5. LET US SUM UP

No knowledge is possible without Being. Being is the core and ground of knowledge itself, and hence of all knowledge. Metaphysics, which is the science of being as being, is implicit in all knowledge. The term 'metaphysics' was coined by Andronicus of Rhodes for the work of Aristotle

that was placed after physics. However, the word probably did not originate from somebody's being at a loss as to what to call a book, but rather is the most suitable designation of the first philosophy, a concept presumably based on the orthodox tradition from Aristotle and his immediate followers. Though the term 'metaphysics' is of Western origin, the terms such as *Brahmodya*, *atmavidya*, *paravidya*, *brahmavidya*, *drshiti*, *adyatmavidya*, and *sidha-darsana* used in Indian philosophy can also communicate the same meaning. These terms imply in some way the meaning of metaphysics as the core and ground of all knowledge, or as the science of being as being. Metaphysics is the core and ground of human knowledge as it underlies, penetrates, transforms, and unifies all other departments of knowledge. As it is the core of all knowledge, it is also the core and ground of philosophy. Metaphysics is also a science, since it is a systematic body of knowledge with its own certain and definite starting point that 'there is something' which is indubitably and 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' that has both necessary and contingent characteristics which enlarge its scope to include both material and formal objects.

---

#### 1.6. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

---

- Ando, Takatura. *Metaphysics: A Critical Survey of its Meaning*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963.
- Bittle, Celestine. *The Domain of Being*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1950.
- Kaufmann, Walter. *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*. New York: Meridian Books, 1957.
- Koren, Henry J. *An Introduction to the Science of Metaphysics*. London: Herder Book Co., 1960.
- Loneragan, Bernard. *Insight*. New York: Longmans, 1965.
- Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives*. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1999.
- Renard, Henry. *The Philosophy of Being*. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1953.
- Van Laer, P. Henry and Koran, Henry J. *Philosophy of Science*. Louvain: Duquesne University, 1956.

---

## UNIT 2                      FUNDAMENTAL NOTIONS AND PRINCIPLES

---

### Contents

- 2.0. Objectives
- 2.1. Introduction
- 2.2. Fundamental Notions and Principles (Western)
- 2.3. Fundamental Notions and Principles (Indian)
- 2.4. Let Us Sum Up
- 2.5. Further Readings and References

---

### 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 fundamental notions and principles. Metaphysics, as a science, has also its own fundamental notions and principles. In this unit you are expected to understand:

- The most fundamental notions and principles (Western)
- The most fundamental principles (Indian)

---

### 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 principles that can serve as the foundation stones. In other words, the function of the fundamental notions and principles is to supply the basic premises necessary for further development of a science.

---

### 2.2. FUNDAMENTAL NOTIONS AND PRINCIPLES (WESTERN)

---

*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; and 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:* It is 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, 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 wake up 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.

**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’, and ‘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, and under the same conditions. For instance, the statement, 'it is possible for rain to fall and not to fall' could be true 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 the quality of all-embracing, so also the principle of non-contradiction implies the principle of identity as prior 'in itself'.

**The Principle of the 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. Principle of Relation:* Relation comes from the Latin word, *referre* which means bring back, the reference of one thing to another, and 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).

---

## 2.3. FUNDAMENTAL NOTIONS AND PRINCIPLES (INDIAN)

---

**PRINCIPLE OF TRUTH (SATYA):** *Satya* etymologically means something enduring. It is unchangeable, indestructible, eternal, and immutable. In this sense, only *Brahman* is *satya*. The principle of truth states that '*there is truth*' and '*truth is triumphant*'. It is self-evident that truth exists; for even denying it would admit it. Truth is also triumphant (*satyamev jayathe*). It means that truth is always victorious. For even if someone claims that one has defeated truth, one must imply that 'it is true that I have defeated truth'. Sankara recognizes three levels of *satta* or truth: *pratibhasika*, *vyavaharika*, and *paramarthika*. *Pratibhasika satta* appears momentarily in illusion and dreams. It is contradicted by normal waking experiences. The momentary appearance of a rope as a snake and mirage as water, is *pratibhasika*. *Vyavaharika satta* includes objects of normal waking experiences, the particular and changing objects, which form the basis of our practical life. *Paramarthika satta* is the pure existence which reveals itself through all experience. It is neither contradicted nor contradictable. It is attributable only to *Brahman*. The Madhyamika philosophers recognize two kinds of truth: *samvrti* (empirical) and *paramartha* (transcendental). The former is relative and the latter is absolute.

**Theories of Truth: The Alambana / Pratibhasa Theory:** *Alambana* means 'foundation' or 'support' or 'objective ground' of a perceptual sensory experience. The Buddhists name it as *pratyaya* (causal condition) on which the arising of a state of perceptual consciousness depends. For example, a visual perception depends upon the visible (*rupa*). My perception of red-colour depends upon red-colour as its *alambana*. As long as there is an appearance (*pratibhasa*), it must be rooted in an *alambana*. In fact *alambana* is *pratibhasa*.

**The Pramana Theory:** The *pramana* theory seeks to ground human knowledge in a mode of experience that is immune to failures such as error, illusion, and hallucination. From this point it is argued that what appears in every state of our consciousness is mind-dependent or internal to consciousness itself. The so-called external world is only a creation of the mind. The stuff of the world is made of consciousness alone. What is emphasized is the essential dependence of what 'appears' in a state of consciousness upon that consciousness itself. The world around us is the world within us.

**The Universal Veridical Theory:** According to this theory, advocated by Prabhakara *mimamsaka*, all perceptions are veridical. It is an error to think that there could be an error. The so-called perceptual error is a fusion or confusion of two different and distinguishable cognitive states. In the usual mirage-illusions, the appearance of water actually belongs to the memory-

state, while the appearance of 'this' or 'there it is' belongs to the perceptual state. The water-appearance in memory is rooted eventually in the actual water experienced.

**The *Paramanuvada*:** In Buddhism, especially according to Buddhist atomism, the atoms are something like the data of sensory perceptual consciousness. If it is the datum of eye-consciousness based upon visual perception, it is given the name *rupa* (the visible). Similarly, the data of other sense-experiences are identified: smell, taste, touch, and sound. The material object is a fictional construction out of these sensory 'atomistic' data. The data are 'substantially real', whereas the material objects, such as the pot or table, are imagined to be real. This system is basically phenomenalistic in the sense that the basic units (these atoms) are phenomenal elements rather than physical elements. The atoms are not the material atoms of the Vaisheshikas.

**The *Arthakriya-samvada* (theory of the function of the object):** The *Sautrantika* develops this concept, in order to distinguish the veridical perception from the non-veridical ones, as in the case of the perception of a gem on the floor: Well, perceiving a gem on the floor, I may rush to pick it up, but if it is a false perception (illusion), I will never be able to pick it up. In one case there is accord with the 'function of the object' (*arthakriya*), in another there is discord; thus non-veridical perception is distinguished from the veridical one. But the *Yogacara* is unimpressed by such a 'pragmatic' theory of truth. For him it begs the question. It is like the Johnsonian way of proving that a stone exists by kicking it.

**The *Yogacara* Theory:** The *Yogacara* assimilates the concept of *arthakriya* into its own system. For if the concept is coherent (or the potentiality to be so) with the expected behaviour pattern that invariably follows the cognitive state, then it is possible for veridical perception to meet this requirement even if it is not assumed that the object is external to consciousness. This is also the *Yogacara* criterion of distinguishing a veridical perception from a non-veridical one; the former has *arthakriya*, while the latter does not. The difference between a true perception of a gem and a perceptual illusion of it is like the difference between a real gem and a fake one. One can trade only the real gem for money, and not the fake one. The difference is due to the causal history of the origin of the real gem and the fake one. In the same way, the difference between the causal history of a veridical perception and that of a non-veridical one accounts for the differences in what follows in either case, i.e., there is coherence with the expected behaviour pattern in one case and the lack of it in the other. If the real gem and the fake one agree in all conceivable patterns of behaviour, then there is little point in calling one real and the other fake, unless one is already prejudiced with the idea that one of them is certainly real and the other is not. In other words, one disqualifies oneself to judge the real from the unreal since one is already prejudiced. If, however, one is already familiar with the causal history of both which determined the issue, then the issue is already resolved, and one does not need a further arbiter of truth

**Principle of Causality (*karana*):** The principle of causality means that every event has a cause; whatever happens is made to happen by a cause. This is the view of all the systems of Indian philosophy. According to all orthodox systems, the belief in causation is almost a human instinct. But there are different views among the different systems. These views are upheld by the following important theories of causation which figure prominently in Indian philosophy, viz., (1) the theory of unreal or apparent production of the *Advaita-Vedanta* (*vivartavada*); (3) the theory of dependent origination (*pratitya samutpatvada*) of the Buddhists; and (4) the theory



of emergent production (*arambhavada*) or the theory of non-existence of effect in 'cause' (*asatkaryavada*) of the *Nyaya-Vaisesika*. *Satkaryavada* or *parinamavada* means that the effect is only an explicit manifestation of what was implicit and latent in the cause. *Asatkaryavada* or *arambhavada* holds the view that the effect is a new creation without any prior existence in the cause. The effect is a new beginning, an *aramba*. According to *vivartavada*, the effect is only an appearance of the cause.

**Samkhya Theory of Parinamavada:** The *Samkhya* view is found in the famous words of the *Gita* (2.16): "There can be no existence of the non-existent and no non-existence of the existent." According to this view, an effect is not a new entity; an effect is already contained in its cause in an unmanifested state, and the production of an effect merely means its manifestation. Since an effect exists in its cause in an unmanifested state even before its appearance, it is considered to be ever-existent (*sat*), and hence the *Samkhya* theory of causation is called *Satkaryavada* (the theory of ever-existent effect). As the manifestation of an effect is brought about by a change in the cause, which is conceived as a real change, it is called *parinamavada* or *vikarvada*, i.e., theory of transformation or evolution from the cause. However, there is an abiding substance which runs through the causal series. For example, when a gold vessel is broken and changed into a different form, the change occurs only in the arrangement of gold but not in the substance, i.e., gold. Production means the modification of the form of the cause. The fundamental stuff which runs through the causal series is neither produced nor destroyed as it is eternal. Thus, the *dharmin* (*dravya*) does not change; only the *dharmas* (*bhavas*) change. The two are in fact identical. If it were not so, anything could arise out of anything. In that case, it would be impossible to make any selection of a particular material for the production of a particular effect. From these considerations, one can conclude that all the effects have a previous existence in potential forms. The world-process does not bring into existence anything new, as it is a process of transformation of the potential (*avyakta*) effects into actual (*vyakta*) effects. The whole world, except the individual soul, is the modification of the primordial matter, the '*prakrti*'.

**Vedanta Theory of Vivartavada:** According to this theory, the essence of an effect is identical with the essence of its cause. The difference between cause and effect consists in the difference between the two forms of the identical stuff. In a causal process, the form of a cause is changed into a new form without involving any change in the essence of the causal stuff. Now, unless there is change in the essence of the causal stuff, there cannot be any real change even in the form of that stuff itself. The Advaitins, therefore, hold that what is considered as the real modification of the causal stuff is only an appearance. The manifold world of different forms and names is not the result or the real modification of *Brahman*, the abiding eternal substance, but only an appearance generated by the beginningless '*avidya*'. Thus, the '*parinamavada*' of *Samkhya* logically leads to the *vivartavada* of Sankara, according to which there is no real production of the effect.

**Buddhist Theory of Pratityasamutpatvada (dependent origination):** According to this view, a cause is completely annihilated without leaving anything behind it, and the effect arises after the annihilation of the cause. The relation between cause and effect is one of antecedent to a consequent. In the objectively real world the occurrence of one moment means the death of the preceding moment. The empirical world is governed by the causal principle: '*Asmin sati idam bhavati*' (this being that arises) and '*asmin asati idam na bhavati*' (this not being that does not

arise). It means that the effect arises depending on the cause, and if cause ceases the effect also ceases. Causation is thus simply dependent arising. A certain kind of effect invariably comes into existence following upon or as the result of the existence of a certain set of relevant causal conditions.

**Nyaya-Vaisesika theory of Asatkaryavada or Arambhavada:** The basic principle of the Nyaya-Vaisesika metaphysics is the theory of *dharma-dharmibheda*, i.e., the differentiation is essence between the substrate and their properties. There is an absolute difference between a cause and its effect. A cloth, in order to be real, must have an essence different from that of the threads. From the existent (cause) comes into being an effect which was non-existent before. Cause, defined by Udayana, is an invariable antecedent of an effect which is unconditional or necessary. If an unconditional antecedent, which is always present when an effect is present and absent when an effect is absent, were not regarded as its cause, then the effect would be uncaused. Hence, the first essential characteristic of a cause is its antecedence to the effect (*purvavratti*). The second is its invariability; it must invariably precede the effect (*niyatapurvavratti*). The third is its unconditionality; it must unconditionally or necessarily precede the effect (*ananyathasiddha*). Unconditional antecedence is immediate and direct antecedence. There is no destruction of the cause prior to the emergence of the effect. The cause continues to exist even after its effect is produced. An effect is never produced out of its cause. The cause is a substance which does not transmit its essence to the effect. Though the effect has nothing in common with the cause, yet the former can reside only in the latter. The effect arises in the cause and resides only in the latter. The effect arises in the cause and resides therein by the relation of inherence (*samavaya*) which itself is an entity. Thus, while it relates the effect to the cause, it also serves as a wedge and does not let the one merge into the other.

**Principle of Knowledge (Jnana):** According to this principle the experience of human knowledge is an undeniable fact. I know that I know. If I do not know that I know, then I must at least admit that I know that I do not know. In any case, I must admit that I know at least something.

**Principle of Meaning (Sphota):** For this principle every letter, word, or sentence is a single meaningful, eternal, and formal symbol called *sphota*. The articulated sounds are merely means by which this single meaningful, eternal, and formal symbol is revealed. The term '*sphota*' is derived from the root '*sphut*' which means 'to burst forth', and thus it is defined as one from which meaning bursts forth. The theory of *sphota* (*sphotavada*) was developed and systematized by Bhartrhari in his work *Vakyapadiya*.

**Principle of Negation (Abhava):** Thought starts with negation or negative judgment in actual life. If life runs unobstructed, there would be no thought and philosophy. When there is obstruction, either thought must arise or life must become extinct. But life resists extinction, and hence thought is produced.

**Principle of Assertion or Affirmation (Pratipada):** Principle of Assertion or Affirmation states that every refutation and negation implies some kind of assertion or affirmation on which negation rests. For, pure negation cannot be the final end or the ultimate limit. Negation must always have some locus or basis to stand on. It can never be *in itself*. When we negate some kind



of being, we always have some other kind in hand. If we negate every determinate content or object, we cannot thereby claim to have negated the objectivity as such. Even if everything is claimed to be negated, how can the negating subject itself be negated? One may claim to negate even this subject. But that would mean a further retreat to that form of consciousness which is aware of the negated subject. No amount of negation can dethrone Being from its position and secure the place of the latter for itself. Hence it is not the non-being which is the limit, but the ever unnegated and unnegatable Being which is the limit, the absolute ground, the affirmation and presupposition of all, on which negation rests.

**Principle of identity (*tattvamsi*):** It does not mean the identity of a thing with itself but the identity of the individual self with *Brahman*.

**Principle of distinction (*bheda*):** Three types of distinctions are made by the Vedantins: *Heterogeneous Distinction (vijatiya bheda)* by which one being is distinct from beings of other groups, e.g., a cow is distinct from a horse. *Homogeneous Distinction (sajatiya bheda)* by which a being is distinct from other members of its own group, e.g., one cow is distinct from another cow. *Internal Distinction (svagata bheda)* by which one part of being is distinct from its other parts, e.g., the distinction between the tail and leg of the same cow. Ramanuja denies heterogeneous and homogeneous distinctions in God, but maintains internal distinction in Him with conscious and unconscious substances.

**Principle of contradiction (*virudha*):** The principle states that a certain doctrine having been accepted, the probans contradictory to it is contradictory. Contradictory probans is that which is contradictory to that which has been admitted. The definition means 'that which contradicts or sets aside an admitted fact, and that which is contradicted or set aside by an admitted fact'. Contradiction is taken to hold in all those cases where two or more sentences cannot be true together. 'This table is red' and 'this table is not red' cannot both be true at the same time. These sentences are regarded as contradictory not because red and not-red are opposed to each other, but because these two sentences are used with regard to the same object under the same respect.

**Principle of exclusion (*apoha*):** A word expresses its meaning by excluding all its opposites. For example, the word 'elephant' excludes all beings that are not elephants.

**Principle of fullness (*purnam*):** The principle of fullness states that fullness comes from fullness. Fullness minus fullness equals fullness (*Isa Up-Invocation*)

Aum

That is fullness

This is fullness

From the fullness, the fullness has come out. When this fullness is taken from that fullness, what remains is fullness.

Aum, peace, peace

**Principle of order (*rta*):** This principle enunciates the fact that we have an ordered universe by *rta*. *Rta* literally means 'the course of things'. It is the immanent law of things. The whole universe is founded on *rta* and moves in it. It is the inviolable moral order of the world.

**Principle of presumption (*arthapatti*):** It consists in the assumption of some unperceived fact in order to explain apparently inconsistent facts. For example, from the facts of 'John is alive' and 'he is not present in his house', we presume that he is elsewhere.

**Principle of momentariness (*kshanika*):** Everything changes from moment to moment. Existence in the world is continuous birth, decay, and death. The world is in constant flow, and the objects of the world are subject to change and decay. All things change. There is nothing human or divine that is permanent (*sarvam kshanikam*).

**Principle of indescribability (*sunya*):** The word '*sunya*' ordinarily means void or empty. According to Madhyansikar, *sunya* means indescribability (*avachya* or *anabhlabya*) as it goes beyond the powers of the intellect. It transcends all the four well-known categories of the intellect: *asti* (existence), *nasti* (non-existence), *ubahya* (both) and *nabhaya* (neither). It also means that there is a transcendental reality about which nothing positive or negative can be asserted.

**Principle of creative-power (*maya*):** It is the real power-principle by which the world is created. It makes the indeterminate *Brahman* determinate. It is the principle of determination of *Brahman*. It is different from *avidya* or ignorance by which an individual identifies oneself wrongly with the evolutes of *prakriti* – body, senses, mind, etc.

**Principle of indeterminate and determinate (*nirvikalpaka evam savikalpaka*):** Ordinary perception is of two kinds: *nirvikalpaka* and *savikalpaka*. The perceptual knowledge immediately resulting from sense-object contact is of the nature of mere acquaintance (*alochana*) with the object, and is called indeterminate perception (*nirvikalpaka*). Immediately after arises the determinate perception of the object (*savikalpaka*). Indeterminate perception is a simple apprehension in which one has a mere experience of 'something'. It is a judgment without words. Determinate perception is the predicative knowledge of an object in which the knowledge gained by the indeterminate is analyzed into universal and particular, and the two are related by way of predication. The relation of subject and object is involved in a determinate perception.

**Principle of liberation (*moksha*):** Thinking results in attachment. Attachment results in desire. Desire results in anger. Anger results in delusion. Delusion results in confusion. Confusion results in loss of discrimination, which enslaves one. Hence, all beings are oriented towards liberation. That being is liberated which realizes itself to be *Brahman*, detached from all things, when one has the experience of being identified with *Brahman*: *Aham Brahm asmi*.

### Check Your Progress

**Note:** Use the space provided for your answers.

- 1) Explain briefly the fundamental principles from Western perspectives.

-----  
-----

2) Describe the fundamental principles from Indian perspectives in your own words.

---

## 2. 4. LET US SUM UP

---

We have just reflected on the most important fundamental notions and principles. The most important notions are the notion of Being, notion of action, and notion of self. Notion is a 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, identity and distinction, non-contradiction and excluded middle, and causality and relation. These different fundamental notions and principles, looked at from both the Western and India perspectives, are all complementary and not contradictory.

---

## 2.5. 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.

Goel, Aruna. *Indian Philosophy*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Ltd., 1984.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Tr. John Macquarrie. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988.

Jha, Ganganatha *The Nyaya-sutras of Gautama*, Vol.1 Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 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.

Matilal, Bimal Krishna *Perception: An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.

Pandeya, Ramachandra *Indian Studies in Philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1977.

Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives*. Bangalore: ATC, 1999.

Peters, John A. *Metaphysics*. Louvain: Duquesne University Press, 1963.

Raju, P. T. *Introduction to Comparative Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas Publishers, 1992).

Singh, B.N. *Dictionary of Indian Philosophical Concepts*. Varanasi: Asha Prakashan, 1991.

Upadhyaya, K.N. "Indian Tradition and Negation" *Philosophy East and West* Vol.38.No.3 (July,1988).





### **Parmenides (C. 550 B.C.E.)**

Parmenides, the metaphysician of the Eleatic school, challenges Heraclitus' teaching that everything changes, that fire becomes water, and water earth, and earth fire, that things first are and then are not. How can a thing both be and not be? How can anyone think such a contradiction? To say that it can, is to say that something is and something is not. Or if Being has *become*, it must either have come from non-Being or from Being. If from non-Being, it has come from nothing, which is impossible; if from Being, then it has come from itself and is identical with itself, and thus has always been. Then, it is evident that from Being only being can come; that whatever is, always has been and always will be; that everything remains what it is. Hence, there can be only one eternal, unchangeable Being. All change is inconceivable and the world of sense is an illusion. These diametrically opposed views of Heraclitus and Parmenides find a sort of reconciliation in Plato for whom particulars may come and go, but the Idea or Form goes on forever. Humans may come and go, but the human-type is eternal.

### **Plato (428-348)**

The idea or form comprehends or holds together the essential qualities common to many particulars. The essence of things consists in their universal forms. The ideas or forms are not mere thoughts in the minds of humans or even in the mind of God (the divine thought is itself directed toward them). Plato conceives them as existing in and for themselves, possessing substantiality, i.e., they are substances, real or substantial forms, the original, eternal transcendent archetypes of things, existing prior to things and apart from them, and thus uninfluenced by the changes to which they are subject. The particular objects of perception are imperfect copies or reflections of the eternal patterns. Particulars may come and go, but the idea or form goes on forever. Humans may come and go, but the human-type is eternal. The human mind is meant for the world of Ideas, and it transcends sense reality towards the supersensible. For Aristotle, metaphysics is not only the science of the supersensible but of the sensible too, insofar as the sensible *is*.

### **Aristotle (384-322)**

Aristotle himself never called 'metaphysics' by that name, which was conferred by later thinkers. Aristotle called metaphysics by at least three different names: *sophia*, *protei philosophia*, and *theologikei* (*wisdom*, *first philosophy*, and *theology*). Nonetheless, the subsequent use of the title *Metaphysics* makes it reasonable to suppose that what we call metaphysics is substantially the sort of thing done in that treatise. *Sophia* is explained as the knowledge concerning most noble things. It is a kind of theoretical knowledge of necessary and eternal being, both intuitive and inferential. At the beginning of his *Metaphysics*, there is a discussion about the kinds and stages of knowledge: Human knowledge originates from sensation and develops gradually into memory, experience, and art. In this development *sophia* is the highest scientific knowledge and deals with the principles or causes of things. A person who is called *sophos* possesses the following characteristics: *sophos* knows everything (though not in detail); the most difficult things, what is most exact, what best explains how things happen, things for their own sake, and for what end everything is done. Also, the objects of *sophia* are principles and causes. The good and the end are its special form. It is knowledge for its own sake without any utilitarian interest. It is knowledge suitable for those who live free and independent lives. Such knowledge is more suitable for the gods than for humankind. It is divine on account of two reasons: first, God is the cause of everything and is the first principle with which this science is concerned; second, either God alone or God above all



can have such knowledge, i.e., God is both object and subject of *sophia*. *Sophia*, just mentioned above, means philosophy proper rather than science in general. The already enumerated characteristics seem to be common to all philosophical sciences. However, from the last mentioned divine character of its object and subject, *sophia* is limited to the first philosophy. For him, metaphysics is the First Philosophy that deals with the Unmoved Mover. The Unmoved Mover is the first being or first substance. As the Unmoved Mover is the first, the philosophy which deals with this kind of being is the First Philosophy. Since the first being is God, who is studied in the first philosophy, it is also called theology. In other words, according to Aristotle, metaphysics is the first philosophy and the science of being as being. It is the science of substance, especially of the first substance, of the First Cause, which is immovable, eternal, independent, and without matter, i.e., God. Thus, first philosophy or ontology is at the same time theology. The object of metaphysics is all beings – visible and invisible. It investigates all beings in so far as they are beings – the totality of beings, and all particular domains of beings. The Aristotelian numbering of God among the items it characterizes is overcome by Augustine, who gives God the first place in his metaphysics.

#### **Augustine (353-430)**

Dominant in Augustine's thinking is the Neoplatonic conception of the absoluteness and majesty of God, and the insignificance of His creatures. God is an eternal and transcendent being, all-powerful, all-good, all-wise, absolute unity, absolute intelligence, absolute will, and thus absolute spirit. He is absolutely free and holy, and cannot will evil. In Him, willing and doing are one: what He wills is done without any intermediary. His intelligence includes all ideas or forms of things. God created the world out of nothing. His creation is a continuous creation (*creatio continua*) as it is absolutely and continuously dependent on him. The God-centred metaphysics of Augustine, turning metaphysics into theology, becomes a God-oriented metaphysics in St Thomas Aquinas for whom every being *is* analogous.

#### **Aquinas (1225-1274)**

In the introduction to his *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, he sums up three aspects of metaphysics: Metaphysics is *the science of God* or theology, insofar as it considers God and other supersensible beings, or the pure spirits. It is metaphysics insofar as it investigates beings alone, and all that belongs to being as being. It is *first philosophy* insofar as it looks for the first causes of all things. Aquinas insisted that the immediate object of metaphysics is *being as being*, unlike Francis Bacon for whom metaphysics is neither the study of being as being nor a contemplation of unmoving final causes, but a study of the most general principles or laws or forms of the material world undertaken in view of a practical end.

#### **Francis Bacon (1561-1626)**

According to Bacon, the divisions of philosophy are like the branches of a tree which are united in a common trunk. This common trunk of philosophy is 'one universal science', known as 'first philosophy', which comprises fundamental axioms and notions like 'possible' and 'impossible', 'being' and 'non-being', etc. Metaphysics, as part of natural philosophy, must be distinguished from both first philosophy and natural theology. Physics treats of efficient and material causes, metaphysics of formal and final causes. As a result, metaphysics turned into a formal discipline of

laws or principles. Such a metaphysics becomes a system of pure conceptual knowledge without any trace of empirical influence in Christian Wolff.

### **Christian Wolff (1679-1754)**

He equated metaphysics with *theoretical philosophy*. He distinguished between *general metaphysics* and *special metaphysics*. The former, also called *ontology*, is the basic philosophical discipline which investigates being as being. In Wolff, being is no longer a universal principle, but only an abstract general concept. Some of Wolff's followers held that the object of metaphysics is being in general or immaterial beings. Others considered metaphysics as the science of the first principles of our knowledge, from which we derive the principles of all other sciences. To this latter group belonged Immanuel Kant's teacher Martin Knutzen, and also Alexander Baumgarten whose textbook Kant used for many years in his teaching of metaphysics. If we take into account the fact that Kant's criticism of metaphysics is directed against Baumgarten's rationalistic metaphysics, we can avoid the error of taking Kant's critique to be the absolute denial of metaphysics.

### **Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)**

Metaphysics, for him, is the enquiry into God's existence and nature, human freedom and immortality. *Method of enquiry* is rationalistic or critical enquiry into the faculty of reason. Metaphysics expresses a rational need—a natural disposition of the human mind. It also aims at extending our knowledge of reality to the questions such as, existence of God, freedom of human, and immortality of soul. But if a science of metaphysics is ever to exist it must consist of synthetic a priori propositions. So Kant's first question about metaphysics is, 'how is metaphysics as natural disposition possible?' Kant's second question and the more important one is 'how is metaphysics as science possible?' It does not yet exist as science, hence the question also implies *whether* it is possible as science. The answer to both questions is given by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant's question: 'How is metaphysics as science possible?' leads to the question of the possibility of universal and necessary knowledge. In struggling with this question Kant went beyond both rationalism and empiricism. According to Kant, knowledge is to be understood from the previous conditions of its possibility. Thus we must turn our attention away from the object to the *apriori* conditions of our knowledge of it. This is the turn to the *transcendental method*. For Kant it meant the passage from the conditioned to the unconditioned, from the object of experience to the subject of pure reason which determines this object. Thus metaphysics turns into transcendental philosophy. Kant, without being explicitly conscious of it, demonstrated that metaphysics is impossible without a return to Being. Secondly, he brought about the *transcendental turn* of philosophical thinking. This transcendental thinking began to take shape in Fichte for whom knowledge is no more a passive state of reason affected by the thing in itself, but the self-determination of the ego which sets up the non-ego only for its performance of practical conduct.

### **Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814)**

German idealism, after Kant, ridiculed metaphysics. Metaphysics was equated with dogmatic metaphysics which was considered to be an uncritical reflection of the thing in itself and in this way it was contrasted with the transcendental philosophy of critical idealism. As an example for the transcendental philosophy of critical idealism, Fichte introduced the *Wissenschaftslehre* (the doctrine of science) as a basic science whose content is the pure knowledge of the reason serving as the foundation of all the sciences providing them with their basic principles. Although Fichte's early philosophy was subjective idealism in its purest form, his thought soon proceeded beyond it, when

he realised that thinking presupposes Being: an Absolute Being as condition of finite reason. Thus once again he was close to the idea of metaphysics in the traditional sense further established by Schelling in his view of the self-identity of spirit and nature in place of the supremacy of practical reason and ego of Fichte.

### **Friedrich Von Schelling (1775-1854)**

Schelling advanced beyond Fichte. For Schelling, the Ego transcends itself and becomes aware of the Absolute which lies before any duality of objective and subjective, of real and ideal, and thus moved towards objective idealism. He distinguished between negative and positive philosophy, which are the aspects of the transcendental philosophy (in this sense transcendental philosophy is metaphysics for Schelling). *Negative philosophy* stood for pure *apriori* science of reason whose validity is only relative. *Positive philosophy* advances towards a doctrine of Being, which comprises also a doctrine of God in which it has its foundation. Schelling has thus restored its former unity to metaphysics. However, the metaphysics of Schelling was devoid of systematic coherence, which was left to Hegel to achieve.

### **Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)**

For Hegel, Being is indeterminate. That which is indeterminate is that which is not determinate. That which is not determinate is that which is not. That which is not is non-being. Hence non-being is at the 'heart' of Being. Hence there is a dialectic (thesis and antithesis) at the 'heart' or core of Being itself. Being itself or Pure Being is of all notions the most abstract, the most universal, hence the most empty of contents. It does not mean any particular being. It is without any feature. It is absolutely indeterminate. It is not this, nor that, nor anything. It is that which is in some way. Nothing or non-Being is the opposite of Being while being in the latter. Non-Being is contained in Being. It is deduced from Being. Being and non-Being are opposed, yet identical. Being and non-Being are apparently contradictory terms and so are instances of the extreme form of opposition. Yet they are identical; for non-Being is deduced from Being and it could not have been deduced from Being if non-Being was not there in it at least implicitly. Again, Being and non-Being are empty and vacant, and in this sense too they are identical. Since Being and non-Being are identical, Being passes into non-Being, and non-Being passes into Being. For the thought of non-Being is the thought of emptiness, and emptiness is what pure Being is. This passing, from Being into non-Being or from non-Being into Being, is Becoming. Becoming is the passing or passage from Being to nothing or non-Being, and from nothing to Being. Being is not the focal point of Husserl, but consciousness. Husserl's basic idea is that the consciousness is directed towards objects. Almost all mental content is directed, and thus directedness is a feature unique to consciousness. This directedness of the consciousness towards its object is called 'intentionality'.

### **Edmund Husserl (1859-1938)**

Husserl's fundamental position is something like this. For each of us there is one indubitable fact: *our own conscious awareness*. This is the starting point to build our knowledge of reality on rock-solid foundations. Up to this point he is in agreement with Descartes. However unlike Descartes, he holds that as soon as we analyze our conscious awareness we discover that it is always aware of *something*. Consciousness has to be consciousness of something. It cannot just exist by itself as an object-less state of mind. Direct experience of appearance includes not only material objects but a number of abstract entities, such as our own thoughts, pains, emotions,

memories, music, mathematics, and a host of other things. They are investigated exclusively as *contents of consciousness* independent of their existential status which is bracketed. All the same, on account of his phenomenological reduction which brackets existence, Husserl locked himself in transcendental idealism. He was unable to clear Kant's hurdles and reach reality. Consequently he could not discover the way to metaphysics or metaphysical ontology, as done by other metaphysicians like Whitehead.

### **Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947)**

Whitehead made a fundamental distinction in his metaphysics between actual entities (actual occasions) and eternal objects. *The eternal objects* are the possibilities of all those events which actually occur. They are the forms of things. A form is a society of actual entities. For instance, a piece of chalk is a society of actual entities. It retains its form as a chalk so long as it is not broken up into its pieces. The eternal objects have the possibilities of getting fused with different forms of objects. They are neither things nor causes, but pure potentialities for the specific determination of actual entities. They are the same for all actual entities. They 'ingress' into actual entities as their determinants. They have universality, as the same form belongs to different actual entities. The eternal forms are the ingredients of the actual forms. For instance, all types of tables have the same common essence of tableness. This common essence constitutes the eternal objects of all types of tables. According to Bergson, Being is not only independent of being known, but becoming too. 'Being is becoming.'

### **Henri Bergson (1859-1941)**

Henri Bergson (1859-1941) is the most important exponent of 'perpetual becoming' in modern times. Like Heraclitus, he is an anti-intellectualist. According to Bergson, everything is a continuous flux of becoming and change, *without any underlying subject* which becomes and changes. *Change is the whole of reality*. Everything changes, but there is no thing which changes; everything is in movement, but there no thing which moves; everything is in a state of continuous progress, but there is no thing that progresses; everything is in a process of evolution, but there is no thing that evolves. As Bergson says, "movement is reality itself, and immobility is always only apparent or relative ... there are no *things*, there are only *actions*." Movement is creative evolution. This ceaseless evolutionary movement is the result of a double factor – *matter* and the *vital impulse (élan vital)*. They have existed from the beginning. Every theory, no matter how ingenious, collapses once the fundamental principles of logical thinking are discarded. Heidegger is aware of the possibility of such a collapse.

### **Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)**

Phenomenon does not show itself but remains hidden as the meaning and ground of what shows itself. It calls for a method which makes us see what is normally hidden and forgotten. Now 'logos', the second component of the word 'phenomenology', is a method of making us see what is otherwise concealed, of taking the hidden out of its hiding, and of directing it as 'unhidden', i.e., as truth (*a-letheia*). Thus phenomenology is the method of uncovering the hiding, or 'interpretation' (*Auslegung*). The primary phenomenon which needs uncovering is being, the victim of our usual forgetfulness of the 'ontological difference' between being and beings. For Heidegger, the science of being of beings or ontology is possible only as phenomenology.



Phenomenology is ontology and vice versa. Philosophy itself is nothing but ‘universal phenomenological ontology based on the hermeneutics of human being’ (*Dasein*) which by implication makes phenomenology the one and only ontological method. This view of Heidegger stands in contrast to that of the scholastics and the neo-scholastics like Maritain.

### **Jacques Maritain (1882-1973)**

For Maritain, the object of metaphysics is *being as such* (*ens in quantum ens*). It is not being clothed or embodied in the sensible quiddity, the essence or nature of sensible things, but being disengaged and isolated insofar as Being can be taken in abstraction from more particularized objects. It is being disengaged from the sensible quiddity, viewed as such, and set apart in its pure intelligible values. Being as such is distinct from particularized being. *Particularized being* is being which is studied by the diverse sciences of nature. It is the sensible and mobile beings which are either the object of the philosophy of nature or of the other empirical sciences. Particularized being marks and envelops the metaphysical notion of Being. The metaphysical notion of Being is not disengaged from the particularized being, but is present in it in a disguised and invisible manner. All our notions and concepts are resolved in the metaphysical notion of Being. It is the first of all our notions, of which all the rest are determinations. Gilson approached the same notion of Being from Aquinas’ primacy of the act of Being.

### **Etienne Gilson (1884-1978)**

*Being (Esse)* is the very act which turns a possible into a being. Essence is not the highest perfection in the order of being, but *esse* (act of Being). However, essence is an element of finite being, of absolute necessity and very high nobility, as each essence is the possibility of an actual being endowed with its own finite degree of perfection. Finite being is also act and perfection. The world of finite beings is made possible by the very essences of the things which their own *esse* makes to be true beings. In this way, everything is called a being because of its *esse*, while everything is also called a thing on account of essence or quiddity. However, according to Marechal, in every knowledge of the finite the human intellect moves from the finite to the infinite on account of its dynamism known as ‘intellectual dynamism’.

### **Joseph Marechal (1878-1944)**

According to Marechal, the intellect is dynamic and active. It is a faculty in quest of its intuition, i.e., of assimilation with Being which is pure and simple, supremely one, without limitation, without distinction of essence and existence, and of possibility and reality. Tending towards the infinite, it is not fully satisfied by any finite object. However, to the extent that a finite object participates in the infinite, the intellect finds in the object a partial goal for its appetite, affirms it categorically, and makes a judgment of reality. Hence truth is found in judgment. Judgment is a *synthesis* through concretion. It unites a subject of inherence and a form. Judgment is not only a synthesis, but an *act of affirmation* too. The affirmation is the essential element of the judgment; for it makes the synthesis which has been effected into an ‘object’. It endows it with truth by relating it to the absolute Being. The application of dynamism to the refutation of Kant had already been made by Blondel. It was the aim of *L’action* of Blondel to overcome the phenomenalism of Kant by departing from the presuppositions of immanentism. Hence, the ‘intellectual dynamism’ of Marechal owes much to the influence of Blondel.

### **Maurice Blondel (1861-1949)**

For Blondel action is a complex term 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 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. Suicide itself is an act. Act is essentially an act of the will. This is Blondel's message to his contemporaries: *human has a fundamental tendency towards the infinite*. For Lonergan the most fundamental tendency is the pure desire to know.

### **Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984)**

"Being, then, is the objective of the pure desire to know." The desire to know means the dynamic orientation manifested in question for intelligence and reflection. It is neither the verbal utterance nor the conceptual formulation of questions, nor any insight, nor thought, nor judgment. It moves human to seek understanding, and then it prevents one from being merely content with one's own imperfect, subjective, personal experience. It moves Human to reflect, to seek the unconditioned, and to grant unqualified assent only to the unconditioned; and thus one is prevented from being content with hearsay and legend that are unverified and untested. This desire is pure as it differs radically from other desires; as it compels assent to the unconditioned; and as it is a cool, disinterested, and detached desire. It is a desire to know. The objective of the pure desire is the content of knowing rather than the act of knowing. However, the desire is itself not a knowing; hence its range is not the same as the range of knowing. At first, in each individual, the pure desire is a dynamic orientation to a totally unknown. But when the knowledge grows, the objective becomes more and more known. In this way, the objective includes all that is known and all that remains to be known, namely, Being. Being is *what is known* by true judgement insofar as knowing is determinate. Being is also what is to be known by the totality of true judgements insofar as the desire to know goes beyond actual knowledge. Thus, Being is all-inclusive: it is concrete and universal. Hence, it is the totality of correct judgement that equates with the concrete universe that is Being, which, according to Rahner, is the Being of beings (entity).

### **Karl Rahner (1904-1984)**

Being is grasped only as the act of existing of being. Being is at once separate and united to a receptive subject that is distinct from it. In other words, in the pre-apprehension we grasp Being only through the concept of a specific, sensibly presented, and particular being. In the same way, every being is apprehended in the pre-apprehension of the unlimited scope of all the possible objects of thought. This means that being is apprehended at the moment when it finds itself with the totality of its possible objects. This totality is the one original ground of all determinations of the possible objects or beings. Rahner recognizes the objectivity of Being as distinct from human. That is, Being in general is distinct from human being. The objectivity of Being is conditioned by the pre-apprehension. Human knows about Being in general in one's active dealings with this world. One knows about it insofar as such knowledge is the condition or horizon of objective conceptual knowledge of material beings. In this knowledge of the world, human pre-apprehends Being in its totality through question. For Coreth too, question is the starting point of metaphysics.

### **Emeric Coreth (1919 - 2006)**

The horizon of our questioning is the Unconditioned. The unconditioned is expressed in the word *IS* (Being). Here Being is the unconditioned condition of all questioning. It is the absolutely necessary. It is always and necessarily presupposed as the condition of every question. It is co-affirmed in the very act of questioning. Otherwise, we cannot even ask a question. If the horizon of our questioning or knowing is limited, then our knowledge cannot be absolute. In a limited horizon, we cannot ask about the ultimate, absolute, or unconditioned point of view. Hence, the horizon must be unlimited. To penetrate into the *intensively* deepest core of Being, we must reach the extensively widest range of Being. That which constitutes the ultimate, unconditioned reality of things is *Being*, and that which affects absolutely everything, without any limitation, is also Being. Therefore, Being is the ultimate reality both intensively and extensively. The horizon of Being within which we ask the question as question is unlimited.

### Check Your Progress

**Note:** Use the space provided for your Answers.

1) What are the metaphysical teachings of the ancient and medieval metaphysicians?

-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----

2) Identify the most prominent metaphysicians of the twentieth century. Briefly explain their thought.

-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----

### 3. 4. LET US SUM UP

Western metaphysics has the most diverse and complicated development among the three traditions (Indian, Chinese, and Western). In the West, one system grew out of another, as development, or as criticism, or as both. We can undoubtedly trace the early travails of a sound metaphysics in Heraclitus, a prominent pre-Socratic. This view is opposed by Parmenides who interprets reality to be permanent without any change. These diametrically opposed views of Heraclitus and Parmenides find a sort of reconciliation in Plato for whom particulars may come and go, but the Idea or Form goes on forever. Humans may come and go, but the human-type is eternal. For Aristotle, metaphysics is not only the science of the supersensible, but of the sensible too, insofar as the sensible *is*. The Aristotelian numbering of God among the items it characterizes is overcome by Augustine who gives God the first place in his metaphysics. The God-centred metaphysics of Augustine, turning metaphysics into theology, becomes a God-oriented metaphysics in St. Thomas for whom every being *is* analogous. Thomas insisted that the

immediate object of metaphysics is *being as being*, unlike Francis Bacon for whom metaphysics is neither the study of being as being, nor a contemplation of unmoving final causes, but a study of the most general principles or laws or forms of the material world undertaken in view of a practical end. As a result, metaphysics turned into a formal discipline of laws or principles. Such a metaphysics becomes a system of pure conceptual knowledge without any trace of empirical influence in Christian Wolff and Alexander Baumgarten (whose text book Kant followed in teaching metaphysics). Baumgarten's metaphysical theory is a development of Wolff's conceptualism. Metaphysics leaves behind its original meaning as the science of being, and becomes a science of knowledge.

Kant's idea of identifying transcendental philosophy with ontology or general metaphysics, and of making his *Critique of Pure Reason* the preliminary to metaphysics, is a consequence of Baumgarten's theory. If we take into account the fact that Kant's criticism of metaphysics is directed against Baumgarten's rationalistic metaphysics, we can avoid the error of taking Kant's critique to be the absolute denial of metaphysics. This transcendental thinking began to take shape in Fichte for whom knowledge is no more a passive state of reason affected by the thing in itself, but the self-determination of the ego, which sets up the non-ego only for its performance of practical conduct. Although Fichte's early philosophy was subjective idealism in its purest form, his thought soon proceeded beyond it when he realised that thinking presupposes Being: an Absolute Being as the condition of finite reason. Thus once again he was close to the idea of metaphysics in the traditional sense, further established by Schelling in his view of the self-identity of spirit and nature in place of the supremacy of practical reason and ego of Fichte. Schelling has thus restored to metaphysics its former unity. However, the metaphysics of Schelling was devoid of systematic coherence which was left to Hegel to fill in. Hegel's solution was to replace metaphysics by an objective logic, the science of the world to be constructed through thoughts. This objective logic includes, in addition to ontology or the science of being in general, the other branches of metaphysics on mind, world, and God. Mind (of course, not the absolute mind of Hegel) is also the focal point of Husserl. Husserl's basic idea is that the mind is directed towards objects. Almost all mental content is directed, and thus directedness is a feature unique to the mind. This directedness of the mind towards its object is called 'intentionality'. All the same, on account of his phenomenological reduction which brackets existence, Husserl locked himself in transcendental idealism. He was unable to clear Kant's hurdles and reach reality. Consequently he could not discover the way to metaphysics or metaphysical ontology as done by other metaphysicians like Whitehead. Hartmann's ontology, like Whitehead's metaphysics, continues to hover between the empirical and the apriori, between science and ordinary experience. For Hartmann, 'Being is independent of being-known.' According to Bergson, Being is not only independent of being known but becoming too. 'Being is becoming.' Every theory, no matter how ingenious, collapses, once the fundamental principles of logical thinking are discarded.

Heidegger is aware of the possibility of such a collapse. Not that we can't sometimes think and say things which correspond to an independent reality, but our mental content can only correspond to what is out there on a background of skills and practices which is not itself mental content, and for which all talk of whether it corresponds or fails to correspond to something else is inappropriate. This view of Heidegger stands in contrast to that of the scholastics and the neo-scholastics like Maritain. For Maritain, the intuition of Being includes also the intuition of its transcendental character and ontological value. Gilson approached the same notion of Being from Aquinas'



primacy of the act of Being. The difficulty proper to metaphysical meditation is not due to any obscurity on the part of the subject, but arises from more light than the human 'eye' can see without suffering from it. However, according to Marechal, in every knowledge of the finite the human intellect moves from the finite to the infinite on account of its dynamism known as 'intellectual dynamism'. The application of dynamism to the refutation of Kant had already been made by Blondel. It was the aim of *L'action* of Blondel to overcome the phenomenalism of Kant by departing from the presuppositions of immanentism. Hence the 'intellectual dynamism' of Marechal owes much to the influence of Blondel. This is Blondel's message to his contemporaries: *human has a fundamental tendency towards the infinite*. For Lonergan the most fundamental tendency is the pure desire to know. In other words, the notion of Being is the notion of the concrete in the same way as it is of the universe. *The notion is of the universe* because questions end only when there is nothing more to be asked. *The notion is of the concrete*, for until the concrete is reached there remain further questions. "Hence, it is not the single judgement but the totality of correct judgement that equates with the concrete universe that is Being" which, according to Rahner, is the Being of beings (entity). In this knowledge of the world, Human pre-apprehends Being in its totality through question, the starting point of metaphysics. For Coreth too question is the starting point of metaphysics. Question is the expression of mystery as question reveals and hides at the same time. It implies both knowledge and ignorance. Every question implies at least some knowledge; for no one questions about something of which one does not know anything at all. In the same way, a question also implies at least some ignorance; for no one genuinely questions about something of which one knows everything which one is expected to know.

---

### 3.5. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

---

- Ando, Takatura. *Metaphysics: A Critical Survey of its Meaning*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologica*. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947.
- Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. (In: *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle by Thomas Aquinas*.) Translated by 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*. Translated by 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.
- Panthenmackerl, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives*. Bangalore: ATC, 1999.
- Peters, John A. *Metaphysics*. Louvain: Duquesne University Press, 1963.

---

**UNIT 4                      BRIEF HISTORY OF INDIAN METAPHYSICS**


---

**Contents**

- 4.0. Objectives
- 4.1. Introduction
- 4.2. The Vedas
- 4.3. The Upanisads
- 4.4. The Bhagavad Gita
- 4.5. Metaphysical Systems
- 4.6. Vedanta
- 4.7. Buddhism
- 4.8. Jainism
- 4.9. Saivism
- 4.10. Sikhism: Guru Nanak
- 4.11. Contemporary Indian Metaphysics
- 4.12. Let Us Sum Up
- 4.13. Further Readings and References

---

**4.0. OBJECTIVES**


---

The present unit is oriented to:

- Provide an overview of the main metaphysical trends in India
- Provide the students with an opportunity to appreciate the metaphysical heritage of India

---

**4.1. INTRODUCTION**


---

Indian metaphysics has developed over more than three thousand years. It is a plurality of the ways of understanding Being, from a rich source of ideas reflected in the Vedas, the Upanishads, and particularly in the classical systems of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Metaphysics becomes explicit at various levels and in different contexts; in debates on soul, God, substances, universals, time, change, permanence/impermanence, one and many, etc.

---

**4.2. THE VEDAS**


---

The Vedas are seen as the fertile ground of Indian metaphysics. The Vedic seers did not stop with a mythological view of Reality. They did not rest content until they had a vision of the unlimited Being (*Tadekam*). The hymn where the unlimited Being appears is the *Nasadiya-sukta*, which has been praised as containing ‘the flower of Indian thought.’ This hymn is the quintessence of Indian metaphysics. All things are traced to one principle. Opposites like being and non-being, life and death, night and day, are shown to be the self-unfolding of ‘That One.’ *Tadekam* is the ground of the universe. Because it is devoid of differences and definiteness, it is referred to as ‘That One’ ‘which is in some way’. It is neither a particular being nor non-being (nothing) but ‘something’ which is beyond them while being their core and ground. In this way, the hymn traces the origin of the universe to a single Primordial ground which unfolds itself or the universe in all its diversity: ‘That One’ (*Tadekam*). The hymn says, “In the beginning there was neither Being nor non-Being. That One breathed calmly, self-sustained”. But it had within it the latent power out of which the universe, including the gods, emerged. The point to be noted here is the conception of the ultimate entity as dynamic or self-evolving, and as requiring no outside power

to guide and shape it. It is a hymn of Being. It is an invocation to the Being that transcends all the other beings of knowledge. It provides an experiential insight into the making of that Being. It does not deal with the beginning of the cosmos or with its evolution. It is a profound union of the unconditioned condition of all other conditions, namely, Being. It expresses a luminous awareness that Being is beyond being (existent = *sat* = *ens*) and non-being (non-existent = *asat* = *non-ens*). Being is beyond being and non-being while being in them, while being their only ground.

---

### 4.3. THE UPANISADS

---

Though the Upanisads do not work out a logically coherent system of metaphysics, they give us a few fundamental doctrines which are truly metaphysical, especially the concept *Brahman*. *Brahman* is the ultimate cause of the universe. In the *Chandogya Upanisad*, it is described as '*Tajjalan*.' *Tajjalan* means that (*tat*) from which the world arises (*ja*), into which it returns (*la*), and by which it is supported and it lives (*an*). In the *Taittiriya Upanisad*, *Brahman* is described as that from which all beings are born, by which they live, and into which they are reabsorbed. From *Brahman* arises or evolves ether, from ether air, from air fire, from fire water, and from water earth. But the real theory of evolution is given in the doctrine of the five sheaths (*koshas*) in the same *Upanisad*. The lowest level is that of matter (*annamaya*). Matter is unconscious and cannot account for life. *Brahman* cannot rest content with matter. The inorganic matter must be transformed into organic life. Hence the second state of evolution is life (*pranamaya*). This vegetative life must lead to the animal life. But life is fulfilled only when consciousness is evolved. Hence the third state of life emerges: mind (*manomaya*). This state of instinctive consciousness is shared by lower animals with humans. The subject-object duality is absent here. The instinctive consciousness will be fulfilled only when a higher principle has been evolved where consciousness becomes self-consciousness or rationality. Hence the fourth state of evolution is self-conscious reason (*vijnanamaya*). This metaphysical plane is the sole monopoly of human beings. The fifth and the highest level of evolution is the state of bliss (*anandamaya*), the divine plane. Thus, *Brahman* transcends all, and yet underlies all as their background. The lower is transformed in the higher. *Brahman* is the immanent inner controller of all (*antaryamin*) and the self of all (*sarva-bhutantaratma*). As all spokes are contained in the axle and the wheel, so all beings are contained in *Brahman*.

---

### 4.4. THE BHAGAVAD GITA

---

The metaphysical synthesis of the *Gita* came as an answer to a crisis caused by the *Upanisads* that minimized the significance of action. In the *Gita*, Krsna puts forth a convincing vision of life where a human can follow one's *dharma*, perform actions, and yet escape rebirth and attain liberation. Krsna's task is to show Arjuna his duty and at the same time show him the path to *moksa*. For Krsna, if a person were to act without attachment to its fruit (*niskama karma*), his actions would not have karmic consequences. In other words, one's *karma* depends on the way one acts, the 'way of action' or *karmamarga*. This is followed by the 'way of knowledge' (*jnanamarga*), and finally the 'way of devotion' (*bhaktimarga*) to *Brahman* or God. Thus, the *Gita* is essentially theistic in its teaching. *Brahman* is personal; he is called both *Brahman* and God. The world, including *atman*, is part of *Brahman*. However, *Brahman* is always transcendent. He is invisible as he is shrouded by *Maya*. He is also both unmanifest and manifest, one and many, undivided and divided. In other words, he is both transcendent and immanent, transient and intransient as *atman*.

The period of classical Indian metaphysics is represented by the great metaphysical systems. But these systems are not entirely innovative as they have drawn their views from the earlier teachings. They are either *astika* (orthodox) if they accept the authority of the *Vedas*, or *nastika* (unorthodox) if they do not. The unorthodox schools include Buddhism, Jainism, and Carvaka. There are six orthodox schools: *Nyaya*, *Vaishesika*, *Samkhya*, *Yoga*, *Mimamsa*, and *Vedanta*.

---

#### 4.5. METAPHYSICAL SYSTEMS

---

##### **Nyaya**

The whole metaphysics of Nyaya is given by Gautama, under the category of the knowable. Knowable means what ought to be known for the sake of knowing the truth about the world, for the sake of salvation. The knowable is what ought to be known through the exact measurement of epistemological instruments. The soul is a substance possessing mental attributes such as desire, aversion, pleasure, pain, and intelligence. It exists by itself and supports mental qualities. Consciousness is an adventitious quality of the soul. Knowledge arises in the soul when it comes in contact with the world of objects through the mind.

##### **Vaisesika**

The *Vaisesika* school is more concerned with metaphysics; it wants to know about the underlying structure and reality of our experience. It undertakes a process of analysis, starting with the basic substances of earth, water, fire, air, and their particular qualities of taste, colour, touch, and smell. It argues that everything is divisible into smaller and smaller parts, and ultimately one comes to that something which is theoretically indivisible, called *paramanu*, with which everything is composed of. This philosophy takes experience as the starting point of knowledge; all that we can know comes through the senses. Whatever is experienced can be analyzed into *padartha* (category) which has existence, can be known and articulated. There are seven of these: substance, quality, action, class character, individual character, inseparability, and non-existence. All of them are seen as 'real'. Thus, what is experienced has an underlying substance, beyond particular characteristics and relations with other things. But those characteristics and relations are as real as the substance of that which displays them. They are all part of the phenomena of the world as we experience it.

##### **Samkhya**

*Samkhya* is claimed to be the oldest of the Indian metaphysical systems since there are references to it – especially the two key concepts of *Samkhya* thought: *prakrti* and *purusa* (representing matter and consciousness)—in the *svetashvatara Upanisad* and the *Mahabharata*; so the elements of *Samkhya* must at least be as old as those works. *Samkhya* is a dualism of spirit and matter, *Purusa* and *Prakrti*. Matter is the primeval stuff (prime matter) or material which constitutes everything from inorganic matter to mind, all of which constantly goes through change. Even our mind and reason are subject to change. The world of change or transformation is one, not many. By itself it is completely unconscious; whereas *purusa* is pure consciousness. *Purusa* comes in contact with *prakrti* and throws the reflection of its consciousness on *prakrti*. Although *prakrti* is one, *purusas* are infinite in number. Hence, there are an infinite number of reflections in the same *prakrti*. As soon as the reflections are encountered, *prakrti* begins to evolve the world. Since *prakrti* is the same, the objective world it evolves for all the *purusas* is the same. The communication among *purusas* is made possible through the identity of *prakrti*. All aspects of



physical existence belong to *prakrti*. It is the first cause and all-pervading principle of the entire physical universe in all its concrete and abstract forms.

### **Yoga**

*Yoga* offers a set of disciplines that lead to liberation. Its origins are ancient, but Patanjali wrote the *Yoga Sutras*, the oldest of the *Yoga* texts. Although *Yoga* follows the metaphysics of *Sankhya* there is one significant difference from the *Sankhya*, as it includes the idea of a personal God – *ishvara*, besides its stress on moments of transformation, and integration of reason and action.

### **Mimamsa (Purva Mimamsa)**

The *Purva Mimamsa* metaphysics is the metaphysics of ethical action. It is pluralistic and its central interest lies in showing the efficacy of ethical action. It substitutes ethical action for God himself. The efficacy of ethical action is a force that creates the forms of the world, but not its being. It is the controller and organizer of the world. Yet, plurality is a real fact. The world is created by action and is meant for action. Human life is characterized by action. Even if a human wants to get rid of action, he can do so only through action. *Dharma* is the central problem for *Mimamsa*. *Dharma* is that which supports the universe. It holds the plurality together without allowing a falling apart of the manifold. It is the good which impels a human to action. It brings forth the desired fruit of action. If the *dharma* is ethically right, its fruit produces enjoyment; if it is ethically wrong, its fruit produces suffering and we call it *adharma*.

---

## **4.6. VEDANTA**

---

The term *Vedanta* itself means ‘end or purpose of the *Vedas*’, and it is primarily concerned with *Brahman*, the Absolute Being described in the *Upanisads*. It is also concerned to produce a consistent interpretation of the *Vedas*. The earliest existing work of this school is the *Vedantasutra* of Badarayana (C. 500-250 B.C.E.) who tried to systematize the different philosophical tendencies in the *Upanisads*. Later scholars like samkara, Ramanuja and Madhva wrote commentaries on Badarayana’s *Sutras* giving different interpretations. The central issue treated by them is the relation between *Brahman*, the individual soul and the world.

### **Sankara (c. 788-820 C.E.)**

Sankara’s *Brahmasutrabhasya* is one of the most important works on Indian metaphysics. In it he comments on the *Upanisads*, the *Gita*, and the *Brahmasutra*. The entire philosophy of Sankara can be summed up in the following statement: *Brahma satyam, jagad mithya, jivo brahmaiva naparah* (Brahman is real, the world is false, the self is not different from Brahman). He claims that the ordinary world as we perceive it is in fact *maya*. The only fundamental reality is *Brahman*. This approach is termed *advaita* which means ‘one-without-a-second’ or ‘non-dualism’ – there are not two realities, but only one.

**BRAHMAN:** Sankara accepts the reality of *Brahman* based on the *Upanisads*. *Brahman* is described in different ways by the *Upanisads*, and the descriptions can ultimately be churned into three constitutive characteristics: Being (*sat*), Consciousness (*cit*), and Bliss (*ananda*). The world of forms appears as being because the Being of *Brahman* or Being that is *Brahman* shines through the world. ‘He is all-pervasive, the indwelling Self of all, the regulator of all actions, the

support of all beings, the witness, consciousness, non-dual, and without qualities'. Being is consciousness itself. Consciousness accompanies one's cognitions. Through my subjective consciousness and the objective world, the same Being shines. The ultimate Being that is consciousness is *Brahman* itself. Brahman is the highest transcendental truth in which all subject-object distinction is obliterated. Brahman is devoid of all distinctions, without qualities (*nirguna*). Apart from *nirguna Brahman*, there is *saguna Brahman* (Brahman with qualities). The knowledge of *Nirguna Brahman* alone is the highest and liberating knowledge. *Brahman* is both higher (*parabrahman*) and lower (*aparabrahman*). The lower *Brahman* is not ultimately real. It is the same higher *Brahman* (the only real) facing the world of objectivity. However, the lower *Brahman* is not overwhelmed and overpowered by *Maya*, just as a witness who witnesses people fighting is not overpowered by what one witnesses. This lower *Brahman* is *ishvara* (God) with qualities (*saguna*); whereas the higher *Brahman* is one without qualities (*nirguna*). While *Brahman* is known to us as beyond itself, *ishvara* is only a thought-product.

**BADHA:** Central to Sankara's teaching is the concept of *badha*, which means 'sublation.' Sublation is the mental process of correcting and rectifying the errors of judgment. In this process one disvalues a previously held view or content of consciousness on account of its being contradicted by a new experience. Sublation not only requires rejection of an object, but also that such rejection must occur in light of a new judgment to which belief is attached and which replaces initial judgment. By using this criterion of sublation, Sankara discusses three orders of existence in his commentary on the *Brahma Sutras*: absolute existence, empirical existence, and illusory existence. *Absolute existence* is that principle which cannot be sublated by any other experience. Sublation presupposes a dualism between the experiencer and the experienced. It involves plurality of objects because sublation juxtaposes one object or content of consciousness and judges the first to be of lesser value. The experience of reality is non-dual, and therefore no other object or content of consciousness can replace it. Brahman is the only reality, which sublates everything while remaining unsublatable by any other experience whatsoever. *Empirical or Phenomenal Existence* is the objective universe, the world of experience, governed by cause and effect. It persists till the direct knowledge of Brahman is attained. As it is not ultimately real, it is sublated with the experience of Brahman. *Illusory Existence* is the false appearance of something. An illusory existence – characterized by illusions, hallucinations, dreams, and wrong perceptions – fails to fulfill the functions for everyday empirical truth. For instance, the illusion of a mirage comes to an end when a person, in the wake of a new experience, realizes that it was not real. The illusory existences are sublated by the ordinary empirical standpoint. Thus, it can be said that Sankara upholds a synoptic-experiential theory of truth. Firstly, it means that truth is determined synoptically, or from the totality of experience, in such a way that it includes both a coherence and a consistency theory. Secondly, what is experienced is true until some other experience disvalues it (e.g., the world is real for a perceiver till one experiences that it was a false experience, like one who takes a rope to be a snake until the person realizes that it was an illusory experience). Dreams or illusions are sublated by waking experiences, which in turn are sublated by the experience of Brahman (reality). Consequently, what is not 'real' is not always 'unreal.' Real means real forever or eternal, and thus Brahman is the only reality. Unreal means unreal forever, and unreal objects cannot become an object of our experience; e.g., a square circle, son of a virgin woman. In order for an object to be sublutable, it must become an object of our experience, and accordingly, unreal is that which cannot be sublated by any other experience. There is only one reality, Brahman, and no experience can sublute the Brahman-experience.

### **Ramanuja** (1017 – 1137 C.E.)

The *Vishistadvaita* tradition of Ramanuja affirmed the objective realities of the material world (*acit*), individual souls (*cit*) and God (*ishvara*). Ramanuja taught the way of devotion, and held a theistic view of reality. Devotion leads a person to see oneself as dependent on God. For Samkara, the absolute is impersonal; whereas for Ramanuja, it is personal – *ishvara*. Ramanuja's metaphysics is the metaphysics of the non-dualism of the qualified *Brahman* (*Vishistadvaita*). *Brahman* is non-dual yet qualified by the world and the individual spirits. *Brahman* is the unity of the differences constituting the world of differences - an identity in difference (*bhedabheda*). Ramanuja finds justification for his doctrine of identity in difference in some Upanishadic passages like the *svetashvatara Upanisad* that declares the Absolute as constituted. Thus, for Ramanuja, Brahman is an organic unity, unity-in-diversity. The most original aspect of Ramanuja's metaphysics is the rejection of the principle that to be real means to be independent. Although soul and matter are substances, in relation to God they become his attributes, his body, and he is their soul. Just as qualities cannot exist apart from the substances in which they subsist, similarly matter and souls are parts of Brahman and they cannot exist apart from Brahman.

### **Madhva** (1197-1276)

Madhva is a dualist because he believes that the differences and distinctions are real. He is a *bhedavadin* who asserts that there are real distinctions between God and souls, one soul and another, God and matter, and one object and another. The differences are eternal and they do not disappear even in a deluge (*pralaya*). Individual souls and matter are dependent as they cannot exist apart from *Brahman*. God (*ishvara*) is the efficient but not the material cause of the universe. The individual souls are atomic in size and infinite in number. Souls possess limited power, knowledge, and bliss as they are observed by *karma* caused by ignorance. Their actions, knowledge, ignorance, bondage, and deliverance are caused by God in accordance with their *Karma*. The soul possesses two aspects: the essential and unchanging, and the external and changing. The latter consists of the physical body, senses, mind, the subtle body, and the perishable *samskaras*. Its native qualities of infinite knowledge and bliss remain latent as long as the soul is under ignorance. They become manifest progressively as the soul attains greater and clearer knowledge.

---

## **4.7. BUDDHISM**

---

Siddhartha Gautama (563-483 BCE), later to be called the '*Buddha*' (meaning 'the fully awakened one'), is described as having lived a life of princely luxury and then given it up to follow the path of enlightenment. His quest was to find the cause of suffering and the means of overcoming it. His teaching was more practical than theoretical. He propounded a theory of impermanence and momentariness. Reality is a continuous flux. The experience of permanence is an illusion. Only becoming is real. Just as the self is a stream of consciousness, so the world is a number of accidents ever changing and being renewed at every moment. He proposed the doctrines of *anatmata* and *anicca*. They avoid the tyranny of eternalism and nihilism. By avoiding the extremes of being and non-being, he emphasised the concept of becoming: "There is neither being nor non-being but becoming". Everything has in it the possibility of becoming what it has not yet been. All things are made of one essence, yet they are many according to the forms they assume under different impressions. There is no soul. He also advocated the doctrine

of Dependent Organization (*pratityasamutpada*) which states that complex things developed out of the combinations of several factors. For example, a flame is not a separate unit but a visible resultant of several items such as wick, oil, and fire working in a set pattern. Thus everything depends on every other thing. Nothing has an existence in itself. Nothing is self-created and sustaining. A thing is what it is because of its relation to other things. All is *svabhavashunya* (devoid of one's nature). Causality is nothing but the co-existence and co-ordination of innumerable, momentary existences.

Although Buddha was not for metaphysics, his followers became divided on the grounds of metaphysics. The principal schools are four: *Vaibhasika*, *Sautrantika*, *Yogacara*, and *Madhyamika*. The first two belong to *Hinayana*, and the other two are *Mahayana* schools.

---

#### 4.8. JAINISM

---

Jain tradition claims that there has been a succession of twenty-four teachers, over a very long period of time. They are known as the 'ford-makers' (*tirthamkaras*) since they help their followers to cross over the stream of this world to a place of security and salvation. Of the ford-makers, only the last is recognized as a historical person and is known as Vardhamana Mahavira (c.540-468 BCE). Jainism is a heterodox system which rejects the authority of the *Vedas* and denies the existence of God. It divides reality into two fundamental, independent, and exclusive categories of soul (*jiva*) and matter (*ajiva*). The Jaina metaphysics is a metaphysics of substance. Everything is a substance including motion, rest, space, and action. Substance is that which has characteristics. Characteristics are of two kinds: essential characteristics (*gunas*) and changing modes (*paryayas*). Substance is divided into the extended and the unextended. Only time is the unextended substance. Extended substance is divided into the animate and the inanimate. The animate is the soul or spirit (*jiva, atman*). The soul is of two kinds: the liberated and the bound. The bound is again of two kinds: the moving and the non-moving. The non-moving are plants which have only the sense of touch. The moving are of four kinds: five-sensed beings like humans, four-sensed beings like bees, three-sensed beings like ants, and two-sensed beings like worms.

---

#### 4.9. SAIVISM

---

Siva or Rudra as the Supreme Reality is central to Saivism. Saivism is divided into *Vira Saivism* and *Saiva Sidhanta*. *Vira Saivism* is also known as *Lingayata* or *Satsthala*. Saivism is also divided on the basis of region: Southern Saivism (*Saiva Sidhanta*) and Northern Saivism (Kashmir Saivism or *Pratyabhijna*). **Saiva Sidhanta** speaks of three eternal entities: *pati* (God), *pashu* (soul), and *pasha* (bond). Siva is the Supreme Reality (*pati*) who possesses the eight attributes: self-existence, essential purity, intuitive wisdom, infinite intelligence, freedom from all bonds, infinite grace or love, omnipotence, and infinite bliss. Siva is the first cause, his *sakti* the instrumental cause, and *maya* the material cause of this world. Siva also performs the five functions: creation, preservation, destruction, obscuration, and liberation of souls. The individual souls are called *pashu*. For like *pashu* or cattle they are bound by the rope of *avidya* to this world. The soul is really an all-pervading, eternal, conscious agent and enjoyer. The bound souls mistake themselves as limited in will, thought, and action; their original nature is restored to them in liberation. The fetters which bind the souls are called *pasha*. They are threefold: *avidya*,



*karma* and *maya*. **Kashmir Saivism** accepts the basic principle that pure consciousness is the spiritual substance of the universe. However, it differs from the *Samkhya* and the *Vedanta* systems. The *Samkhya* system postulates two independent realities—*purusa* and *prakrti*—and thus constructs a dualism. The *Vedanta* system postulates a single ultimate reality, *Brahman*, supported by the principle of *maya* which is neither real nor unreal (a conception counter to logic). Kashmir Saivism attempts to solve the problem by constructing a pure monism which postulates a single reality with two aspects: the transcendent and the immanent. The former is beyond all manifestations and the latter pervades the whole universe. Both are real as the effect cannot be different from its cause. Consequently, Kashmir Saivism reconciles the dualism of the *Samkhya* with the monism of the *Vedanta*.

---

#### 4.10. SIKHISM: GURU NANAK (1469-1539)

---

Nanak's metaphysical ideas are crystallized in numerous songs, hymns, and oral discourses called the *Gurbani*, literally meaning the 'guru's word'. These include *Majh Ki Var*, *Patti*, *Dakhni Onkar*, *Sidh Gosht*, and *Var Malhar*. Nanak argues that there is only one God, the true creator and the omnipotent master. He is *Nirankar* or formless, infinite, and immortal. Hence, he cannot be reincarnated and should not be conceived in the shape of an idol. He cannot also assume human form since the human body is subject to decay. Since there is only one God, the best way to achieve communion with him is through the *Guru*, who is the spiritual teacher, prophet, enlightener, and a human representative of God. Nanak regarded himself as a *guru* through whom God chose to speak.

---

#### 4.11. CONTEMPORARY INDIAN METAPHYSICS

---

##### **Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902)**

Vivekananda is an idealist as he believes the ultimate reality to be spiritual. Reality is one absolute *Brahman*. Real as a 'whole' implies that there must be parts. But absolute is perfect unity, and therefore the distinction between parts and whole completely vanishes. The absolute *Brahman* is also beyond space, time, and causation, and thus changeless. The changeless absolute is indeterminate without any attribute. However, the absolute can be described as *sat-chit-ananda*. Love is the essential core of *ananda* (bliss). Metaphysically speaking, reality is absolute *Brahman*, and the same reality viewed from the religious point of view is God, who is all-pervasive, present everywhere and in everything.

##### **Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938)**

Thought has a deeper aspect as it can reach the immanent Infinite to whose unfolding movement all the finite concepts belong. It is not necessary to transcend thought to experience reality; instead of deriving thought and intellect from intuition, intuition can be derived from thought. The whole is a kind of "preserved Tablet" (in the words of the Koran), which holds together all the undetermined possibility as a present reality, revealing in time all of them in serial succession. Reality is pure duration and consciousness reveals it to us in intuition which is the deeper aspect of thought. The self has two aspects: the external and the internal. The external enters into relation with the things of space. The internal is the 'apperceptive reached I moments' of profound meditation. In the process of the internal ego, all states of consciousness melt into one another. The unity of ego is like a seed out of which a variety of forms germinate.

### **Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)**

Tagore is a non-dualist, but not like Samkara. The absolute in its perfection, living away from all that happens in the world, is of no interest to Human. The absolute is a creative person who acts and creates, whom we can love and be loved. Love is more important than knowledge. In knowledge, the distinctions are either kept separate or completely dissolved in a rare unity. But in love, the lover and the beloved are distinguished, yet united. Love retains both unity and difference. Love is the consummation of knowledge. True knowledge is a knowledge of things that retains the distinctions and yet grasps them in their unity.

### **M. K. GANDHI (1869-1948)**

Gandhi's metaphysics is strictly theistic. He identifies reality with Truth which is God Himself. God is described as Truth as God alone is real. God is truth and truth is God. This is not a logical abstract truth, but the spiritual and metaphysical. Truth is the law that supports humans and the universe; God is both the law and the law-giver. God is love itself. For, God is affectional and affective by nature. Truth prevails over one's falsity and falsehood in every conflict between two sides. One should hold fast to truth. Then one will be supported by truth. Falsity leads to non-existence. As truth, God and love are the same, and one should stick to love. One should follow the path of non-violence. The opposite of love is violence.

### **KRISHNACHANDRA BHATTACHARYA (1875-1949)**

The Absolute is completely indefinite as it is neither objective nor subjective. As it is indefinite, it transcends both the subjective and the objective. The subjective and the objective are never free from contents that are definite. The Absolute can be conceived in a triple way: Absolute of knowing, absolute of willing and absolute of feeling. *Absolute of Knowing*: It is not a content of knowing since content is freed from any reference to knowing. It is completely unrelated to knowing; it cannot be known. *Absolute of Willing*: It is absolute freedom. It is the negation of being. Consciousness here has been freed from the content and in this sense absolute is contentless. *Absolute of Feeling*: Reflection is aware of the demand for the unity of the content felt and its feeling, but does not understand it. Such a unity—free from the duality of content and consciousness—is the Absolute of feeling.

### **SRI AUROBINDO (1872-1950)**

Aurobindo is a non-dualist (advaitic), but different from that of samkara. *Maya* is the real power of *Brahman*, part and parcel of consciousness. It is the creative power of *Brahman* who descends through it to the world of matter. There is nothing that is not permeated by *Brahman* and thus everything is real. The conscious is permeated by the unconscious and vice versa. Both the conscious and the unconscious are powers of *Brahman*. *Brahman* is pure existence and it is the very nature of the power of *Brahman* to manifest itself as the world of finite objects and selves. The universe is the power of *Brahman* manifesting itself. In the process of evolution all beings constantly return to *Brahman*. This return to the primordial power of Being results in the evolution of the spirit into higher forms of consciousness. For Aurobindo, unlike Darwin, all beings are the evolutes of the spirit. Every being has something in common with every other being. The ordinary distinction between the lower (plant) and the higher (animal) is not an essential distinction but only one of degree. The lower is constantly struggling to evolve into the higher, and the higher is always reflected in the lower. The universe is a constant evolutionary

play between the lower and the higher, and the summit of evolution is the attainment of *saccidananda*.

There are nine stages of the descent and ascent of the Absolute or Supreme Spirit into matter and from matter: existence, consciousness, bliss, supermind, overmind, mind, psyche, life, and matter. The stages from mind to matter belong to the empirical world. The stages from supermind are supernals and divine. The overmind is the mediator between mind and supermind through the veil of *maya* that separates the two. The overmind corresponds to the witness-consciousness of *Vedanta*. The first three levels beginning with existence constitute *Brahman* which is *sacchidananda*. *Maya* stays between the mind and the supermind, and *maya* and the overmind belong to each other.

### **S. RADHAKRISHNAN (1888-1975)**

The metaphysics of Radhakrishnan is advaitic (non-dualistic) like that of Samkara. From the standpoint of our thought the world is distinct from *Brahman*. But from the standpoint of intuition the world and *Brahman* are identical. This identity is a dynamic identity as the phenomenal world of finite objects and selves is the dynamic manifestation of the power of *Brahman*. *Brahman* is eternally active, and selves and objects are its activity. The power (*maya*) by which *Brahman* manifests itself as the world is *Brahman* itself.

### **JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI (1895-1986)**

He is an anti-traditionist. He opposes all tradition, dogmas, and creeds. Truth is a pathless land; every human should try the spiritual quest by oneself. Nothing can be an absolute guide. Schools and dogmas encourage exclusiveness and intensify our egoism based on illusion. In real truth there is no division between the I and the Thou. True knowledge lies in catching reality in its living process which is life itself, God-self. It is we ourselves. It is ignorance to worship reality other than we. Reality is non-dual. When we are fully conscious of ourselves we realize our oneness with it. The separate I or ego is an illusion. It is called self-consciousness, but we do not have complete self-consciousness. It is a beginningless illusion. But can have an end. It ceases as soon as we realize our concern with eternal life. Evolution naturally leads human to the realization of one's oneness with eternal life. Evolution is towards the realization of self-consciousness which cannot be stopped with the human's ego. The forces of evolution will bring about salvation. But it is not clear whether Krishnamurti believes in the automatic salvation of all of us through evolution, whether we want it or not.

### **RICHARD DE SMETH (1916-1997)**

In working out his thesis, *The Theological Method of Sankara*, De Smet found that Sankara, on account of his belief in *Sruti*, was forced to propose the view that there is only one Reality. While presenting the views of Sankara, the usual interpretation by the scholars of Sankara has been that the rest of reality is only *maya*. But De Smet presented a new interpretation of Sankara, according to which there is only one Reality in the sense that there is only one first cause of being (the total cause), and the rest cannot be called being in the same sense. For De Smet, the truth *Advaita Vedanta* distills from the *Upanisads* is that Brahman is the highest Lord and highest *atman* of all the beings of the universe since it is their total cause. In the richness of its fullness, it exceeds all that we are or can wish to attain because it is Reality-Knowledge-Infinite and therefore absolute Bliss. Its effects can add nothing to its infinity. The effects exist through its causal presence within them.

They are inseparable from it and cannot be counted apart from it. As to their reality, they are neither Being nor non-being in the supreme sense of those terms. Hence, their connection with Brahman is not duality but non-duality (*advaita*), which is not the same as monism. Similar conceptions mark the progress of Christian thought from the Greek and Latin Fathers to the medieval and modern theologians.

### **RAIMON PANIKKAR (1918-2010)**

The focal point of Panikkar's metaphysical thought, which provides the key to understand all his writings, is the principle of radical relativity of the entire reality. Relativity is distinct from relativism. Relativism is generally contrasted with dogmatism and identified with indifferentism and perspectivism in regard to the perception of truth. Radical relativity, instead, conveys the ontological nature of the whole reality which is a web of relationships. Nothing can be understood without reference to its being-in-relation to the rest of reality. This approach affirms at once both the oneness and manyness of reality, and strikes at the root of all dualism and dichotomy. In other words, every being bears in itself the stamp of the divine, the human, and the cosmic. To signify this inseparable relation, Panikkar coins a jarring new term – *cosmotheandric* – in which *cosmos* (universe), *theos* (God), and *aner* (human) are not simply three dimensions of a whole, but all the three are present in every single being. The principle of radical relativity can be seen in the deeper law that governs it. Panikkar calls it '*ontonomy*.' Ontonomy is neither *heteronomy* nor *autonomy*. For heteronomy indicates the state of being governed from without, implying a tilt towards the pole of *theos*. On the other hand, *autonomy* refers to the state in which beings are self-ruled without relatedness to other beings. This frees the reality from the pole of *theos* and orients it towards the cosmic and the human. Both heteronomy and autonomy cause polarization, whereas ontonomy is that state of conscience which overcomes both individualism of autonomy as well as monolithism of heteronomy, as ontonomy is the realization of the *nomos* – the law of being. The same vision of unity leads Panikkar to also link time and eternity, expressed in another neologism of his – *tempiternity* (unity of time and eternity). Tempiternity is the indissoluble unity of all reality, which bears in itself some dimension of transcendence as well as some dimension of temporality. This holistic and integrated vision of reality calls for a corresponding language which is more adequate than the usual language of *logos*. Logos is a partial language that tends to drive a wedge between being and consciousness, subject and object. It is in this context of the inadequacy of the language of the logos that Panikkar underlines the importance of symbols and *mythos*. In Panikkar's view, myth belongs neither to the subjective pole nor to the objective pole. It is the authentic language of faith. It brings together the spoken, the spoken to, the spoken with, and the spoken of, comprehending within its purview also the logical. The language of symbol and myth open the door to pluralism which is the concomitant of the radical relatedness of all reality. Pluralism underlies and unites both unrelated plurality and monolithic unity. Pluralism affirms that in the actual polarities of human existence, not in uniformity, we find our real being.

#### **Check Your Progress**

**Note:** Use the space provided for your Answers.

- 1) Explain briefly the Vedic and Upanishadic conception of Metaphysics.



2) How does the metaphysics of the orthodox systems differ from that of the heterodox systems?

---

#### 4.12. LET US SUM UP

---

The *Vedas* are seen as the fertile ground of Indian metaphysics. The Rigvedic hymn where the unlimited Being appears is the *Nasadiya-sukta*, which is a clear and profound expression of the ancient Indian metaphysical pursuit continued in the *Upanisads*' teaching, that ultimate reality is everlasting, infinite, immeasurable and all-pervading unity. The *Gita* offers a synthesis of many existing teachings within an overall framework of the ultimate self or reality that is indestructible and eternal. This self is also the knowable. The whole metaphysics of Gautama is given by him under the category of the knowable. Knowable means what ought to be known for the sake of knowing the truth about Being, through the exact measurement of epistemological instruments used for distinguishing or dividing things. Similarly, *Vaishesika* argues that everything is divisible into smaller and even smaller parts, and ultimately one comes to that something which is theoretically indivisible, called *paramanu*, with which everything is composed of. *Samkhya*, a dualism of *purusa* and *prakrti*, considers matter as the primeval stuff (prime matter) or material which constitutes everything from inorganic matter to mind, all of which constantly goes through change. *Yoga* philosophy accepts the metaphysical views of the *Samkhya* despite the stress of the former on discipline, practice, or action. The *Purva Mimamsa* metaphysics is also the metaphysics of action. It is pluralistic and its central interest lies in showing the efficacy of ethical action. It substitutes ethical action for God Himself – a concern of the Vedantic thinkers too. Although Vedanta attempted to create a single consistent metaphysical vision out of the material in the *Upanisads*, there are inevitably some differences of view. One problem concerns the extent to which *Brahman* can be said to be an agent. After all, if he transforms himself into the things of the world, then he takes a direct role in their coming into being. On the other hand, Vedanta (like other Indian metaphysical systems) includes the idea of *karma* – that everything is the result of good or bad actions already performed. Does that mean that some things are caused by *karma* and others by the direct transforming action of *Brahman*? These issues are discussed by various Vedantic thinkers like Samkara, Ramanuja, and Madhva, whose thinking is diametrically opposed to that of the Charvakas for whom consciousness is simply the result of the coming together of the elements that form the person. It is concomitant to the Buddhists' theory of impermanence and momentariness. Reality is a continuous flux. The experience of permanence is an illusion. Only becoming is real. Jainism divides the reality into independent and exclusive categories of soul (*jiva*) and matter (*ajiva*). In the same way, Saiva Sidhanta speaks of metaphysical entities: *pati* (God), *pashu* (soul), and *pasha* (bond). In contemporary Indian metaphysics too, many of these issues concerning the absolute dominate. There is a

persistent tendency to either accept, reject, or reinterpret the Vedantic conception of the Absolute.

---

#### 4.13. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

---

Bishop, Donald H., ed. *Indian Thought*. New Delhi: Wiley Eastern Private Limited, 1975.  
Ganapati, S.V. *Sama Veda*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992.

M. Hiriyanna. *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy*. Bombay: Blackie and Son, 1973.  
S. Radhakrishnan. *The Principal Upanishads*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989.

S.Radhakrishnan and Charls A. Moore, eds. *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Sivananda, Swami. *All about Hinduism*. Shivananda Nagar: The Divine Life Society, 1993.

T.M.P. Mahadevan. *Invitation to Indian Philosophy*. New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann Publishers, 1979.

V. Madhusudan Reddy. *The Vedic Epiphany*. Vol.I. Hyderabad: Institute of Human Study, 1991.

Vidyalankar, Pandit Satyakam. *The Holy Vedas*. Delhi: Clarion Books, 1998.

Wifred, Felix. *Beyond Selected Foundations*. Madras: University of Madras, 1993.



Indira Gandhi National Open University  
School of Interdisciplinary and  
Trans-disciplinary Studies

**MPYE – 008**

**Metaphysics**

**Block 2**  
**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. Gracious Thomas Director, School of Social Work IGNOU	Dr. Jose Kuruvachira Salesian College & IGNOU Study Centre Dimapur, Nagaland
Prof. Renu Bharadwaj School of Humanities IGNOU	Dr. Sathya Sundar Sethy Dept of Humanities IIT, Chennai.
Prof. George Panthanmackel, Senior Consultant, IGNOU	Dr. Joseph Martis St. Joseph's College Jeppu, Mangalore – 2
Dr. M. R. Nandan Govt. College for Women Mandya - Mysore	Dr. Jaswinder Kaur Dhillon 147, Kabir park Opp. GND University Amristar – 143 002
Dr. Kuruvila Pandikattu Jnana-deepa Vidyapeeth Ramwadi, Pune	Prof. Y.S. Gowramma Principal, College of Fine Arts, Manasagangotri Mysore – 570 001
Dr Babu Joseph CBCI Centre New Delhi	
Prof. Tasadduq Husain Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh	
Dr. Bhuvaneswari Lavanya Flats Gangai Amman Koil St. Thiruvanmiyur Chennai – 600 041	
Dr. Alok Nag Vishwa Jyoti Gurukul Varanasi	



**Block Preparation**

Units 1-4

Prof. George Panthanmackel  
Suvidya College,  
Electronic City, Bangalore.

**Content Editor**

Dr. V. John Peter  
IGNOU, New Delhi.

**Format Editor**

Prof. Gracious Thomas  
IGNOU, New Delhi.

**Programme Coordinator**

Prof. Gracious Thomas  
IGNOU, New Delhi.

---

## BLOCK INTRODUCTION

---

The finite being has to be identical with Being. In finite beings, there is an inseparable relation between Being (that which is in some way or something) and essence (the principle of determination or limitation of Being into finite being). The finite being is through *participation* in unqualified Being. Being is the inner principle or ground of that which really is and through which beings are in themselves. Essence is the principle of determination and principle of determination which makes a thing what it fundamentally is. Further there is 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. Being is most intrinsically personal, appearing in its own self as person. That is why an understanding of Being calls for an analysis of the metaphysical structure of the human person. The experiencing agent is composed of the 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.

**Unit 1** discusses Being and its characteristics and Essence and its characteristics. The finite being has to be identical with Being; for, unqualified Being transcends *this* particular Being. The immanent Being is a modified, finite, and limited Being. It is the *proper* Being of the particular being. The limiting principle (essence) is neither Being nor being. 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. 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.

**Unit 2** speaks of the principle of permanence (substance) and the principle of change (accident). This unit explains Substance and its characteristics along with Accidents and their characteristics. Finite beings are composed of a relatively permanent principle called 'substance' and of secondary principles called, 'accidents' which may come and go without producing a change in the primary mode of being. Substance is defined as the being-in-itself of a finite essence which is the basic inner principle of permanence or continuity of that being which becomes. An accident is that which is not in itself but in another. It is a mode of being, but not autonomous.

**Unit 3** attempts to make clear of the classical views on prime matter and substantial form and explains their relation to the contemporary scientific theories on matter such. Materiality underlies all material things. Formality underlies all finite beings with material forms. The principle of materiality is prime matter and the principle of formality is substantial form.

**Unit 4** explores the metaphysical meaning of Act, Potency, Act and potency, Potency and possibility, Potency and evolution. As change and stability are experienced in life, these metaphysical concepts need to be understood well. Whatever a being *has* or *is* in a positive manner is an act. Potency means power and the capacity for act. *Possibility* is objective potency and the capacity of a being for receiving existence. Change is the transition or passage from potency to act or from act to potency. Evolution implies and manifests potency. It is the change, over time, in one or more inherited traits passed on from one generation to the next, including anatomical, biochemical, or behavioural characteristics.

---

**UNIT 1****BEING AND ESSENCE**

---

**Contents**

- 1.0. Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Characteristics of Being
- 1.3 Characteristics of Essence
- 1.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.5 Further Readings and References

---

**1.0. OBJECTIVES**

---

In finite beings, there is an inseparable relation between Being and essence. Being is that which is in some way or something; whereas essence is the principle of determination or limitation of Being into finite (limited) being. Being in itself is unlimited, infinite. In this Unit we discuss:

- Being and its characteristics
- Essence and its characteristics

---

**1.1. 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 make explicit the essence. Hence things remain blank for themselves and for other things. They are of themselves silent partners for Human. In persons, the human encounters beings like himself, 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. 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. Being is most intrinsically personal, appearing in its own self as person. That is why an understanding of Being calls for an analysis of the metaphysical structure of the human person.

The experiencing agent is as structured as one's operation is. "As the operation is, so the agent is." The operation is composed of exercise and determination. Hence the experiencing agent (person) must also be composed. The experiencing agent is composed of the 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.

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, insofar as it is immanent in this being through a certain identity, is not unqualified Being. For, unqualified Being transcends *this* particular Being. The immanent Being is a modified, finite, and 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 unqualified 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 unqualified Being. The unqualified 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 unqualified 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 insofar 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 unqualified Being points to a ground which is transcendent not only relatively to finite beings but absolutely. Our experience of something reveals the ontological difference between Being and beings. Beings are posited in and by Being (act of existing). The beings are not Being itself. This difference implies the finiteness of beings. The finiteness of the beings is a condition of the possibility of all enquiry in which we enquire *whether* it is and *what* it is. The first question inquires about the Being's act of existing (act of Being) and the second about the Being's essence (whatness or quiddity).

---

## 1.2. CHARACTERISTICS OF BEING

---

### **Being (esse) as the Principle of Reality of Beings**

Should something possess no act of existing, 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. Being is the inner principle or ground of that which really is and through which beings are in themselves. We cannot conceive of Being simply as a mere state into which a previously constituted essence would somehow be transferred. It is rather that which makes real whatever is real, including all determinations of a being, including its whatness. Hence, *Being is the universal ground or principle of all beings and of their determinations.*

### **Being as Objective of the Pure Desire to Know**

Being is the objective of the pure desire to know. The desire to know means the dynamic orientation manifested in question for understanding and reflection. It is the fundamental drive that carries the cognitional process from sense and imagination to understanding, from understanding to judgement, and from judgement to the complete context of correct judgements called *knowledge*. It is simply the inquiring and critical spirit of human. It moves a human to seek understanding, and then it prevents one from being merely content with one's own imperfect, subjective, personal experience. This desire is pure, as it differs radically from other desires by compelling assent to the unconditioned. Pure desire is a cool, disinterested, and detached desire.



### **Being as Unrestricted Notion**

At the root of all that can be affirmed or conceived is the pure desire to know. It is the pure desire that underlies all judgement and formulation, all questions and all desire to question. The objective of the pure desire to know is Being. It is the source not only of answers, but also of their criteria; not only of questions but also of grounds on which they are questioned. In other words, there is a cool, detached, disinterested desire to know at the root of cognitional process, and its range is unrestricted. Such an unrestricted notion is Being.

### **Being as a Spontaneous Notion**

There is a distinction between the spontaneously operative notion and theoretical accounts of its genesis and content. The spontaneously operative notion is invariant. It is common to all human beings. It functions in the same manner, irrespective of what theoretical account of it a human may come to accept. The theoretical account of the content and genesis of the notion are numerous. They vary with philosophical contexts. Spontaneously operative notion is present, invariant in all. The notion of Being is such a notion present in all, and thus extends to everything that is known and unknown. It is true that Being is known in judgment. It is in judgment that we affirm or deny. Until we are able to affirm or deny we do not yet know. Although Being is known only in judgment, the notion of Being is prior to judgment. For, judgment presupposes reflection, reflection presupposes question, and question presupposes the desire to know. The desire to know is the desire to know Being, which is immanent to self or spontaneously operative. It is all-pervasive and underpins all cognitional contents and penetrates them all, constituting them as cognitional. All cognitional contents, such as ideas and concepts, are responses to the desire to know, and all judgments are responses to the demand for the unconditioned. It is the notion of the to-be-known through that content which is prior to every content. The 'to-be-known through the content' passes without residue into the known through that content as each content emerges. The notion of Being also constitutes all contents as cognitional (can be known) levels of knowing: experience, understanding, and judgment. *Experience* is the first level of knowing. It presents the matter to be known. *Understanding* is the second level of knowing. It defines the matter to be known. *Judgment* is the third level of knowing by which the experienced is thought and the thought is affirmed or denied. Hence, Being is really known in judgment by which it is known as Being. Hence, knowing is knowing Being, yet the known is never mere Being, just as judgment is never a mere 'yes' apart from any questions that 'yes' answers.

### **Being as the Core of Meaning**

The notion of Being is the core of meaning as it underpins all contents, penetrates them, and constitutes them as cognitional as we have already seen. Meaning can be distinguished from the viewpoint of its sources, acts, terms, and the core. *A source of meaning* is any element of knowledge such as data, images, ideas, and concepts; the grasp of the unconditioned and judgment; the detached and unrestricted desire to know. *Acts of meaning* are of three kinds: formal, full, and instrumental. *The formal act* of meaning is an act of conceiving, thinking, considering, defining, supposing, and formulating. *The full act* is an act of judging. *The instrumental act* is the implementation of a formal or of a full act by way of words or symbols in a spoken, written, or merely imagined utterance. The *all-inclusive* terms of meaning is Being, since apart from Being there is nothing. In this way, the *core* of all acts of meaning is the intention of Being. A given judgment pertains to a context of judgments. It is from the context that the *meaning* of the given

judgment is determined. For, the meaning of the judgment is an element in the determination of the universal intention of Being.

### **Beings as the Appearance of Being**

The objectivity of Being is conditioned by the pre-apprehension. Human knows about Being in general, in one's active dealings with the world. One knows about it insofar as such knowledge is the condition or horizon of objective conceptual knowledge of material beings. These material beings are the initial starting points and hence also the permanent basis of all cognitions. Thus, human ever remains dependent on these starting points, even in transcendental reflection on Being in general. During the course of such reflection, the object of knowledge may be changed. But the structure and the way in which these objects have to be grasped, remains unchanged. When Being is conceived, it is to be conceived in the manner of an 'object' in the world, in the manner of an appearance. Being in general, and all that is immaterial, is conceived in the manner of material beings. That is to say, it is considered as a being which 'has' Being. One cannot conceive a thing existing in itself, in any other way. Hence the origin of all human concepts is through the senses. Even non-material beings cannot be comprehended by humans, apart from reference to an appearance through which this non-material being becomes a datum. Hence Being, both in direct knowledge and in metaphysical reflection, can be grasped only through Being that appears. Even transcendental reflection on Being is effected necessarily through objects. Therefore, Being in general is disclosed to humans in the appearance of beings, insofar as these most general definitions of Being in general are known through beings. Human becomes aware of this 'ontological difference' between Being and being in the act and fact of questioning.

Question is something final and irreducible. Every attempt to place the question in question (i.e., to question the question) is itself again raising a question. So Human is bound to question. Hence it is the absolute fact which refuses to be replaced by another fact. This question is a metaphysical question. The metaphysical question is the reflexive articulation of the question about Being which pervades the ground of human existence itself. It turns upon itself as such and thereby turns upon the presuppositions of the question. The transcendental question does not merely place something asked about in question, but also the one questioning and the question itself. Hence, absolutely everything is placed in question. This is the pervasive question about Being itself, raised to conceptual form. Therefore, in raising the metaphysical question, human becomes aware of what one is in the ground of one's essence.

The necessity of this question is based on the fact that human has access to Being only as something questionable. The ground of this necessity is not any question. For, human can avoid asking a particular question. But one cannot avoid the question about Being in its totality. One has to ask this question about Being in its totality if one is to be at all. Hence human exists as the question about Being. In this question, Being presents and offers itself as that which is questioned and withdraws itself as that which necessarily remains in question. Hence, human is the Being of the question. In this Being of the question, Being reveals itself and conceals itself in its own questionableness.

When we ask questions, we not only know how things are in relation to us but also how they are absolutely, in themselves - what it is in itself. In this way, the unconditioned, absolute Being puts an end to human question. The very act of questioning reveals that even if we only explicitly inquire

about a relative validity for our own personal need, this relative validity itself is posited as Absolute. Behind the relative horizon there is always an absolute horizon. 'Validity for me' can be spoken of only because we contrast it with 'validity in itself'. The horizon of our questioning is the Unconditioned. The unconditioned is expressed in the word *IS* (Being). Here Being is the unconditioned condition of all questioning. It is the absolutely necessary. It is always and necessarily presupposed as the condition of every question. It is co-affirmed in the very act of questioning. Otherwise, we cannot even ask a question.

### **Being as the Unlimited**

If the horizon of our knowing is limited, then our knowledge cannot be absolute. In a limited horizon, we cannot ask about the ultimate, absolute, unconditioned point of view. Hence, the horizon must be unlimited. To penetrate into the *intensively* deepest core of Being, we must reach the *extensively* widest range of Being. That which constitutes the ultimate, unconditioned reality of things is *Being*, and that which affects absolutely everything, without any limitation, is also Being. Therefore, Being is the ultimate reality both *intensively* and *extensively*. The horizon of Being within which we ask the question as question is unlimited.

### **Being as Knowing and Not-Knowing**

Every question implies that we know about Being. For, we cannot question about something of which we do not know anything at all. However, the question also presupposes that we do not know about Being. In this way question manifests both the identity of Being and knowing, and the distinction between them. In other words, our knowledge about Being consists in the identity of Being and knowing, and our not-knowing about Being consists in the non-identity of Being and knowing.

### **Being as the Cause of the Contingent Beings**

Every being is necessary and not necessary. It is not necessary insofar as it is a finite being. But if it is necessary, it is as necessary as Being. Then, insofar as it is, it can no longer not be. It necessarily is, insofar as it is. This is possible only if every being possesses something which determines it to the necessity of Being. Otherwise, it would by itself be both necessary and not necessary which is contradictory. Therefore, every contingent being requires a positive element by which it is determined to the necessity of Being. It requires a ground, a sufficient reason of its being.

Contingent beings do not have their ground in themselves. Their ground lies outside of themselves. They are posited into being by something else. To bring forth some reality which goes beyond one's own being and essence is to act. The contingent being is the product of the activity of some other being. Its exterior cause is an efficient cause which brings it about. Consequently, every contingent being which is, is necessarily posited into being by an efficient cause, by Being itself.

---

## **1.3. CHARACTERISTICS OF ESSENCE**

---

Essence is the principle of determination which makes a thing what it fundamentally is. The concept originates with Aristotle (384-322 BCE), who used the Greek expression *to ti en einai*, literally 'the what it is to be', or sometimes the shorter phrase *to ti esti*, literally 'the what it is'. This phrase presented such difficulties for his Latin translators that they coined the word *essentia* to represent the whole expression. For Aristotle and his scholastic followers, the notion of

essence is closely linked to that of definition (*horismos*). The English word 'essence' comes from the Latin *essentia*, which was coined (from *esse*, 'to be') by ancient Roman scholars in order to translate the Greek phrase *to ti ēn einai*.

Like his teacher Plato (428-348 BCE), Aristotle's philosophy aims at the universal. Aristotle, however, found the universal in particular things, which he called the essence of things, while Plato finds that the universal exists apart from particular things, and is related to them as their prototype or exemplar (Plato, more mystical, a higher power; Aristotle, more essentialist, the form of things within). For Aristotle, therefore, the philosophic method implies the ascent from the study of particular phenomena to the knowledge of essences, while for Plato the philosophic method means the descent from a knowledge of universal Forms (or ideas) to a contemplation of particular imitations of them. For Aristotle, 'form' still refers to the unconditional basis of phenomena but is 'instantiated' in a particular substance.

According to Thomas Aquinas (1225-74), essence or quiddity is that through which a thing is constituted in its proper genus or species. Essence is also called form, for the certitude of a thing is signified through its form. The same thing is also called nature. Nature is what we call everything that can in any way be captured by the intellect, for a thing is not intelligible except through its definition and essence. Every substance is a nature. But the term nature used in this way seems to signify the essence of a thing as it is ordered to the proper operation of the thing.

For Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), essence is *ideal*. However, *ideal* means that essence is the intentional object of the consciousness. Essence must be distinguished from actual existence, just as the pure Ego must be distinguished from the psychological or empirical Ego. Essences are non-real, while facts are real. The realm of transcendently reduced phenomena is non-real, while the realm of actual experience is real.

Existentialism received existence from Jean Paul Sartre's (1905-80) statement that for human beings "existence precedes essence". Inasmuch as 'essence' is a cornerstone of all metaphysical philosophy and the grounding of rationalism, Sartre's statement was a refutation of the philosophical system that had come before him. Instead of 'is-ness' generating 'actuality,' he argued that existence and actuality come first, and the essence is derived afterward.

In Indian metaphysical perspectives, a distinction is made between one's *swadharma* (essence) and *svabhava* (mental habits and conditionings of ego personality). *Svabhava* is the nature of a person, which is the result of his or her *samskaras* (impressions created in the mind due to one's interaction with the external world). These *samskaras* create habits and mental models, and those become our nature. While there is another kind of *svabhava* that is a pure internal quality - *smaran* - we are here focusing only on the *svabhava* that was created due to *samskaras* (because to discover the pure, internal *svabhava* and *smaran*, one should become aware of one's *samskaras* and have control over them). *Dharma* is derived from the root *dhr* - to hold. It is that which holds an entity together. That is, *dharma* is that which gives integrity to an entity and holds the core quality and identity (essence), and form and function of that entity. *Dharma* is also defined as righteousness as well as duty. To do one's *dharma* is to be righteous, to do one's *dharma* is to do one's duty (express one's essence).



Indeed, the concept of Buddhist emptiness is the strong assertion that all phenomena are empty of any essence, demonstrating that anti-essentialism lies at the very root of Buddhist praxis. Therefore, within this school, it is the innate belief in essence that is considered to be an afflictive obscuration which serves as the root of all suffering. However, the school also rejects the tenets of idealism and materialism; instead, the ideas of *truth* or *existence*, along with any assertions that depend upon them, are limited to their function within the contexts and conventions that assert them, somewhat akin to relativism or pragmatism.

### **Essence as Nature**

Sensible things are individuals as they exist in themselves in the real world. These sensible things are known by the intellect in abstraction from their designation in a particular matter. So abstracted, they are still composed of matter and form. They are conceptualised with a content of matter and form in general, but not in particular. In so abstracting from the particular they abstract from place and time, and exhibit their natures under an aspect that is found in all individuals. The abstracted, the nature considered as a potency to Being, is called the thing's essence which is abstracted with precision, though what is abstracted does not fully coincide with the thing. The essence abstracted rescinds from or excludes the individuality. It represents only a part of the thing. The essence and the individuality go together to compose the thing. Hence, essence abstracted with precision cannot be predicated of the thing. For instance, one cannot say man is humanity, any more than one can say that one is one's arm. Rather, one has one's humanity. In this sense, a thing is not its own essence, but has its essence.

### **Essence as Thing**

Essence can also be abstracted without precision. Such an abstraction excludes nothing in the thing, but contains the individual designation implicitly and indeterminately. It can be predicated of the thing in complete identity. For instance, a human is one's own essence when the essence is abstracted without precision. Essence and thing are identical. It is correct to say that the essence exists or that the thing exists, when the abstraction of essence does not proceed from individuation.

### **Essence as Common**

The essence can exist both in reality and in the human intellect. In reality it exists in individuals, as in the case of humanity that exists in millions of human beings. The same essence is found separately in every one of these many individuals. It is common to them all. The same essence can exist in one's own intellect or in the intellect of anyone else who thinks of it. As a universal, it represents all individual human beings in the one concept. It has a unity of its own as universal, just as it has a unity that is individual in every particular human person. Of itself, the essence can have no unity. If it had the unity of an individual of itself, it would always be that individual. In the same way, if the essence had of itself the all-embracing unity of a universal, it could never be found in several individuals. "But the same essence is found in many individuals and in the universal concept. It is common to all. It is a common nature".

### **Essence as the Ground of Particular Instances**

The individual of a species presupposes the common nature of the species as its ground. Human cognition presupposes the real individuals from which it abstracts the universal. Every individual rose is a particularization of a certain plant nature and every individual human is a particularization

of human nature. In other words, the essences as they exist in the First Cause are the ground of the individual nature. Hence, Being is absolutely prior to essence.

### **Essence as Formal Causality**

Even though an essence in itself is devoid of Being, its potentiality distinguishes it from utter nothingness. It is a potency to real existence; while nothingness has no potency to real existence. Negations like nothingness, contradictions like a square circle, and privations like blindness, are not essences. They can receive cognitional being, but not real being. They cannot exist in the real world, but only in the contradictions of human reason. But an essence has to have a positive formal aspect of its own which (essence) determines the existential, and thus it exercises formal causality. Form is always seen to determine act. Form is the act of matter which determines matter. But in regard to existential act, form determines only as potency. It is the potency that limits the existential act which determines it to the existence of a tree, a stone, or whatever the essence happens to be. As it determines only as potency, the essence does not have to have any actuality prior to the receiving of its existential act. It is able to determine and limit without requiring any actuality in priority to Being. "As the subject of existence it calls for no prior being of its own, and as the determining principle of existence it demands no actuality. It receives its actuality from the existential act it determines".

In the order of formal causality, essence determines Being and the form of the thing is the cause of the thing's being. The efficient cause of the thing is extrinsic to it; whereas the formal cause is intrinsic. As formally caused by the essence, its being may be said to flow from the essence. "In this way every nature is essentially a being, because an essence is of its very notion a potency to being and formally demands being". This formal requirement is not enough to make anything be. An efficient cause has to make that formal causality actual. But in any production of being (even in creation), the agent has to function through the formal causality of the essence. That is the only way it can produce a finite being. "Although an essence does not include real being, it nevertheless does not exclude it. Nothingness, on the contrary, excludes real being".

### **Essence as Entitative Principle**

Essence is one of the two entitative principles of a being: *Being and essence*. These constitute finite beings. Neither of the two is an in-itself. The origin of human knowledge lies in sensible things. All other knowable beings have to be represented by the mind in their light. Sensible things are known simultaneously in their essence by simple apprehension and in their being by judgment. Every other knowable object has to be represented as something that is. The two entitative principles admit no exception. Being exists as a nature in the first efficient cause of things, and as an act that is not nature in all other finite things. As an existential act it has to involve its own limitation, i.e., as an essence that is other than itself. In this way Being confers being upon a man, a mountain, or a star. What exists is not the existential act itself, but the limiting essence that has being in virtue of the existential act. The limitation is not a reduction to 'nothing' or a negative cutting off of being, but a positive thing like the man or the star. A limitation of Being is a particular being that exists.

### **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, is its essence. Hence, essence is that through which a being is posited in a determined, limited manner of being. 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. We must conceive of essence as the principle of limitation and determination of a being. [Determination is precise specification or making a thing what it is.]

### **Kinds of Essence: Common and Individual**

*Common essence* is the principle of limitation and determination of all the members of the same species, e.g., the essence of Man. *Individual essence* is the principle of unique determination of an individual, e.g., what makes John uniquely John.

### **Check Your Progress**

**Note:** Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What are the characteristics of Being?

-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----

2) What are the characteristics of Essence?

-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----

### **1.4. LET US SUM UP**

In finite beings, there is an inseparable relation between Being and essence. Being is that which is in some way or something; whereas, essence is the principle of determination or limitation of Being into finite (limited) being. Being in itself is unlimited, infinite. 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 lets itself be modified or limited, and according to the limitation the finite being participates in Being. 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 unqualified 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. Being is the inner principle or ground of that which really is and through which beings are in themselves. Essence is the principle of

determination which makes a thing what it fundamentally is. Essence, as the principle of determination, is also the principle of limitation; for a principle that determines limits. Limitation also implies negation. 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.

---

### 1.6. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

---

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Trans. James F. Anderson. New York: Image Books, 1955.

Bittle, Celestine. *The Domain of Being*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1950.

Coreth, Emerich. *Metaphysics*. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.

Lonergan, Bernard. *Insight*. New York: Longmans, 1965.

Maritain, Jacques. *A Preface to Metaphysics*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1943.

Owens, Joseph. *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*. Houston, Texas: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1985.

Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives*. Bangalore: ATC, 1999.

Peters, John A. *Metaphysics*. Louvain: Duquesne University Press, 1963.

Puthenpuraackal, Johnson and Panthanmackel, George, eds. *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. I. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010.

Rahner, Karl. *Spirit in the World*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1969.



---

**UNIT 2****SUBSTANCE AND ACCIDENTS**

---

**Contents**

- 2.0. Objectives
- 2.1. Introduction
- 2.2. Etymological Meaning
- 2.3. Development of the Doctrine
- 2.4. Kinds of Substance
- 2.5. Characteristics of Substance
- 2.6. Accidents
- 2.7. Characteristics of the Accident
- 2.8. Let Us Sum Up
- 2.9. Further Readings and References

---

**2.0. OBJECTIVES**

---

We know that we have the experience of two principles in our lives: the principle of permanence (substance) and the principle of change (accident). We go out of home to our college and come back to the same home after classes. We know that we are the same persons and that others call us by the same name. But we also undergo regular and constant changes with regard to weight, complexion, etc. These are facts that we experience, and all the metaphysical principles (especially substance and accident) are derived from and based on these factual experiences. Hence, in this Unit we shall study:

- Substance and its characteristics
- Accident and its characteristics

---

**2.1. INTRODUCTION**

---

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 are 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. Taking these considerations into account we can define *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. Being-in-itself and not in another

---

## 2.2. ETYMOLOGICAL MEANING

---

The term 'substance' is derived from the Latin '*substantia*' which means 'standing under.' '*Substantia*' is the equivalent rendering of the Greek '*ousia*' of Aristotle (384-322 BCE). Substance, the first of Aristotle's categories, signifies being as existing in and by itself, and serving as a basis for accidents. Nothing is more evident than that things change. A piece of wood may be hot or cold, lying flat or upright, yet it is still wood; but when it is completely burnt so as to be transformed into ashes and gases, it is no longer wood. The specific, radical characteristics by which we describe wood have totally disappeared. Thus, there are two kinds of changes: one affects the radical characteristics of things and the other in no way destroys these characteristics, and so does not affect it fundamentally. Therefore it is necessary to recognize in each thing, certain temporary principles and also a permanent principle which continues to exist. Its fundamental characteristic is to be in itself and by itself. In the history of metaphysics, the metaphysicians have variously interpreted this experience of change and permanence developing their own perspectives on substance.

---

## 2.3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOCTRINE

---

**In the West:** Aristotle employs the term, substance, in criticizing Plato's theory of forms. In his early work on 'Categories,' substance is given as the principal category. Substances are concrete individuals, like an individual man or an individual horse. Aristotle had also called this category 'what it is'. The kinds, man, horse, etc., were called substance in a secondary sense. Later on, he dropped this view. Substance stands in contrast to other categories such as quality, place, and action, which tell us something about substance. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle further analyses concrete individuals as composites of matter and form. In Books Z and H, he argued substance as the individual form which was called substantial form in the middle ages. However, the ideas of substance as concrete individual, and as the ultimate substratum of attributes and of change, are never completely set aside. His cosmology postulated immaterial substance moving the celestial spheres, and an Unmoved Mover as the cause of all celestial motion. These immaterial substances were later smoothly integrated into medieval theology as angels and God respectively. Aquinas (1225-74) reconciled the teaching on consecrated bread and wine with the notion of substance, which are substantially changed into Christ's body and blood through a supernatural action while continuing to look and taste like bread and wine, and thus their perceptible accidents remaining unchanged. It is the theory of 'trans-substantiation'. In the same way, the humans (being of one species) are individuated by matter during life, but they lack this matter after death. However, they retain their identity and individuality, thanks to the distinguishing qualities of their earthly history.

Modern philosophers retained the idea of substance as that which exists independently. For **Descartes** (1596-1650), there are only three substances: self, world, and God. Substance is that which needs nothing else to exist. In the strict sense, there is only one substance which is totally independent, i.e., God. However, Descartes avoids pantheism by adding that we could also be called created substances that exist by the help of God. Extension is the attribute of the corporeal substance. It is one of the clear and distinct ideas.

*Self:* The self is the momentary act of thinking. Descartes did not intend to prove the existence of a substantial soul until he had introduced the idea of substance while speaking of God. One could not be deceived while believing that one thinks in the moment in which one thinks, but one could be

deceived while believing that one's momentary act of thinking comes from a permanent subject or substantial soul. The substantial principle is not included in the clear and distinct idea of the thinking self. On the other hand, one tends to believe that all one's momentary instances of existing are connected in such a way, that if one is deceived in this matter then one is deceived by the author of nature, God Himself. Once one proves the existence of an infinitely good and wise God who can neither deceive nor be deceived, one can safely assert the existence of a substantial soul.

*World:* Descartes faced the problem of how to perceive material beings. The first difficulty: the mind is spiritual and that body and soul are not one consubstantial principle in human. Consequently, we do not immediately become conscious of our bodily reactions or of any other material thing. The second difficulty: the only way of arriving at a direct intuition is through consciousness, which presupposes identity between the subject and the object of knowledge. However, we live under the strong impression of a material world around us. The existence of the material world is beyond rational doubt, but not beyond hyperbolic doubt. It does not become totally certain until we know of the existence of God, who will not deceive us.

*God:* Proving God's existence is basic in Descartes' search for certainty. Descartes gives three arguments for the existence of God. *Argument from the Idea of the Perfect Infinite:* I conceive of God as "an infinite, independent, all-knowing, all-powerful substance, by which I myself and all other things, if they actually exist, have been created;" I, therefore, have the idea of the infinite. But the idea of infinity could not have been produced in my mind by the other ideas (of self and world too) which are finite. It is not by removing the limits that I form the idea of infinity, but it is by limiting the positive idea of infinity that I form the idea of the finite. Consequently, before I form any other idea I have the idea of infinity, which is a clear and distinct idea. It is as obvious as the idea of the thinking self, because I cannot conceive of anything finite unless I have an idea of the infinite. Therefore, since clear and distinct ideas must have objective value, there is actually something infinite which is perfect. Now this perfect being must exist, how else would I explain the origin of this idea in me? In other words, neither the external world nor I am perfect. The external world is not perfect because it is corporeal and changeable. I am not perfect because I doubt. Therefore, there must exist a perfect being who has put in me this idea of himself. *Argument from Contingency of the Thinking Self:* I must conceive of the thinking self as contingent, i.e., as non-necessary; otherwise it would not be a doubting self. But I could not have the idea of a contingent being unless I had a previous idea of the necessary, because contingency is the negation of necessity. This previous idea of the necessary is not formed through the idea of the contingent self, but is presupposed by the idea of the self. Here again the idea of the necessary is clear and distinct, and implies that there is something necessary. *Ontological Argument:* God is such a being that all perfections must be included in his essence. In other words, he must necessarily have all perfections. Since it is better to exist than not to exist, existence is a perfection which must be attributed to God. He, therefore, necessarily exists; in him essence and existence are the same. Descartes did not add anything new to the ontological argument of Anselm, except that he called the idea of the greatest conceivable being, an innate one. And he added the simile of the valley and the mountain. "I cannot conceive a God unless as existing, any more than I can a mountain without a valley." For mountain and valley, whether exist or not, are inseparable. In the same way we cannot conceive God unless as existing.

**Spinoza** (1632-77) accepted Descartes' definition of substance, but he was more consistent than Descartes in his conception of substance. "By substance, I mean that which is in itself and conceived through itself; in other words, that of which a conception can be formed independently of any other conception." (*Ethics*, I, Def. II). Only God is such a substance. This substance is infinite and not finite. If it were finite, then it would have to be conceived along with something else which would limit it. Then it would cease to be a substance. An object which is not its own cause is dependent on another cause. That which is not dependent on another cause is a substance. No substance can depend on another substance. Hence, there is only one infinite substance.

For **Leibniz** (1646-1716) an object with proper parts depends on these parts to exist. The true substances are monads, which must be without parts or spatial extension. Therefore, the changes in monads are like mental events, and Leibniz viewed the world as a plurality of monads. These are simple substances which are not made up of parts. These monads are "the true elements of Nature, in fact, the elements of things." They have the following characteristics: 1. Monads are Real: They are real things, and not ideas. 2. Monads are simple: They cannot come to be except by creation, nor cease to be except by annihilation, while compound substances are produced by aggregation and separation of monads (generation and corruption). 3. Monads are Independent: There are a plurality of monads which are independent of one another and dependent on God alone. One monad cannot influence another. 4. Monads Enjoy Perception: All monads, which are simple substances, enjoy some measure of perception, though in different degrees. 5. Monads are dynamic: The monad is not inert. For, each simple substance has its own activity. 6. Monads are Representatives: Each monad is a "perpetual living mirror of the universe." Every individual substance expresses the whole universe in its own way. Though each monad mirrors the whole, it does it in its own unique way. Leibniz ranked all substances according to the degree of their knowing capacity: 1. *Inorganic substances* that have perception and appetition, but no apperception. 2. *Living substances below the level of human*, that have souls and therefore a certain degree of consciousness or apperception. 3. *Human*: Human is capable of apperception of both truths of fact and truths of reason. 4. *God*: God has the apperception of only truths of reason. God knows the last reason why all things come to be in his pre-established harmonious plan for the world. In God there is no appetition in the sense of desire for more perfection.

**Locke** (1632-1704) held that substance is an unknowable substratum, a 'something we know not what' supporting the qualities we perceive. He regarded persons not as immaterial souls, but as 'forensic' entities whose persistence is secured simply by the continuity of consciousness. **Berkeley** (1685-1753) attacked Locke's substratum in the case of material substances as absurd. Bodies are simply bundles of qualities, but he retained immaterial substances or souls. **Hume** (1711-76) dissolved the soul into a bundle of its perceptions. He ostensibly destroyed the last remnants of traditional substance, and shifted the role of substance to perceptions which are the independently existing components of the universe. **Kant** (1724-1804) bound substance to the logical role of being a subject of predication. He argued for an eternally persisting substrate which is not an autonomous thing, but merely a necessary condition for the appearance of change.

**In India**: Substance is the substratum where actions and qualities inhere, and which is the co-existent material cause of the composite things produced from it. It is the substratum of all things. A substance is destroyed only by the destruction of its substratum. It is not destroyed



either by its own effect or by its own cause. It means that the relation of the destroyer and the destroyed does not exist between two substances which have entered into the relation of effect and cause. Thus the Sutra states: "Substance is not annihilated either by effect or by cause" (VS I, 12). For Prasastapada, 'substance is the main category, and all categories depend on it for their existence. So it is first named.' Being the substratum of qualities, it is different from qualities. For instance, in the case of a white cloth, the white colour is experienced as a property residing in the substratum, cloth. Therefore, white colour and cloth are different in their essence. The word 'property' does not mean only qualities, but it is used in a wider sense and includes all the five kinds of properties (i.e., substance, quality, movement, the universal, and *visesha*), which subsist in their substrate by inherent relation. A substance does not possess qualities at the first moment of its production. If the qualities arise simultaneously with substances there cannot be any distinction between them, and if the qualities do not arise then substances would be free from qualities. Then the definition of substance, as that which possesses qualities, would be violated. To meet this difficulty, it is said that substance is the substrate of qualities either in the relation of intimate union (*samvaya sambandha*) or antecedent negation (*pragabhava*). Qualities inhere in a substance from the second moment of its production until its destruction. A substance is also the material cause of its composite product. For example, threads are the material cause of cloth made by their combination. Only substance is capable of producing an effect out of its stuff. These substances are nine: earth, fire, air, water, ether, time, space, spirit, and mind. The *Vaisesika* philosophy is pluralistic and realistic, but not materialistic since it admits spiritual substances. Out of the nine substances, the first five (i.e., earth, water, fire, air, and ether) are called physical, since each of them possesses a unique quality sensed by the external sense. Smell is the unique property of earth, and other substances have smell only if mixed up with some quantity of earth. There is smell in muddy water, but not in pure water. In the same way, taste is the property of water, colour of light, touch of air, and sound of ether. The substances – of earth, fire, water, and air – are both eternal and non-eternal. The atoms of earth, water, fire, and air are eternal as an atom is indivisible and can neither be produced nor destroyed. All others are non-eternal as they are produced by the combination of atoms and are subject to destruction. There are four kinds of atoms: earth, water, fire, and air, each having its own special quality. Ether is the fifth physical substance, the substratum of the quality of sound. The sound is perceived, but not ether. It is one and eternal as it is indivisible and does not depend on any other substance for its existence. It is all pervading as it has an unlimited dimension whose effect is perceived everywhere. Time and space are also eternal, all-pervading, imperceptible, infinite, partless, and indivisible. Time causes our cognitions of past, present, and future, and of 'younger' and 'older.' Space (*dik*) causes our cognitions of east and west, here and there, and near and far. There are innumerable souls that are independent, individual, eternal, and all-pervading spiritual substance, the substratum of the quality of consciousness. The souls are divided into two: the individual and the Supreme. The Supreme is only one, the Creator of the world. The individual is internally perceived as possessing some quality when one says, 'I am happy', 'I am sorry', and so on. The individual is not one but many, being different in different bodies. Mind is an internal sense which is atomic, many, eternal, and imperceptible. Each self has a mind through which the self comes into contact with the objects. Its existence is inferred from the fact that the self must perceive internal states through an internal sense, just as it perceives external objects through external senses. Moreover, the mind is selective in the perception of external objects. We perceive colour, touch, taste, smell, and sound subsequently,

even though all the external senses may be in contact with objects simultaneously, coming into contact with only one sense at a time.

---

## 2.4. KINDS OF SUBSTANCE

---

*Primary and secondary substance:* *Primary Substance* is every individual substance, e.g., a single inanimate body such as a bit of gold or a piece of paper; a single plant such as every rose, plantain, or tapioca; every single animal such as every cow, buffalo, goat, or elephant; a single human like Mother Theresa, Mahatma Gandhi, or Muhammad. *Secondary substance* is the substance expressed by the universal idea representing a class, e.g., human, animal, organism, body, substance, plant, fish, bird, etc. *Complete and incomplete substance:* *Complete substance* is that which possesses everything that its constitution and essence requires for its existence and for the proper functioning of its activities. Its nature demands no further union with a substantial co-principle. For instance, every human, consisting of body and soul, is a complete substance, capable of existing and of performing its natural functions of vegetancy, sentiency, and rational life; in the same way, every brute, plant, and inorganic body are complete substances. *Incomplete substance* requires to be conjoined with some other substantial co-principle so as to constitute a complete substance. Each substantial principle, taken alone, is insufficient to exist, or at least, is insufficient for all the functions of an individual of that particular species. For instance, the human soul alone without the body cannot perform the functions of vegetancy and sentiency. Human needs a material body for these functions. *Simple and composite substance:* *Simple substance* does not consist of entitatively distinct substantial parts. Such simple substances are also called pure spirits, such as angels or God. Complete substances of this kind are absolutely simple. However, one can also speak of certain substances as 'naturally simple' which consist of parts which are material and entitatively distinct, but naturally indivisible and inseparable. The ultimate physical components of the universe (like protons and electrons) would be 'naturally simple' in this sense. *Composite substance* is complete substance consisting of incomplete substantial principles, entitatively distinct among themselves in such a manner that their union results in a single, unified nature. The principles complement each other making a single being of natural functions through their union. Human, for instance, is a composite substance of body and soul. The soul does not inhere in the body as an accident inheres in its subject, nor does the body inhere in the soul, nor do they co-exist side by side as if each were independent of the other.

---

## 2.5. CHARACTERISTICS OF SUBSTANCE

---

We do not have a single coherent concept of substance. Hence, it is to be identified and separated into the following characteristic strands for a better understanding.

a). *Independence:* The ontological primacy of substance arises chiefly from their independence, in their ability to subsist. Independence of substance excludes only dependence on a substratum, and not dependence on a cause (such as the ultimate cause). Hence there can be substances which are caused, i.e., created substances. Independence may be either absolute or relative. *Absolute independence* means that something exists not only *in* itself but also *of* itself. Such a being does not depend on anything else in any way whatsoever. Only God can be such a substance. *Relative independence* means that something exists *in* itself, but not *of* itself. It is in this sense that we speak of the independence of substance here. Strictly speaking, substance denotes only the substantial whole. Yet, essential parts which go to constitute this whole (e.g., body and soul) are also spoken of as substances. Although substance usually stands out independently as what is relatively persistent

in contradistinction to its changing appearances, anything that exists in itself – even if it lasts only for an instant – is truly substance. b). *Survivability and permanence*: For something to change, it must exist before, during, and after the change. That is, it must survive it. Substance survives its accidents. There can be no substance without accidents. A substance is either material or spiritual. If material, it must have the accident of quantity. If spiritual, it must have the accidents of intellect and will. The subject of change (substance) thus ‘outlives’ its accidents, whatever ceased to be at the change. Experience provides us with numerous examples of this permanence and survival.

**Substance and Nature:** Nature is derived from the Latin participle *natus* ‘born’, a form of the verb *nasci*, ‘to be born’. The nature of a thing suggests what the thing is born for; what it is originated to do; what it exists to accomplish. The nature of a thing is its reality considered as equipment for action or operation. *It is the first or radical intrinsic principle of its rest and movement.* It is the basic, the radical, the fundamental principle of rest and movement in the body. A body is equipped with powers or faculties by means of which it operates or acts and is acted upon. These powers or faculties are the *proximate* principles of operation. We call nature the first or radical principle, to distinguish it from these proximate principles. Nature has powers and operates by means of powers. It is the first principle of the activity which proceeds from the powers which are the proximate principles of action. The relation between substance and nature can be explained in this way: As we have just seen, nature is the radical or the ultimate principle of all operations in a particular being. Different beings have specifically different activities. For instance, neither does iron act like gold, nor gold like iron, nor iron like radium, nor radium like argon, nor argon like hydrogen. As long as a thing is what it is, its activities remain specifically the same. The activities are determined by some principle within the thing itself. This ultimate intrinsic principle of activity is nature. Nature is Being-in-itself and not in another. Hence, substance is nature insofar as the former is also the ultimate principle of Being- in-itself.

---

## 2.6. ACCIDENTS

---

The original Aristotelian term (*symbebekos*) for predicamental accident meant ‘going along with’ or ‘occurring with’ something else. Size and colour, for example, go with or presuppose the bodies of which they are merely the modifications. They can change while the body’s nature remains the same. Sapling and tree do not differ in substance, in spite of change in size, shape, and colour. The same individual human passes through the different stages of embryo, foetus, childhood, youth, maturity, and old age, changing in many ways in size, shape, colour, activities, place, and time but remaining identical in substance. These accidental characteristics are really distinct from the substance, regardless of any consideration by the human mind. They are distinct realities that occur to, or belong to, a substance. The etymology of the Latin term *accidens*, ‘falling upon’ or ‘happening’ expresses it quite vividly.

---

## 2.7. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ACCIDENT

---

**Dependence:** Change, like that in colour or size, reveals the accidental character of such a thing, though it is not the essential trait of an accident. For, an accident may remain the same during the whole course of its subject’s existence, as do the intellectual faculties in a human. What

necessarily distinguishes an accident from substance is the former's dependent characteristic. Whatever being it has, it has through the being of something more basic, the substance. It is a nature too weak to have being just through itself. Whiteness cannot exist in reality except through a body that is white. It is called a nature, because it is conceptually intelligible. It is essence, because it is a potency to the being that corresponds to it. But it does not have its being in an independent unlike substance; it requires also a finite nature other than itself through which to receive and have its being. This dependence in the order of essence is the distinguishing trait of an accident. It is an essence that depends upon another essence in its very role of essence - as a potency to being. Because of this dependence, it is not at all on the same level as substance. It is an essence, not just through itself, but through a substantial essence. Redness is an essence only because a primary instance of essence, a body, can be red. It may be called an accidental essence, or an accidental nature; distinguishing it from essence meant absolutely, that is, from substance.

**Inherence:** The very nature of every accident is such that it is meant for being in something other than itself, that is, in a substance. It is an actuation of a potency. It is the accidental act of a subject. It actuates a substance in a secondary way. Redness, for instance, makes actually red a face that in itself was just able to blush. Accordingly, it actuates a potency to redness. The potency here is the substance. Redness is one of its accidental forms or acts. Every accident, then, is in a subject that is a substance, and every accident actuates a substance. Is every accident therefore an inherent form?

The more basic accidents, like quantity and qualities, are undoubtedly forms intrinsic to the thing they actuate. A colour inheres in a body, adding a new form to the thing's intrinsic constitution. But do accidents such as where and when a thing is, add any inherent form? Although there seems to be no intrinsic addition to the reality of a pie when it is brought from the pantry into the dining room, still there is a real accidental difference accruing to it from the new and really different place. Each category of accident is a supreme genus of being, an original mould into which the existential act is cast. One kind of accident, therefore, is not to be conceived as modelled on another. Accidents such as where and when, need not be expected to conform to the type found in quality. There is the possibility that some accidents may actuate a thing extrinsically, that is, without effecting any intrinsic change in its constitution, as in the case of the pie being in different places. If the non-inherent accidents presuppose the inherent ones, then accidents may be said in general to inhere, as substance is said to subsist. Yet, while every accident is dependent on and in this sense is in a substance, some accidents need not be inherent.

In the case of inherent accidents, the substance through which they have their being is the substance in which they inhere. By actuating their substance these accidents have their being through it. By making a body white, whiteness has its being as a modification of the body. In the case of participated existence, as has been seen, the situation is different. The existential act inheres in or actuates the essence it makes be. It belongs to that essence, it is an accident of that essence. But what it depends on primarily is an agent other than that essence. It is through another substance, the extrinsic efficient cause. The essence it actuates depends upon it for distinction from mere nothing. The existential act is accordingly prior to the corresponding



essence. The predicamental accident, on the other hand, is subsequent to what it actuates, and so has its being through the nature in which it inheres. It requires also an efficient cause, for it involves new being. Its efficient cause may be the substance in which it inheres, as in the case of an act of intellection; or an agent other than that substance, as in the case of the electric plate heating the water. Unlike dependence, inherence is not necessarily required for an accident. Where and when a thing is, for instance, are really accidental to it, yet not inherent forms. They are in the thing in the sense of dependence on it in being; but they do not, like size or whiteness, add to the intrinsic constitution of the thing.

**Being of a Being:** Just as an accident may be termed a nature or an essence or a form, so it may be called a thing, or a quiddity, or a being in a secondary sense. These terms denote what exists primarily – namely, a substance. A tree or a stone is unhesitatingly called a thing, but the term is applied only with misgivings to a colour, or a sound, or a size. Yet each of these is something. In some diluted sense, therefore, a colour or a sound is a thing. But any such accident is always a quiddity that belongs to another quiddity, the substance. In this sense it is a quiddity of a quiddity. In a corresponding secondary way, every accident may be termed a being, insofar as it is in some way. Since it has existence only through a substance, and belongs to a substance, it is rather a being of a being (*ens entis*).

**Distinction of Accidental Being:** Accidental existence is really distinct from substantial existence. Accidental existence is being in. In regard to real accidents this is a real distinction. The substantial being of a human really continues, while the accidental being of one's height and weight increase with years. The substantial being endures in reality without that accidental being. An accident really exists as a modification of a really existent substance. Only in real dependence upon substantial existence can the accidental existence be had. An identical existence cannot be really dependent and really independent in the same respect. The one has to be really distinct from the other.

In other words, accident 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. Hence an accident is *whatever is added in anyway to another already primarily determined in its being*. Accidents are mainly of two kinds: Physical and Non-physical. *Physical Accident* is the real inner principle of a being which further perfects the being in which it inheres, e.g., the operations, habits, and faculties of an experiencing agent. *Faculties* are the agent's proximate principle of action, e.g., intellect, will, memory. *Habits* are the lasting dispositions which by their innate or acquired presence make easier the work of the active powers, e.g., faculties. *Non-physical accident* is predicate which does not belong to the definition but says something more about a being, e.g., property and logical accident. *Property* is any positive predicate which is not a part of the definition but which necessarily flows from the definition, e.g., human's laughing. *Logical accident* is any predicate which is neither a part of the definition nor necessarily flows from the definition, e.g., human's singing.

### Check Your Progress

**Note:** Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What do you understand by substance? What are its characteristics?

-----  
 -----  
 -----

2) What do you understand by accident? What are its characteristics?

-----  
 -----  
 -----

## 2.8. LET US SUM UP

Finite beings are composed of a permanent principle which remains the same throughout all changes. This permanent principle is called 'substance' and secondary principles are called 'accidents.' An accident is that which is not in itself but in another. It is a mode of being, but not autonomous. The Indian thinkers interpret substance as the substratum where actions and qualities inhere. For them, substance is the main category, and all categories depend on it for their existence. Qualities inhere in a substance from the moment of its production until its destruction. The main characteristics of substance are independence, survivability, and permanence. It is also distinct from nature which is the basic principle of action.

## 2.9. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Translated by James F. Anderson. New York: Image Books, 1955.

Aristotle. "Metaphysics." In: *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle by Thomas Aquinas*, translated by 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.

Noonan, John P. *General Metaphysics*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1957.

Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives*. Bangalore: ATC, 1999.

Peters, John A. *Metaphysics*. Louvain: Duquesne University Press, 1963.

---

## UNIT 3 MATTER AND FORM

---

### Contents

- 3.0. Objectives
- 3.1. Introduction
- 3.2. Classical Views
- 3.3. Scientific Views
- 3.4. Prime Matter
- 3.5. Substantial Form
- 3.6. Let Us Sum Up
- 3.7. Further Readings and References

---

### 3.0. OBJECTIVES

---

Materiality underlies all material things. Formality underlies all finite beings with material forms. The principle of materiality is prime matter and the principle of formality is substantial form. In this Unit an attempt is made to:

- Understand the classical views on prime matter and substantial form
- Explain the classical views in its relation to the contemporary scientific theories on matter: quantum mechanics and theory of relativity

---

### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

---

*Hylomorphism*, the classical theory of matter and form, is derived from the Greek words ‘*hyle*’ (matter) and ‘*morphe*’ (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.

---

### 3.2. CLASSICAL VIEWS

---

Plato distinguished between matter and form, but Aristotle is the author of hylomorphism. St. Augustine held a theory of matter and form, but the importance of hylomorphism was not realized before the Middle Ages. Scholastic philosophers adopted Aristotle’s theory although they differed in their interpretation of it. The pure potentiality of matter was denied by *Duns Scotus*, but defended by Aquinas and his followers. Suarez calls matter pure potency, but attributes a kind of actual existence to it. Albert the Great, the nominalists, and Suarez denied the necessity of an intrinsic principle of limitation. Regarding the principle of individuation, Duns Scotus sought the solution in adding to the specific nature the form of ‘thisness,’ which is formally distinct from the specific nature but actual on the part of the thing. The nominalists denied that there is any basis for a problem of individuation. Suarez held that an essence is individual by its very entity. Plato and Aristotle appealed to matter. St. Thomas developed Aristotle’s theory by adding to matter the qualification ‘marked by quantity’. While the entire Thomistic school admits this formula, there is a difference of opinion about its interpretation, and even about the sense which St. Thomas ultimately intended to give to it. Sylvester of Ferrara (1474-1528), followed by Boyer and Renard, explain this quantity as the actual quantity of a body; whereas Cajetan (1469-1534) and more recently Remer, Gredt, and Phillips explain it as

the transcendental relation of matter to quantity. Rosmini (1797-1855) and some others have tried to explain individuation by means of existence

---

### 3.3. SCIENTIFIC VIEWS

---

Our normal tendency is to depict matter and the material world as we observe it, but the theories of quantum mechanics and relativity critically challenge our way of looking at matter.

**Quantum Mechanics:** Mechanics, a branch of physics, deals with the movement of bodies. Quantum mechanics deals with the movement of quantum particles. It was developed in the 1920s by an international group of physicists, including Niels Bohr (1922-2009) from Denmark, Louis de Broglie (1892-1987) from France, Erwin Schrodinger and Wolfgang Pauli from Austria, Werner Heisenberg from Germany, and Paul Dirac from England. The subject-matter of quantum physics includes the movement of particles, creation of particles, destruction of particles, interaction between particles, the way atoms are tied to the nucleus, the nuclear forces, the properties of particles, the conception of the beginning of the universe as a great quantum leap, etc.

The theory begins with Max Planck, a physicist, who brought forth the first crucial idea of the quantum theory in 1900. This theory states that energy absorption and emission take place in discrete quanta. In his view, our continuous view of the world must be replaced by a discrete one. The different forms of energy in the universe are discrete and imperceptible. To know Quantum mechanics is to know the subatomic world, which is a world of puzzles, paradoxes and perplexities ruled by chaos, randomness, and probabilities. The subatomic units of matter have dual aspects. They appear sometimes as particles and other times as waves. This is a very strange property of matter understood in terms of probabilities. Probability means we can never predict an atomic event with certainty. Mechanical stability of particles is yet another puzzle whereby atoms colliding millions of times every second will return to the original form after a collision. Again, the subject-object distinction of the macroscopic world does not exist clearly in the microscopic world.

The principles of classical physics collided with the new concepts of indeterminacy, randomness, and unpredictability. The development of quantum physics marked the beginning of the age of the 'new physics,' radically altering the physicist's conceptions of reality. The new vision of matter in quantum physics is generally termed as the philosophy of quantum mechanics. The two fundamental principles of quantum physics are the principle of complementarity and the principle of uncertainty. The principle of complementarity proposed by Niels Bohr was meant to explain the wave-particle duality of light. According to this principle, wave and particle are mutually exclusive but complementary aspects of light. They are mutually exclusive in the sense that when one is manifest the other is not manifest. According to the principle of indeterminacy or the uncertainty principle of Heisenberg, it is impossible to determine exactly both the position and momentum of a particle at the same time.

**Relativity:** The theory of Relativity, proposed by Albert Einstein (1879-1955), is one of the most significant scientific advances of our time. The central problem in physics in the nineteenth century was concerned with resolving the problem of Newton's 'action at a distance' and the wave propagation of light. It was necessary to postulate a medium, first to transmit force between two bodies and then as a medium for light to travel as a trans-wave.



Einstein's inventive theory as a solution to this problem gave rise to the theory of relativity, which holds that concepts like mass, motion, length, time, simultaneity, etc., are not absolute but relative. They are relative to the frame of reference. There are two kinds of relativity theories: the Special Theory of Relativity and the General Theory of Relativity. Special Relativity discusses situations when bodies move with uniform velocity. There are two postulates that are central to the special theory of relativity. The first states that there is no privileged frame of reference. All frames of reference which are moving with uniform velocity with regard to each other are equivalent, and therefore the laws of physics are equally applicable in all frames of reference. The second postulate holds constancy of the velocity of light, which is an absolute universal constant as the maximum interaction speed between two bodies is the speed of light and this is independent of the motion of the source of the observer.

According to the first postulate, all natural events are unaffected by uniform motion. Motion makes sense only when referred to a frame of reference. There is no absolute length, time, and mass. These have different values in different frames of references. The Special Theory of Relativity also holds that those events which are simultaneous in one frame of reference need not be simultaneous elsewhere. It also limits the maximum speed of interaction to the velocity of light. Nothing can move faster than light, and if anything moves faster than light it would contract to nothing.

Relativity of length and relativity of time are two important consequences of the special theory of relativity. Length is not something absolute in the sense that it has the same value for all persons at all places. Length is relative depending on the frame of reference. For instance, the length of a rod is four feet when measured by a stationary observer; the same rod will have a length less than four feet when it is placed in a fast moving frame of reference like a super space-shuttle for the same the stationary observer.

Time also is relative. A moving clock slows down with respect to a stationary observer. This means that if two exactly identical clocks are synchronized, but one is kept in a stationary frame of reference and the other in a moving one, the second one will show a lower reading than the first. Not only clocks, all other time-related phenomena too slow down in a moving frame of reference.

According to this theory, there is no absolute past, present, or future applicable to the cosmos as a whole. Similarly, two events that are simultaneous in one frame of reference need not be so in another frame of reference. Relativity of mass and the equivalence of mass and energy, are another amazing twin consequence of the special theory of relativity. Einstein also showed that mass too varied being relative to the frame of reference. A moving body has a greater mass than a stationary one. Perhaps the most far-reaching consequence was the mass-energy equivalence, according to which mass and energy are inter-convertible. Mass can be converted into energy:  $E = mc^2$ . Energy depends on its inertial mass and the velocity, and therefore energy can increase either with the increase of mass or velocity.

The General Theory of Relativity is the theory of gravitation which deals with bodies with accelerated motion (non-uniform motion). The concept of accelerated motion consists of change in speed or change in direction. The two postulates for the general theory of relativity is the principle of equivalence and gravity, which is defined as the curvature of space-time continuum.

The first postulate signifies the equivalence of accelerated motion and gravity. The second postulate of the General Theory of Relativity defines gravity as a geometrical property by which the presence of a huge mass can curve the space-time continuum. This aspect of relativity sees gravity not as a force (as held by Newton) between bodies but as a geometrical property.

A significant result of the theory of relativity is the happy blending of classical metaphysics and modern physics. Classical metaphysics views matter (prime matter) as the principle of indetermination, and form as the principle of determination. Matter in itself is capable of receiving any form. Matter remains relative to a form. This fundamental nature of relativity and indeterminacy of matter is the ultimate metaphysical foundation of the physical theories of quantum mechanics and relativity. Thus, the classical conception of prime matter as the principle of indetermination continues to be relevant in the context of the new findings of physics.

---

### 3.4. 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 traditionally known as 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, and 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, and 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 Aristotelean 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*. The following are the main characteristics of prime matter:

#### **Prime Matter as the Principle of Imperfect Individuation**

Individuation is the adequate distinction of one being from another. *Imperfect individuation* is the adequate distinction of beings which fall within the same species, e.g., the distinction between different individuals of the human species. *Individuality* or individuation is the unity of a being which is *one in itself and non-multipliable*. An individual is an existing unit of being incapable of being multiplied. An individual is one in such a manner that it cannot be divided. ‘Individual’ is in opposition to ‘universal’. The universal is a nature common to-one-and-many. It is capable of being realized in any number of individuals of the same class. As a class-nature it is conceived as a unit. Since it is communicable to many, it is multipliable. On the other hand, the individual

nature is one for itself alone so that it is incommunicable to others. The individual nature, as an existing individual incommunicable to many, is non-multipliable.

What is the principle of individuation which makes a being to be an individual? We can distinguish between an extrinsic and an intrinsic principle of individuation. The extrinsic principle is the efficient cause which gives an individual being its existence. The intrinsic principle is the ground or reason in the being itself which gives individuality to the being, so that it is one in itself and non-multipliable into many. In other words, what is it in the being itself that makes it to be 'this' individual. Since this question refers to the single individual, taken absolutely and without any relation to others, this intrinsic principle is called the *principle of absolute individuation*. It is the intrinsic principle which gives the unity of individuality to a being. In order to understand the problem rightly, we must compare the individual nature of a being with its specific nature.

#### **Individual Nature and Specific Nature**

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 of 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 neither 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 a 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.

### **Prime Matter as the Principle of Quantity**

Quantity is that which is one, yet divisible. There are two types of quantity: multitude and magnitude. *Multitude* is the composition of the discontinuous parts which are the subjects of the same species, e.g., multitude of humans. *Magnitude* is the composition of the continuous parts of a corporal being, e.g., a huge tree.

### **Prime matter as the Principle of Mutability and Passivity**

*Mutability* is the ability to change. There are two kinds of mutability: substantial mutability and accidental mutability. *Substantial mutability* is the ability to become an individual of another species, e.g., food becoming part of the one who eats it. *Accidental mutability* is the ability to undergo a change of accidents, e.g., a change in the weight of body or a change of opinion. *Passivity* is the ability to receive some perfection from another.

### **Prime matter as the Principle of Being -present-to-another**

Every being necessarily acts. The activity of the spirit is spiritual, which implies luminous self-awareness or knowledge. Hence, the pure spirit is primarily present to itself and only then is it present to the other. Human knows about the other first. One knows about oneself only afterwards. Hence, human is not pure spirit. There is in human a non-spiritual principle, namely, prime matter which is the principle of being-present-to-another.

---

## **3.5. 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 dresses, a 'formal occasion', a '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.*

Of course, human, dog, tree, coal, hydrogen, computers, etc. have *accidental forms* too. The human being will be of a certain age, sex, size, nationality, condition of health, temperature, location and so on. These many and variable forms do not constitute human's substance as this kind of *actual body*. They are *accidental forms*, not *substantial forms*. Each individual body has only one substantial form, but a plurality of accidental forms. 'Each individual body' means a *continuous body*. Now, any living body is continuous throughout its living structure. A lifeless body is strictly continuous at least in its minimum particles. In other words, the individual body, which is a single continuous quantity, is actuated only by one substantial form, but it *may be divided* into a plurality of individual bodies of the same species. Each of the bodies so resulting has its own substantial form. For instance, a rosebush may be cut and divided into several rosebushes. The undivided bush has only one substantial form *actually*. But in the plant in question, the bodily substance is capable of division in such a way that life may be preserved in each of the parts. Thus, the plant has a potentiality or capacity for such division, and its substantial form is said to have a parallel potentiality or capacity by reason of its dependence upon the matter of the plant. Hence we can say that the rose-bush is actually one, but potentially many. Similarly, we can also say that the *substantial form of the rose-bush* is actually one, potentially many. Substantial forms of the human souls, and that of most animals, are never multiple either actually or potentially. Each of such forms is necessarily *one* substantial form having no capacity for division according to division of the body-structure (matter) on which, intrinsically or extrinsically, it depends.

In a living body, the life-principle (soul, entelechy) is the substantial form. When this form is driven out by death, the remaining structure is substantially different from the living body. The corpse of a human is not a human. It is a package of various inorganic (non-living) substances and naturally tends to break up, or decomposes. Hence, a corpse is not a single substance but a mixture of many substances; whereas the living human, actualized by the spiritual substantial form (soul) is a single human substance.

Substantial change involves the acquisition or incoming of a new substantial form and the simultaneous loss or outgoing of the old substantial form while the prime matter remains. When a living body is changed to a dead body, there occurs a substantial change. Again, when hydrogen and oxygen are brought together in due proportion, the gases are changed into water. The properties of water are not the same as those of the gases. Here, we know that the change is a change of substance. The two substances have become a single compound substance called water. Therefore, substances manifest their character by their properties. When the properties are wholly changed we know that the substance is changed. Inasmuch as the change results in the production of a new substance (substances) it is *generation*. The same change, inasmuch as it results in the loss of the previous substantial form, it is *corruption*. The generation of one substance(s) is the corruption of another, and vice versa.

When a compound substance (such as water) is generated by the fusion or union of other substances, we have a *compound*. A compound is a substantial unity. The substantial forms of the elements joined together in a compound, endure in the compound in a *virtual manner*, and not *actually*. For example, the substantial form of water is a true substantial form, distinct from the form of hydrogen and the form of oxygen which are the constitutive elements of water. The forms of these elements can be generated again from water. In other words, these elements are latently or *potentially* present in the water, and not *actually*. And this potential or latent presence of the elements in the water is not a purely passive thing since the water is capable of being reduced to the gases. The potential presence of the elements is a kind of *active* potentiality which is called *virtual*. Thus, we can say that the elements in a compound are present in the compound, not *actually* but *virtually*. To be more precise, the *substantial forms* of the elements are virtually present in the substantial chemical compound.

To have new bodily substance we must have old bodily substance, since bodies come from other bodies by generation and corruption. However, the process of generation cannot proceed in an infinite series of bodies from other bodies, and there from other bodies, and so on for ever. For an actual infinity in anything limited or finite is a contradiction. Hence, the *first* bodily beings cannot have come into existence by way of generation, i.e., by way of substantial change. The *first* finite being must have come into existence by an *absolute* production by the Infinite Power without any material prerequisites. Such a production is called *creation*. It is the *production of a being in its entirety out of nothing*. It is “*productio totius rei ex nihilo sui et subjecti*”. It means “the production of a thing is entirety out of nothingness either of self or of subject”. *Nothingness* refers to the absence of all pre-existing materials. The calling of being out of nothingness is the exercise of *absolute or unconditioned and unlimited power*. And such power is exercised only by the Absolute and Infinite Being.

*Substantial form* is an inner principle of primary actualization or determination of a being. It is the inner principle of specific perfection. It is active, and it is determining. It makes a body actual in a definite specific kind of actual bodiliness. The result of the substantial union of substantial form with prime matter is called *second matter or materia secunda*. *Materia secunda* is an existing bodily substance. Substantial form is the root and source of bodily actuality, of substantial determinateness, of activity; whereas prime matter is wholly potential, indeterminate, inactive, or inert. *Kinds of substantial form: Pure substantial form* is the inner principle of primary determination which constitutes the whole being, e.g., angels. *Component substantial form* is the inner principle of primary determination which is only a constitutive principle of being, e.g., substantial forms of all material beings. *Subsistent component substantial form* is the inner principle of primary determination which of itself has its act of existing, e.g., the human Soul. *Non-subsistent component substantial form* is the inner principle of primary determination which exists and can exist only insofar as it is in union with matter, e.g., animal forms, vegetative forms, and inanimate forms.

<b>Check Your Progress</b>
----------------------------

**Note:** Use the space provided for your Answers.

1) How do you explain matter and form from classical perspectives?

-----  
 -----  
 -----

2) How do you relate matter to modern theories of quantum mechanics and theory of relativity?

-----  
 -----  
 -----

---

### 3.6. LET US SUM UP

Prime matter is the principle of indetermination, and substantial form is the principle of determination. The theories of quantum mechanics and relativity critically challenge our way of looking at matter. The new vision of matter in quantum physics is generally termed the philosophy of quantum mechanics with its two fundamental principles: principle of complementarity and the principle of uncertainty. The principle of complementarity explains the wave-particle duality of light; the principle of indeterminacy or the uncertainty principle states that it is impossible to exactly determine both the position and momentum of a particle at the same time. A significant result of the theory of relativity is the happy blending of classical metaphysics and modern physics. Classical metaphysics views prime matter as the principle of indetermination, and form as the principle of determination. Matter in itself is capable of receiving any form. Matter remains relative to a form. This fundamental nature of relativity and indeterminacy of matter is the ultimate metaphysical foundation of the physical theories of quantum mechanics and relativity. Thus, the classical conception of prime matter as the principle of indetermination continues to be relevant in the context of the new findings of physics too.

All material beings possess a principle of materiality. It is not a being at all but a principle of material beings as such. This principle of materiality is traditionally known as prime matter. The other substantial principle (with the exception of the 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 the principle of imperfect individuation, quantity, mutability, and of being-present-to-another. Substantial form is the principle of determination, which determines a substance in its actual being, and makes it a substance of this precise kind. It is an inner principle of primary determination of a being. It is the inner principle of specific perfection. It is active and determining. There are four kinds of substantial forms: pure substantial form, component substantial form, subsistent component substantial form, and non-subsisting component substantial form.

---

### 3.7. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Bittle, Celestine. *The Domain of Being*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1950.

Clark, Ronald W. *Einstein: The Life and Times*. New York: Avon Books, 1971.

- Coreth, Emerich. *Metaphysics*. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.
- Eddington, Sir Arthur. *The Physical Nature of the Physical World*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1968.
- Glenn, Paul J. *An Introduction to Philosophy*. London: Herder Book Co., 1966.
- Heisenberg, Werner. *The Physicists' Conception of Nature*. London: The Scientific Book Guild, 1962.
- Pagels, Heinz R. *The Cosmic Code - Quantum Physics as the Language of Nature*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982.
- Pamplany, Augustine. "Quantum Mechanics." In: *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. II. Edited by Johnson Puthenpurackal and George Panthanmackel. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010.
- Pamplany, Augustine and Kozhamthadam, Job. *East-West Interface of Reality: A Scientific and Intuitive Inquiry into the Nature of Reality*. Pune: ASSR Publications, 2003.
- Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives*. Bangalore: ATC, 1999.
- Panthanmackel, George. *One in Many: An Investigation into the Metaphysical Vision of Karl Rahner*. Bangalore: SFS Publications, 1993.
- Rahner, Karl. *Spirit in the World*. Translation by W. Dych. London: Sheed and Ward, 1968.
- Russel, Bertrand. *The ABC of Relativity*. New York: New American Library, 1959.
- Thanniyiel, Tigi. "Relativity." In: *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. II. Edited by Johnson Puthenpurackal and George Panthanmackel. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010.
- Venkataraman, G. *At The Speed of Light*. Hyderabad: University Press, 1993.



---

## UNIT 4 ACT AND POTENCY

---

### Contents

- 4.0. Objectives
- 4.1. Introduction
- 4.2. Act
- 4.3. Potency
- 4.4. Potency and Possibility
- 4.5. Potency and Change
- 4.6. Potency and Evolution
- 4.7. Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8. Further Readings and References

---

### 4.0. OBJECTIVES

---

Is everything changing? If everything changes, then change is the unchanging reality. Along with change, we also experience stability. Change seems to be guaranteeing stability. For instance, planets are kept in stable orbits because of their motion. In this Unit we explore the metaphysical meaning of:

- Act
- Potency
- Act and potency
- Potency and possibility
- Potency and evolution

---

### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

---

The concepts of act and potency have historically 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.

---

### 4.2. 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, and 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. The acts are distinguished as the following: *Act of essence*: The act of essence is the act which perfects and determines a being in its species. It is that constitutive principle of a being which makes a being just this particular kind of being and nothing else. *Act of existing* is the act of Being. It is unlimited perfection. *Act of property* is the act of perfecting and determining an essence in which the entity of property flows necessarily from its essence. *Act of accident* is the act of perfection and determination of a being in which the entity of the accident does not flow necessarily from the essence of the being, e.g., dark hair, dark skin, one's weight, height, etc. *Pure act* is subsisting perfection without any limit. It lacks no entity, nor can it receive an increase of entity as it possesses all possible actuality. There are pure acts both in the *order of existence* and *essence*. *The order of existence* implies the act of existing of all beings and the exercise or occurrence or happening of all operations. *The order of essence* implies all the determinations of beings, which make them be such or such. The *pure act* in the order of existence is God; the pure acts in the order of essence are angels, whose substantial forms are not restricted. *Mixed act* is a composition of perfection and potentiality, e.g., all corporal beings. *Mixed act in the order of existence proper*: It includes every finite being insofar it is composed of *the act of existing* and *complete essence*. *Mixed act in the order of complete essence*: Complete essence is a composition of substance and accidents. *Mixed act in the order of substance*: Every corporal substance is composed of prime matter and substantial form. *Mixed act in the order of operation*: Every operation of a finite being is composed of exercise and determination.

---

#### 4.3. 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 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; 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.

**Act is Limited only by Potency**: The notion of act does not include any limitation. For, act is perfection and potency is limitation and hence imperfection. But if act as act is limitation, a pure act would be a contradiction in terms. For, pure act excludes the possibility of any limitation and imperfection. Hence a pure act limited of itself would be a contradiction in terms. However, it does not mean that any act which exists in reality is without any limitation. It is true that it does not include limitation; nevertheless, it does not *exclude* it either. Hence if an act is found to be limited, it is not limited by itself but by the limiting principle in which it is received, i.e., by potency.

**Potency is Limited of Itself:** By its very nature, potency is a limited receptive principle of perfection. It is a capacity for perfection. All the same, in a certain sense, potency may be said to be limited by the act to which it is ordered and which it receives. For instance, the potency of water to be heated is a potency to be heated, and therefore limited by the act of heat. It is not a potency to be a human person. For this reason potencies are distinguished and diversified according to the act to which they refer. The following conclusions can be drawn from the fact that act is limited only by potency: a) If there is an act not limited by potency, it is *infinite*. For whatever is not limited is unlimited or infinite. b) If there is an act not limited by potency, it is *unique*. For two or more infinite acts in the same order are impossible, since such acts would either be different or not. If they are not different, then they are not two but one and the same. If they are different, one would have to have a perfection which is lacking in the other. Hence, this other would not be infinite but finite. Hence, of necessity, an infinite act is to be unique.

**Potency and Act are Really Distinct:** Potency and act are really distinct; for that which perfects cannot be really the same as the perfectible. Otherwise the perfectible would give itself an act which it does not have, so that Being would come from non-Being. Besides, if potency and act were not really distinct, that which limits and that which is limited would be really the same so that act would limit itself. From the real distinction of potency and act, it follows that nothing can be potency and act in the same respect; for this would imply that that which perfects is really the same as that which is perfected or perfectible.

**Act and Potency Enter into a Real Composition:** Act and potency are merely principles which by their union form a complete whole. Hence, the real distinction between an act and its potency is not a distinction between two separate entities or beings, but a distinction between two principles of one and the same reality, namely, a *metaphysical* distinction.

---

#### 4.4. POTENCY AND POSSIBILITY

---

*Possibility* is objective potency. It is the capacity or aptitude of a being for receiving existence. A 'possible' passes from a state of relative non-existence to existence. "*What is not yet, but can be.*" There are two kinds of possibility: subjective possibility (logical possibility) and objective possibility. *Subjective possibility* is the conceivability in which we do not see any contradiction. A being of subjective possibility is a being which was not, is not, and will not be, but conceivable. It has existence only in the mind. e.g., a human with a hundred eyes. *Objective possibility* (ontological possibility) is the real possibility of an object which in fact is not contradictory. For example, when we derive the concepts of 'gold' and 'mountain', our intellect perceives that these concepts are compatible, and can be united into one concept whose component parts do not contradict each other. Hence, we can base the possible 'golden mountain' upon the contingent realities from which we have abstracted the concepts of 'mountain' and 'gold.' Possibility also differs from potency. For, every possibility implies a certain act (actuality), hence it is always an objective potency; whereas potency need not always contain an act, as in the case of pure potency (prime matter). *Possibility and Impossibility:* A thing is *possible* inasmuch as it is *existible*, inasmuch as it *can be*. A thing is possible *in itself* (intrinsically) when the concept of it involves no contradiction. For, that which involves contradiction in its very concept is not a thing, but the absence of being. It is self-cancelling and amounts to zero. A 'square circle' is a contradiction in itself. It is simply *no-thing*. Such a thing lacks intrinsic

possibility. It is called a *thing* merely by figure, analogy, and by reason of the want of words for the expression of sheer negation. It is *intrinsically (absolutely or metaphysically)* impossible. What is intrinsically impossible simply cannot be even by a miracle of God. This does not mean that God's power is limited. God cannot produce what is intrinsically impossible, because this is not a thing at all. It is *no-thing or nothing*. What is producible is always some particular thing.

The first point to establish, when there is the question of the possibility of anything, is the fact of its intrinsic possibility. When a thing is intrinsically possible it is existible. It is *absolutely* or *metaphysically* possible by the power of God, though it may not be possible by the power of creatures. It may be intrinsically possible, and yet lack the *extrinsic* and *relative* possibility of creature-causes to produce it. Thus a mountain of gold or a human with a hundred eyes is intrinsically possible. It involves no contradiction in itself.

---

#### 4.5. POTENCY AND CHANGE (MOTION)

---

Change is the transition or passage from potency to act or from act to potency. There are three conditions required for change: *Starting-point (Terminus a quo* = term from which); it should have a definite starting point. *Ending-point (Terminus ad quem* = term towards which); it should have a definite point to end up. *A Real transition* from one point or state to another. *Kinds of change: Positive change and negative change. Positive change* is the transition or passage from potency to act. There are four kinds of positive change: creation, generation, accidental change, and local change. *Creation* is a passage from mere possibility to actuality, that is, from non-existence to existence, e.g., creation of the cosmos. *Generation* is a passage or transition from one substantial form to another in which a new substantial form is acquired, e.g., generation of a plant. *Accidental change* is the passage from one accident to another, e.g., water vaporizes to steam at 212 F (Fahrenheit = 100 C). *Local change* is the passage from one place to another. *Negative change* is the passage from actuality to potentiality. There are three kinds of negative change: corruption, privation, and annihilation. *Corruption* is passage from one substantial form to another in which there is a loss of the previous substantial form, e.g., the life and death of plants and animals. *Privation* is the loss of the previous accidental form, e.g., becoming blind. *Annihilation* is the passage from existence to non-existence, e.g., soul of animal in death.

---

#### 4.6. POTENCY AND EVOLUTION

---

**Evolution of the Cosmos through The Big Bang:** Albert Einstein in 1905 proposed the special theory of relativity in which he conveyed the effects of a body accelerating with a velocity almost equivalent to that of light. Based on the relativity field equations, many scientists described the beginning and the possible end of the universe. It was Alexander Friedmann, who tried to solve the field equations and suggested the possible beginning and end of the universe mathematically. The greatness of Friedmann was that he made his prediction when there was no observational evidence for a Universe that would expand and evolve with time. Expansion of the universe became a widely accepted concept towards the middle of the twentieth century and the forerunners of this theory were the Belgian priest George Lemaître and Edwin Powell Hubble. Lemaître was one of the pioneers who applied Albert Einstein's theory of General Relativity to cosmology and proposed that the cosmos was confined to a tiny atom, and that an explosion expanded this universe. He envisioned all the heavenly bodies squeezed into a super, compact, primordial matter called the 'primeval atom.' Then all at once there was this moment of the Big Bang. The theoretical musings of Lemaître and Friedmann were brought to the forefront by the



investigations of Edwin Powell Hubble, an American astronomer, who established on his observational evidences that the galaxies are not at rest in space. He developed the theory of the Big Bang to its full stature; he is also noted for the discovery of the Andromeda galaxy, the Hubble Constant, Hubble's Law, and for his numerous other observations from his famous Mount Wilson Observatory. He also observed the red-shift of a number of galaxies and found that the farther the distance of the galaxy, the greater is the red-shift. This showed that the farthest galaxies are moving at a greater speed than the closer ones.

**Evolution of Life Through Cells:** The bodies of animals and plants are made up of separate units called cells. The human body, for example, consists approximately of 100 trillion cells but most are too small to see unless highly magnified. All cells consist of a very complex living material called *protoplasm*, and are made up of three basic parts. They have a thin skin called the *cell membrane*; this membrane encloses a jelly-like substance called *cytoplasm* and a small object called a *nucleus* (Most cells have a single nucleus bounded by a nuclear envelope, or membrane, with pores. Pores provide continuity between the nucleus and the cytoplasm. The nucleus contains one or more discrete structures, known as nucleoli, which are sites of ribosomal ribonucleic acid (RNA) synthesis. Hereditary information is in the DNA contained within the chromosomes in the nucleus. This information is transcribed into RNA in the nucleus, which then serves as a messenger. The messenger moves outside the nucleus to the ribosomes, where it guides the synthesis of proteins. Thus, the nucleus directs the activity of the cell. There are many tiny living objects in the cytoplasm called *organelles*. All cells contain round or sausage-shaped organelles known as *mitochondria*. These are the power plants of a cell. Mitochondria contain enzymes which release energy from food. This process is called respiration. Tiny organelles, *ribosomes*, float in the cytoplasm. Ribosomes contain a chemical known as *ribonucleic acid* (RNA). They take part in the manufacture of proteins. Organelles called *lysosomes* contain enzymes which are released when cells are injured. Cytoplasm also contains a number of flattened spaces known as *Golgi Body*. This stores useful substances before they are secreted from the cell. All cells contain a nucleus which contains one or more discrete structures known as nucleoli, which are sites of ribosomal RNA synthesis. The nucleus has a membrane with holes through which chemicals move to and from the cytoplasm, and it is rich in a chemical called *deoxyribonucleic acid* (DNA). This chemical is a part of the *chromosomes*, which only become visible in a nucleus when a cell divides. DNA is concerned with protein manufacture, and plays an essential part in cell division. It is a long, thread-like molecule, similar in shape to a rope ladder twisted into a spiral. The upright sides of the ladder are made of alternate sugar and phosphate molecules joined into a chain. The rungs of the ladder are made of chemical bases, of which there are four types: *adenine*, *guanine*, *cytosine*, and *thymine*. They are often referred to by their initial letters A, G, C, and T. The genetic code is formed by the sequence in which these four chemical bases are arranged along the length of a DNA molecule. Most of a cell's DNA is contained in the chromosomes in its nucleus, but proteins are made in the cytoplasm of a cell. Somehow the coded instructions for protein manufacture must pass from the nucleus to the cytoplasm and then be transcribed. This task is carried out by two types of substance, such as ribonucleic acid (RNA) which works in conjunction with microscopic granules in the cytoplasm, *ribosomes*. The two types are called messenger RNA and transfer RNA. In the nucleus, a part of the DNA molecule opens up, exposing the gene for a particular protein. The messenger RNA copies the sequence of bases which make up the gene. The transfer RNA picks up amino acid molecules and carries them to the ribosome where the amino acids are linked together, forming a

protein molecule. The sequence of amino acids in the protein molecule depends upon the way the transfer RNA molecules fit into the messenger RNA, and this depends upon the sequence of bases in the gene.

It has now been revealed that in terms of the number of genes in our cells, we humans are only a little better than the lowly roundworm which has just over 19,000 genes and the fruit fly that has some 13,600. Results published by two teams of scientists, in February, 2001, put the number of genes in the human genome at around 30,000, that is, less than a third of what was estimated earlier (c.100,000). However, humans being very thrifty with their genes are able to do more with their genes than other species. For instance, instead of producing only one protein per gene, as believed earlier, the average human gene has been found to produce three different proteins. Moreover, each gene directly interacts with four or five on an average, and thus functions in a collective manner. It is also surprising to know that in the 75 % of repetitive DNA sequences, which are known as junk DNA and were considered to be useless, there are sequences that are still active and may be coding for proteins. The genome sequence also shows that every person on Earth shares 99.99 % of the same genetic code with all other people, a fact that should help settle the question of racial or ethnic superiority.

**History of Human Evolution:** Scientists agree that life did not always exist on earth. They estimate that it began about four billion years ago. About four billion years ago, *Aries*, the first prokaryotic cells, appeared on earth. On account of the balance of Earth's own internal dynamics and its position in the structure of the solar system, matter existed as solid, liquid, and gas, and flowed from one form into another to provide an incessantly creative chemical womb from which arose *Aries*, the first prokaryotic living cell. The primal prokaryotic cells had the power to organize themselves, as did the stars and galaxies. The cells could also remember significant information, even the patterns necessary to knit together another living cell. The cells also possessed a new order of creativity to catch the pockets of energy hurled by the Sun at the speed of light, and to use these quanta as food. *Aries* and the prokaryotes hydrogen from the ocean had released oxygen into Earth's system, which saturated the land and the seas. However, the prokaryotes unknowingly pushed Earth's system into an extremely unstable condition by altering earth's chemistry with this element of explosive power. Consequently, the prokaryote communities perished as their interiors were set ablaze by the oxygen. But out of this crisis arose *Vikengla*, a new and radically advanced being. *Vikengla* was the first eukaryotic cell which was capable of shaping oxygen's dangerous energy for its own purposes. The eukaryotes invented meiotic sex by which the universe's diversity expanded a hundredfold, through sexual union. Finally, the eukaryotes took that daring step of submerging themselves into a larger mind as a trillion of them gathered together and evoked Argos, the first multicellular animal. About 600 million years ago, there arose the multicellular organisms. They included the corals, worms, insects, clams, starfish, sponges, spiders, vertebrates, leeches, and other forms of life. The animals followed the plants onto land, heaved with amphibians, reptiles, insects, and dinosaurs. About 67 million years ago there was an astronomical collision that changed Earth's atmosphere and climate, which nearly destroyed all forms of animal life on Earth, including the dinosaurs. But such destructions opened up new possibilities seized upon by the birds and the mammals. The mammals entered Earth's life about 200 million years ago. They developed emotional sensitivity, a new capacity within their nervous systems for feeling the universe. This mammalian emotional sensitivity was deepened with the human neural capability, the self-consciousness. Four million years ago in Africa, humans stood up on just two limbs; and by two

million years ago they began to use tools. Beginning around thirty-five thousand years ago, they began a new form of celebration that displayed itself in cave paintings deep within Earth. About 12 thousand years ago, the first Neolithic villages were formed in Jericho, Catal Hiiyik and Hassuna. It was the most radical social transformation ever to occur in the human venture. In this period, the decisive developments in language, religion, cosmology, arts, music, and dance took their primordial form. The urban civilization began to shape itself about five thousand years ago, giving rise to new power centres: Babylon, Paris, Persopolis, Banaras, Rome, Jerusalem Constantinople, Sion, Athens, Baghdad, Tikal of the Maya, Cairo, Mecca, Delhi, Tenochtitlan of the Aztec, London, Cuzeo, the Inca City of the Sun. Europeans initiated the third of humanity's great wandering about five hundred years ago. The first had brought *Homo erectus* out of Africa to spread throughout Eurasia. The second was that of the *Homo Sapiens* who wandered until they reached the Americas and Australia. The principal difference of the third wandering was that now the Europeans encountered humans wherever they went and they colonized them.

From the above-mentioned it is true that today all scientists admit that there has been some evolution at least within the confines of a definite species, resulting in the production of new races and varieties. This is a fact of observation. The most extreme fundamentalists admit that all present human races are descended from one original couple, and this supposes a certain amount of evolution. But there are fewer facts and more hypotheses as we pass from species to genus, to family, to order, to class, and to phylum. A considerable number of observations point towards an evolution of very wide extent; many facts can be easily explained on the basis of those hypotheses which are difficult to interpret 'scientifically' in any other way. Yet, universal evolution (from amoeba to ape) cannot be considered to be an established fact, and will most probably always remain a hypothesis, although the great majority of scientists favour that view.

As for the way of explaining the evolutionary process, there has been, until rather recently, considerable disagreement between the proponents of evolution. The five most important explanations are: (1) Lamarck's explanation through adaptation and the inherited transmission of acquired characteristics; (2) Darwin's explanation through natural selection; (3) De Vries' explanation through mutations; (4) Teilhard de Chardin's inclusive or integrative evolution; and (5) Stephen Hawking's view on increase in complexity.

**Lamarck** (1744-1829), a French naturalist, posited the two following laws: (a) In every animal which has not passed the limit of its development, the frequent use of any organ gradually strengthens and develops that organ, while constant disuse gradually weakens it until it disappears; (b) when such modifications have been acquired by both sexes in a species, they are transmitted to their offspring.

**Darwin** (1809-1882), the great British naturalist, postulated three facts to explain evolution: (a) *The accidental variations occurring continually in nature*: In every litter some of the offspring are stronger, faster, etc., than the others; (b) *The struggle for life*: The food supply is limited, and each animal has to fight to get its share of it; (c) *Natural selection*: In this struggle the stronger and faster individuals will survive, while the weaker and slower are eliminated. The fittest survive, and since they tend to mate with the fittest, the generations of offspring gradually improve.



**De Vries** (1848-1925), a Dutch botanist, discovered the phenomenon called ‘mutation’, which consists in a sudden change in one or several of the genes of a new born individual, producing more or less considerable changes in the animal’s specific features. Such mutations have been studied extensively – and even produced artificially – in laboratory-bred organisms, especially in the fruit-fly. They also occur spontaneously in nature, where they are known as ‘sports’.

**Teilhard de Chardin** (1881-1955): When Teilhard started his career, evolution was held in suspicion if not in condemnation. However, he accepted evolution as an undeniable fact. The basic, generalized, idea of evolution is that the universe and the material realities within it did not come into existence as finished products. Rather, they appeared in the course of a gradual, continuous, and progressive process. He holds that the early earth had latent germinal powers. Everything that was to appear, even humans, was already there in the initial ‘stuff of the universe’ in some extremely attenuated form. The evolutionary movement starting from the primordial atoms, proceeds until the universe arrives at the centre of centres which he calls the Omega Point. At a certain point of the evolutionary movement, life shows up; at another, the power of self-reflection. From the cell to the thinking animal, as from the atom to the cell, a single process (a psychical kindling or concentration) goes on without interruption and always in the same direction. Evolution is Orthogenetic; Evolution is the Development of the Spiritual; Evolution is Continuous; Evolution is Creative Transformation; it is Theistic. Teilhard explained that the motive force needed for evolutionary process comes from the upward striving consciousness, the ‘within’ of cosmic matter. Other elements like struggle for survival, natural selection, mutation, and sudden changes of hereditary factors also play a part. But the development of life, which clearly strives after increasingly complex forms, can only be explained by this inner movement of the ‘within.’ The ‘within’ includes, integrates, and guides all the other factors. We may verbalize this Teilhardian vision of evolution as ‘Inclusive or Integrative Evolution’.

**Stephen Hawking** (1942- ), a Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University, holds the view that in the process of evolution, the most important change has been the change in the level of information contained in DNA. An increase in the level of information relates directly to the increase in the level of complexity. As complexity increases, at certain stages, better forms with more intelligence appear. This is how we have evolved from apes. In future too, there will be a steady increase in the level of complexity in the DNA. This rate could be increased to a great extent if we could design DNAs. Thus we will have designer DNAs and scientists will design plants, animals, and may be, even human beings. In the next 100 years we will be able to grow babies outside the womb. Presently, human intelligence is restricted by the size of the brain that can pass through the birth canal. If the babies are grown outside the womb, there will be no such restrictions. These babies will have designed DNA structure and hence, would be close to being the advanced forms of human beings. The present millennium will be dominated by two advanced forms: One form will result from the increase in level of the complexity of our DNA molecule, the advanced human forms; and the other advanced form will result from the increase in the level of the complexity of the electronic circuits, namely, computers. We are today more complex than the computers, but then, the rate of increase in complexity of computers is considerably faster than the rate of increase in complexity of our brain. If both forms do not indulge in wars, they would be able to have better control over natural factors and hence could gain control over the universe. The future will bring about major



changes in the human race and lead to the formation of advanced forms, which probably would not look like the present-day humans.

It can be concluded that neither the adaptations emphasized by Lamarck, nor the natural selection of Darwin, nor the mutations of De Vries, nor the increase in complexity of Stephen Hawking can *of themselves alone* explain evolution. These factors have been most certainly at work in evolution, yet the over-all progress of evolution is not explained by the blind influence of these mechanical factors. Some kind of *finality* seems to be required if we want to present a complete explanation of evolution. Finalism holds that evolution does not result from the blind interaction of the forces of nature, but is informed by a purpose; it strives towards an end under the guidance of a directing mind as illustrated by Teilhard de Chardin.

### Check Your Progress

**Note:** use the space provided for your Answers

1) Explain the relation between act and potency.

-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----

2) How is potency related to evolution?

-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----

### 4.7. LET US SUM UP

The concepts of act and potency have historically delineated the dramatic antinomy felt by Greek thought with Being (Parmenides) and becoming (Heraclitus). The term 'Act' means *perfection itself*. Whatever a being *has* or *is* in a positive manner is an act. Potency means power. It is the capacity for act. The notion of act does not include any limitation. For, act is perfection and potency is limitation and hence imperfection. *Possibility* is objective potency. It is the capacity of a being for receiving existence. Change is the transition or passage from potency to act or from act to potency. Evolution implies and manifests potency. It is the change, over time, in one or more inherited traits passed on from one generation to the next, including anatomical, biochemical, or behavioural characteristics. Generally, scientists speak of two kinds of evolution: evolution of the cosmos and evolution of life. The concept of the evolution of the cosmos has its basis in the theory of the Big Bang. The evolution of life began with the origin and development cells, the basic unit of life and life-processes. The scientists agree that life did not always exist on earth. They estimate that it began about four billion years ago. About four billion years ago, *Aries*, the first prokaryotic cells appeared on earth. On account of the balance of Earth's own internal dynamics and its position in the structure of the solar system, matter existed as solid, liquid, and gas and flowed from one form into another to provide an incessantly creative chemical womb from which arose *Aries*, the first prokaryotic living cell.

As for the way of explaining the evolutionary process, there has been, until rather recently, considerable disagreement between the proponents of evolution. It can be concluded that neither Lamarck, nor Darwin, nor De Vries, nor Stephen Hawking can satisfactorily explain evolution, since *finality* is lacking in their conjectures. The over-all progress of evolution is not explained by the blind influence of mechanical factors. Some kind of *finality* seems to be required if we want to present a convincing explanation of evolution. Evolution, in fact, does not result from the blind interaction of the forces of nature but is informed by a purpose; it strives towards an end under the guidance of a directing mind as illustrated by Teilhard de Chardin.

---

#### 4.8. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

---

- Arimboor, Xavier. "Evolution." In: *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. I. Edited by Johnson Puthenpurackal and George Panthanmackel. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010.
- Barrow, John D. *The Origin of the Universe: To the Edge of Space and Time*. New York: Phoenix. 1994.
- Bittle, Celestine. *The Domain of Being*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1950.
- Buss, David M. *Evolutionary Psychology: the New Science of the Mind*. Boston: Pearson/A and B., 2004.
- Chandrakunnel, Mathew. "Big Bang Theory." In: *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. I. Edited by Johnson Puthenpurackal and George Panthanmackel. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010.
- Clarke, Murray. *Reconstructing Reason and Representation*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2004.
- Coreth, Emerich. *Metaphysics*. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.
- De Chardin, Teilhard. *Hymn of the Universe*. London: Harper and Row, 1961.
- De Chardin, Teilhard. *The Phenomenon of Man*. London: Harper Perennial 1976.
- George A. *The Cosmic Christ: From Paul to Teilhard*. London: Sheed and Ward 1968.
- Joyce, Richard. *The Evolution of Morality: Life and Mind: Philosophical Issues in Biology and Psychology*. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2006.
- Miller, Geoffrey P. *The Mating Mind: How Sexual Choice Shaped the Evolution of Human Nature*. Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 2000.
- O'Connell, Robert J. *Teilhard's Vision of the Past: The Making of a Method*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1982.
- Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives*. Bangalore: ATC, 1999.

Roberts, Noel Keith. *From Piltdown Man to Point Omega: the Evolutionary Theory of Teilhard de Chardin*. New York: Peter Lang, 2000.

Singh, Simon. *Big Bang: The Origin of the Universe*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2004.



Indira Gandhi National Open University  
School of Interdisciplinary and  
Trans-disciplinary Studies

**MPYE – 008**

**Metaphysics**

**Block 3**

**RELATION OF BEING AND BEINGS**

**UNIT 1**

**Being and Relation**

**UNIT 2**

**Being and Causality**

**UNIT 3**

**Being and Analogy**

**UNIT 4**

**Being and the Problem of One and Many**



**Expert Committee**

Prof. Gracious Thomas  
Director, School of  
Social Work  
IGNOU

Salesian College &  
IGNOU Study Centre  
Dimapur, Nagaland

Prof. Renu Bharadwaj  
School of Humanities  
IGNOU

Dr. Sathya Sundar  
Sethy  
Dept of Humanities  
IIT, Chennai.

Prof. George  
Panthanmackel,  
Senior Consultant,  
IGNOU

Dr. Joseph Martis  
St. Joseph's College  
Jeppu, Mangalore – 2

Dr. M. R. Nandan  
Govt. College for  
Women  
Mandya - Mysore

Dr. Jaswinder Kaur  
Dhillon  
147, Kabir park  
Opp. GND University  
Amristar – 143 002

Dr. Kuruvila  
Pandikattu  
Jnana-deepa  
Vidyapeeth  
Ramwadi,  
Pune

Prof. Y.S. Gowramma  
Principal,  
College of Fine Arts,  
Manasagangotri  
Mysore – 570 001

Dr Babu Joseph  
CBCI Centre  
New Delhi

Prof. Tasadduq Husain  
Aligarh Muslim  
University  
Aligarh

Dr. Bhuvaneswari  
Lavanya Flats  
Gangai Amman Koil  
St.  
Thiruvanmiyur  
Chennai – 600 041

Dr. Alok Nag  
Vishwa Jyoti Gurukul  
Varanasi

Dr. Jose Kuruvachira

**Block Preparation**

Units 1-4

Prof. George Panthanmackel  
Suvidya College,  
Electronic City, Bangalore.

**Content Editor**

Dr. V. John Peter  
IGNOU, New Delhi.

**Format Editor**

Prof. Gracious Thomas  
IGNOU, New Delhi.

**Programme Coordinator**

Prof. Gracious Thomas  
IGNOU, New Delhi.



---

## BLOCK INTRODUCTION

---

Being is that which is some way or 'something.' There is no being which is not 'something.' Something or Being underlies, penetrates, transforms, and unifies all beings. Being is the Being of beings. 'Relation' means the reference of one thing to another, mutual inter-directedness and the bearing (reference, respect, attitude, ordination) of one thing to something else. 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,

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. 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.

**Unit 1** explains both the ontology and epistemology of relation. Being, as the ultimate foundation of all beings, is related to all beings. "To be is to be related." Being is related to beings both ontologically and epistemologically. We cannot think and speak of Being without any knowledge of it. Both ontology and epistemology are inseparably related. They are the two aspects of 'the same coin,' which is metaphysics. Metaphysics is metaphysics of Being and knowledge. Hence, metaphysics of relation presupposes both ontology of relation and epistemology of relation.

**Unit 2** briefly describes the essential nature of cause, main divisions of cause, cause in its relation to effect, condition, occasion, sufficient reason and chance. 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'.

**Unit 3** elaborates on 'Being and Analogy,' from both Western and Indian perspectives. In understanding and grasping Being as being, some how it escapes us in some way, goes away from us without leaving us completely. Each being is analogous because being itself is originally analogous; for Being, that which is in some way, is in its own way. In other words, Being is analogous in itself.

**Unit 4** attempts to tackle the metaphysical problem of One and Many. There is an inseparable relation between One and many. 'Many' cannot be without 'One.' The 'many' has its foundation in the 'One,' which sustains and supports the many. In the same way, the One never remains in isolation apart from 'the many.' It is because the One by its very nature is 'relational,' social, and self-giving by allowing itself to be limited in the finite other so that the finite is made possible by the infinite One. This unit attempts to establish that Being is One in Many.

---

## UNIT 1 BEING AND RELATION

---

### Contents

- 1.0. Objectives
- 1.1. Introduction
- 1.2. Ontology of Relation
- 1.3. Epistemology of Relation
- 1.4. Let Us Sum Up
- 1.5. Further Readings and References

---

### 1.0. OBJECTIVES

---

Being is that which is some way or 'something.' There is no being which is not 'something.' Something or Being underlies, penetrates, transforms, and unifies all beings. Being is the Being of beings. Being, as the ultimate foundation of all beings, is related to all beings. "To be is to be related." Being is related to beings both ontologically and epistemologically. Hence, this Unit explains both:

- Ontology of relation
- Epistemology of relation

---

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

---

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), which is always the object and subject of knowledge. We cannot think and speak of Being without any knowledge of it. Both ontology and epistemology are inseparably related. They are the two aspects of 'the same coin,' which is metaphysics. Metaphysics is metaphysics of Being and knowledge. Hence, metaphysics of relation presupposes both ontology of relation and epistemology of relation.

---

### 1.2. ONTOLOGY OF RELATION

---

**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 and 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 colour. 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.

Every category contains foundation. Substance contains the foundation for specific identity and diversity. Two flasks of water, two sparrows, two humans, etc. (the two members of each pair being compared together), are identical in species. Each pair, compared with another pair in this series, is different in species. Here is the relation of specific identity among all the individuals of a certain species, and the relation of specific diversity among the individuals of different species. Quantity contains the foundation for the relation of equality and inequality. Things that have the same weight, size, volume, shape, or dimensions are equal, while things which differ from each other in these respects are unequal. Two globes of the same diameter have the relation of equality. Quality contains the foundation of similarity and dissimilarity. For example, we speak of two painters as being similar or dissimilar in their technique, of two philosophers as being similar or dissimilar in their opinions, or of two cats as being similar or dissimilar in their behaviour. Action and passion (reaction) contain the foundation of the relation of cause and effect as observed in mechanical, physical, and chemical agencies. Salt, the effect of the combination of sodium and chlorine, is in relation to these two chemicals. Electricity, which produces light and heat, is related to them as effects to their cause. Time contains the foundation for priority, simultaneity, and posteriority in successive duration. Place contains the foundation of the relation of distance, nearness, and relative positions. The moon is nearer to the earth than to the sun. Therefore, there is the relation of comparative nearness between the moon and the earth. The positions of north and south, east and west, or right and left, or before and behind, or up and down, or inside and outside, etc., give rise to relations among objects. Posture and habitus contains the foundation of the relation of similarity and dissimilarity between things, but in a different manner than the qualities. To be prone, or to be erect, makes objects either similar or dissimilar. Thus, there is a relation of dissimilarity between one human lying down and another standing. So too, to be clothed or not clothed makes two persons either similar or dissimilar. From this it is seen that every category contains items which may be the foundation for various sorts of relations between things.

**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. 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, and 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 sceptre 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, e.g., the reality of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in the Trinity. 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.

The subject of a real relation is always a substance. For, a real relation is something that accrues to some absolute nature; it is, therefore, an accident. Since the relation is something real, it is a real accident. But only a substance can be the subject of a real accident. As an accident, therefore, a real relation inheres in its subject. Accordingly, it is an inherent accident, though not an absolutely inherent one like quantity or quality. It depends also on something outside its subject, i.e., on its term. The term of a real relation is something really existent. If the term perishes, the relation thereby perishes. Relation is essentially dependent on its term. In this way the real relation is not absolutely inherent in the subject. It can go out of existence without any change (substantial or accidental) in the absolute reality of the subject. It inheres therefore not absolutely but in dependence upon its term. It can come into being without any change in the absolute reality of its subject, as when a man becomes an uncle through the birth of a nephew about which the child knows nothing. The one subject really ceases to be equal; the other really becomes an uncle. In this case there is difference in relative reality, but not in the absolute reality of the subjects. For, the subjects change relatively, independent of human intellectual activity. Hence, it is the term that specifies a relation. It is, of course, remotely determined by the kind of

subject in which it inheres, and by the foundation or ground upon which it rests. But the ultimate specification comes from the term. For instance, a father is ultimately denominated from a child, a grandfather from a grandchild. In every case the term gives the final specification. Since subject and term are at opposite ends of the relation, they may both be called its terms (*extrema*). The subject is the term (*a quo*) from which the relation proceeds, and the term is that to which (*ad quem*) the relation is directed. If either is lacking, the relation cannot exist. Every relation, in this way, is in some sense reciprocal. But the nature of the relations need not be the same. In one term it may be a real relation, but in the other a relation of reason. For instance, in creation the relation of creature to creator is real, while that of creator to creature is only a relation of reason. Similarly, the relation of knower to thing known is real, but that of the thing known to the knower is a relation of reason. The foundation or ground of relation always remains while the relation may perish. For instance, the ground would really remain in the sugar cube if every other sugar cube in the world had perished. The sugar cube, however, would no longer be similar in reality to any other. The real relation of similarity would have perished, while the ground would still really endure. The absolute reality of the ground and the relative reality of the relation, accordingly, cannot really coincide.

From another standpoint relations are mutual and non-mutual. A relation is non-mutual, if its foundation is real or logical in one of the extremes only. For example, the relation of knowledge between the knowing subject and the known object in which the foundation of the relation is the real transition from a state of non-knowledge to a state of knowledge with regard to some definite object. It is obvious, however, that only one extreme undergoes this transition and change, namely, the knowing subject which acquires the knowledge. The relation of knowledge is real only on the part of knower; on the part of the known it is only logical. A relation is mutual, if its foundation is real or logical in both extremes. If two horses are white, the foundation of the relation of their similarity, namely, 'white colour' is present in both horses. When two poles have a length of ten feet, the foundation of their equality in length, namely, their quantity, is found in each pole, because each one is ten feet long independent of the other. The relation, therefore, is mutual. A mutual relation is one of the same denominations or symmetrical, when the foundation in both extremes is the foundation of the same nature and degree. The whiteness of the horses, the common origin or children in the same family, the equal length of the poles, are of the same denomination, because the foundation is of the same nature and degree in each. A mutual relation is of mixed denomination or asymmetrical, when the foundation present in both extremes is of a different nature or degree. This means a difference of foundation in both, and consequently also a difference in relation of the one to the other. Many relations are of this kind; for example, that between parents and children, husband and wife, master and servant, physician and patient, lawyer and client, judge and criminal, teacher and pupil, superior and subject, king and people, and so on. These examples for mutual relations pertain to all relations which are mutually present in both extremes, whether of the same or of a mixed denomination. They may also be purely logical, having a foundation which is conceptual or logical in both extremes. Thus, all relations existing between concepts, judgements, and inferences rest upon foundations which have no existence except in the mental order, since they are logical entities and as such have no existence outside the mind. Such is the relation between subject and predicate in a sentence, all relations of grammatical construction, etc. Formal logic is practically a treatise on mutual logical relations.

**Relative and Correlative:** Correlatives are simultaneous in nature. By this we mean that relative things, precisely and formally as in relation to each other, must exist at the same time. Thus, 'mother' and 'child' are correlatives. Obviously, the mother as a 'woman' or 'human being' exists before her child. But as a 'mother' she must have a 'child' and she cannot be a 'mother' before she has a 'child'. Correlatives are simultaneous in knowledge. This means that the knowledge of one extreme as 'relative' always involves the knowledge of the other extreme as 'correlative'. And in truth, it is impossible to know what 'parent' is without also knowing what 'offspring' is. If we know that St. Peter's Basilica in Rome is more beautiful than Bom Jesu Basilica in Goa, we must have knowledge of the beauty of each. Correlatives connote each other. This means that as the intelligibility of the one extreme is dependent on the intelligibility of the other, they can be understood only in reference to each other. This follows from the foregoing principle that the concept of 'offspring' involves the concept of 'parent', and vice versa. That two figures are similar to each other in their triangularity, implies that the understanding of the 'triangular shape' of the one involves the understanding of the 'triangular shape' of the other. Hence, no relative term, as 'relative', can be understood without bringing the correlative term into the understanding, since they cannot be understood except in reference to each other.

**Absolute and Relative:** It has become almost commonplace in recent philosophy to say that all things are only 'relative.' The reason lies in the fact that anything, in order to be known, must enter into a relation with the mind and as such must be 'relative to mind.' It is true that nothing can be known unless it enters into a relation with the mind, because 'knowledge' in its very concept and essence implies such a relation. But this only means that a thing, when known, has a relation to the mind and that the knowledge of the thing is dependent on this relation. It does not, however, mean that the thing is dependent on the mind and its knowledge-relation, so that the reality of the thing would be dependent on our knowing it. A thing must be real or 'absolute' before it can become known, before it can become 'relative' to our mind.

All creatural beings are 'relative'; for they are essentially and necessarily dependent on God, the First Cause, for their being, and this 'dependence' is a form of relation. In this sense, only God is 'absolute', because God alone is without dependence on any other being. Creatural beings are also related in many ways among themselves as similar or dissimilar, equal or unequal, acting or acted upon, specifically identical or diverse. A thing is said to be relative, when it is taken in reference to something else; it is absolute, when it is taken in itself and on its own account. A relation always implies the three factors: subject, term, and foundation; and the relation is conceived as something 'existing between' the subject and the term due to their common foundation. The 'subject' and 'term' must be distinct in entity. No being is said to be related to its own self; it is always in reference to something else.' Consequently, both the subject and the term must be 'something in itself and on its own' before each can have a reference to the other. For, if they had no being or existence of their own, they could never have a reference to anything account,' and that means to be absolute. Things, therefore, cannot be 'relative' unless they are first 'absolute.' It follows that creatural beings in the universe are both absolute and relative. But is this not a contradiction in terms? Certainly, if it were stated that something was 'absolute' and also 'relative' from the same standpoint and in the same respect, a contradiction would be involved in the statement. A thing, however, can very well be 'relative' from one standpoint and 'absolute' from another, and then there is no contradiction. Considered in themselves all things



have a reality of their own, independent. But to have a being and existence of its own means to be 'something in itself and on its own of the being and existence of other things, and hence, from this standpoint, they are absolute. Compared, however, with other things, they are either similar or dissimilar, equal or unequal, etc., and viewed from this standpoint, they are relative. As a matter of fact, they can be 'relative' to others only because they are 'absolute' in themselves. Hence, the knowledge of things as 'relative' presupposes the knowledge of them as 'absolute': we must always know the terms of a relation before we know the relation itself. Consequently, the knowledge of the absolute is prior to the knowledge of the relative.

We may summarize the doctrine of relation in the following sentences: Not all relations are logical in character; some relations are real in nature; the entity of the 'relation' is really identical with the entity of the 'foundation' in the extremes, with a virtual distinction between them; a knowledge of the 'absolute' is necessary before knowledge of the 'relative' is possible.

---

### 1.3. EPISTEMOLOGY OF RELATION

---

Many of the Indian philosophers understand and interpret relation as both ontological and epistemological, without making any clear demarcation between them. For them, relation is essentially non-monistic in its connotation and therefore it necessarily presupposes a dualistic or pluralistic conceptual framework. All relations imply two or more distinct factors: *anuyogi* (adjunct) and *pratiyogi* (subjunct). Relation is mainly of five kinds: *samyoga* (conjunction), *vibhaga* (disjunction), *prthaktva* (separateness), *samkhya* (number), and *samavaya* (inherence). *Samyoga* is a relation between two independently existing things that they can be in and out of relation without their essential nature being affected. It is a separable, terminable, and repeatable relation. *Vibhaga* inheres in pairs of individuals which have just parted from contact with each other. *Prthaktva* is a quality which resides in pairs of separate substances. *Samkhya* refers to numbers higher than one. *Samavaya* is a relation between two or more inseparably existing objects. It is a relation of 'being-in' or 'inhering in' like the cloth inhering in the threads, or colour in the threads. In the Buddhist tradition all relations are regarded as mental construction without objective existence. Relations are only hypostatized as external and superimposed upon the reals which are impermanent or momentary particulars. They are discrete, unrelated, and superimpositions (*upadhi*). Relation is an interpretation of reality rather than reality itself.

Most of the Western philosophical traditions make a clear distinction between subject and object in the act of knowledge. They would interpret knowledge as a relation between two beings: the known and the knower. Through this relation the knowing subject (knower) opens oneself to the world. One who knows leaves oneself and turns to the surrounding world. However, in knowledge one returns to oneself as the known being 'penetrates' into the subject in some way, since knowledge takes place not outside but inside the subject. This knowledge is the result of a natural process.

**Process of Human Knowledge:** Human knowledge is the result of the following process. The physical stimuli proceeding from the things activate external senses, arousing a nerve impulse which travels along the nerve fibres to respective centres of the cortex as sensation of colour, sound, flavour, odour, pain, warmth, etc. In this way the sensing subject is determined in its sensory response, partly by its own vital nature and partly by the character of the incoming stimuli. Sensation is thus to be the product of a double factor: one is objective—the physical stimuli issuing from the external thing; and the other subjective—the vital response of the subject, the particular

stimuli with the particular kinds of sensations. The result is the cognitional image of the object (phantasm or sense-image). The **phantasm** is the total sensory impression of the completed cognitional image of the thing furnishing the stimuli which arouse the sensations. The phantasm is the unitive bond between the sensory subject and the thing, making the thing known in a sensory manner. Universals are derived from sense image through abstraction. Sense image represents both the similarities and the differences of the individual things. **Intellect:** The human intellect has two aspects: agent intellect and passive intellect. The active or agent intellect operates on phantasm, and draws out the essence of the individual thing applicable to all the members of the same class. Then the passive intellect (potential intellect) receives the abstracted essence (impressed intelligible species) and makes an intellectual representation of the things (expressed intelligible species), namely, universal idea. Direct universal idea considers only the essence and not the applicability of all the members of the same class. Whereas reflex universal compares the idea (expressed intelligible species) with the individual of the same class, affirming or denying; that is judgement. The universality is the product of mind having its foundation in things themselves. Knowledge, in this sense, is the presence of the known in the knower, the presence of the object to the subject.

**Knowledge as the Presence of the Object to the Subject:** In knowledge, an object makes itself present to the subject. The known 'reproduces' itself in the knower; e.g., when the colour blue is known, the blue of the thing penetrates into the subject. This process takes place immaterially. The real thing remains unchanged. The mystery of knowledge is that the object, in so far as it is known, does not act as a body on the subject. "The object exists in the subject in a new way, which is not a material mode of being, but an immaterial one (this does not necessarily mean spiritual), and intentional, in so far as such an objective presence always refers to the material thing." For we cannot observe the intentional presence of colour in a subject, as the blue colour in a flame is observed. The intentional presence is an unobservable and absolutely private fact.

**Knowledge as Possession of the Known by the Knower:** Knowledge is a possession of the known on the part of the knower. There is a certain union of the object with the subject. This union, however, does not cancel the difference between the knower and the known. There would be no knowledge without this union. The known is not transformed into another thing; the knower grasps the known as it is. The conformity between the known as it is present in the knower and the real known, is truth. What changes is the mode of being of the known being. There is a material mode of being in the thing insofar as it exists outside the subject, and an immaterial mode insofar as it exists intentionally in the subject. The real object is one but its intentional presence multiplies itself according to the number of knowing subjects.

**Knowledge as Intentional Assimilation:** In the act of knowing, the knower is the known since the knower assimilates the known (assimilation = make something similar) and appropriates it (the knower appropriates the known). Such an appropriation is the deepest root of knowledge. It satisfies the requirements of absolute idealism. However, absolute idealism exaggerates the identity of the subject and the object, which results in a cognitive monism without any distinction between beings. Cognitive assimilation takes place in the immaterial sphere and thus maintains intact the distinction between the knower and the known. There is no real transformation of the object. On the contrary, the knowing subject is transformed by the object which 'acts' on the subject.

**Knowledge as the Actualization of the Intentional Species:** The species is an act of the faculty of knowledge. It is an ontological situation of the cognitive soul through which the soul is enriched by an intrinsic principle which has the function of producing the knowledge in act (i.e., the operation of knowledge). The species is not that which is known (for in such a case, knowledge would always be self-knowledge) but that by which the real thing is known. The species through which knowledge is made possible, is not innate, since they proceed from things through a psychic activity. Only angels know by infused species (this is what rationalism claims for man). Knowledge has need of the species since the finite and created intelligence is not the measure of things. God knows the created beings in his supreme essence which is identical with his existence without any species. However, not everything is known by man through the species, but only the object of immediate knowledge. God is known in an analogical way from the ideas of the directly known things, and not through species.

**Knowledge as the Appropriation of the Being of a Thing:** A thing is known by that which is. To know means to possess a being intentionally. Knowledge is always relative to the mode of being. It does not mean that knowledge is extrinsic to Being. It is also a mode of being. Hence, knowledge is also knowable through reflection. Since knowledge refers to Being we can conclude that a thing is knowable insofar as it is, in the measure in which it is. The reason for the knowability of something is its content of being. That which is not, is not knowable. I can know only that which is.

**Being as the Formal Object of Knowledge:** The formal object of knowledge is Being, i.e., insofar as it is, insofar as it possesses Being as an act. If Being is the formal object of knowledge, then it is necessarily contained in the comprehension of every object. The first thing that falls under the scope of knowledge is Being since the comprehension of a being implies the comprehension of the character of Being. Our knowledge is always the knowledge of 'something,' of Being. The notion of Being is not innate but the result of experience in which human notices Being as soon as one knows intellectually. Anything that is the object of some comprehension is first grasped *sub ratione entis*, under the aspect of Being. The fact that the formal object of knowledge is Being does not mean that human has a perfect notion of everything. Cognitive progress is made through a growing reflection. Of course, explicit and systematic reflection on Being is the task of metaphysics just as the scientific knowledge of light is the task of optics, and not of the common human who, however, sees everything in virtue of light.

### Check Your Progress

**Note:** use the space provided for your Answers

1) What do you understand by relation? What are the different kinds of relation?

-----  
 -----

2) Bring out clearly the complementarity of both ontology of relation and epistemology of relation.

-----  
 -----  
 -----

---

#### 1.4. LET US SUM UP

---

Being is the Being of beings. As Being is the Being of beings, all beings are also simultaneously and radically related to Being. We cannot think or speak of Being without any knowledge of it. Metaphysics is metaphysics of Being and knowledge. Hence, a metaphysics of relation presupposes both an ontology of relation and an epistemology of relation. Ontology of relation is based on three factors: subject, term and foundation. Subject is the radical principle of the relation. Term is that to which the subject of the relation is referred. Foundation is the proximate principle from which the relation originates. Relation can also be grouped into two main classes: logical and real. Logical relation is the relation which exists only in the mind. Real relation is a relation which exists among things. A real relation may be either essential or accidental. An essential relation is one in which the very essence of one thing has a relation to something. Real relation can also be subsistent or accidental. Subsistent relation is identical with its subject and immediate foundation, whereas accidental relation is really distinct from both its subject and immediate foundation. An accidental relation is based upon an accident as its foundation.

Many of the Indian philosophers understand and interpret relation as both ontological and epistemological, without making any clear demarcation between them. However, most of the Western philosophical traditions make a clear distinction between subject and object in the act of knowledge. They would interpret human knowledge as a relation between the two: the known and the knower. For them, human knowledge is the result of a process in which the physical stimuli proceeding from the things activate external senses producing sensations which form phantasm or sense-image. The active intellect operates on phantasm and draws out the essence of the individual thing applicable to all the members of the same class. Then the passive intellect (potential intellect) receives the abstracted essence (impressed intelligible species) and makes an intellectual representation of the things (expressed intelligible species), namely, a universal idea. When a universal idea is affirmed or denied of a particular, we have judgment, which is the basic unit of human knowledge. Knowledge, thus, is the presence of the known in the knower, a relation of Being and being known.

---

#### 1.5. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

---

- Bittle, Celestine. *The Domain of Being*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1950.
- Koren, Henry J. *An Introduction to the Science of Metaphysics*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1963.
- Owens, Joseph. *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*. Houston, Texas: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1985.
- Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives*. Bangalore: ATC, 1999.
- Peters, John A. *Metaphysics*. Louvain: Duquesne University Press, 1963.



Sanguiniti, Juan Jose. *Logic and Gnoseology*. Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1988.

Splett, Joerg. "Relation." In: *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol.5. Edited by Karl Rahner with Cornelius Ernst and Kevin Smith. Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1968.



---

## UNIT 2 BEING AND CAUSALITY

---

### Contents

- 2.0. Objectives
- 2.1. Introduction
- 2.2. Main Kinds of Cause
- 2.3. Intrinsic Causes
- 2.4. Extrinsic Causes
- 2.5. Allied Concepts
- 2.6. Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7. Further Readings and References

---

### 2.0. OBJECTIVES

---

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.* This Unit is designed to explain:

- The essential nature of cause
- Main divisions of cause
- Cause in its relation to effect
- Cause in its relation to condition, occasion, sufficient reason, and chance

---

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

---

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 partakes of the nature of causality it must be *ontologically and positively productive of being* in some manner.

*Cause and Principle:* As we have already seen, *a principle is that from which something proceeds in any way whatsoever*. It implies two factors: every principle is *prior* to that which proceeds from it, and that this priority is grounded in the things themselves because of some *special connection* existing between them. ‘Principle’ is also distinct from ‘cause’. *Every cause is a principle, but not every principle is a cause*. A cause is always a ‘principle’, because it is a thing from which another (effect) proceeds. A cause is that which exerts a positive influence in the *production* of a thing; whereas there are principles which do not produce anything. The concept of ‘principle’ is thus wider than that of ‘cause’. For something to be a real cause three conditions must be fulfilled. First of all, the cause must be a real and *positive entity*. A negation or privation is never given the name of a ‘cause’. A negation or privation is the absence of entity and as such is actually nothing. But what is actually nothing cannot exert a positive influence in the production of anything. Thus the cause must really contribute some *influence* in the production of the effect. For cause is conceived as a principle of production. The effect is the result of a production originated in the cause. If the cause exerted no positive influence, this production could never originate, and hence the effect would never come into being. Therefore, a mere precedence in time or place is not sufficient to be a cause. Finally, the effect must be *really distinct* from the producing cause. The cause ‘produces’ the effect. Thus it must produce something distinct from itself. If the effect were not distinct from the producing cause, the cause would of necessity *produce itself*, although such a production is quite absurd and impossible. Hence the effect and the producing principle must be distinct.

---

## 2.2. MAIN KINDS OF CAUSE

---

Two main theories have attempted to give an adequate explanation of the facts of change in the universe: *mechanism* and *naturalism*. The theory of materialistic mechanism maintains that the ultimate constituent particles of matter are homogeneous in character, actuated by purely mechanical forces which produce only local motion. According to this explanation the only causes existing in nature are efficient causes. The theory of *naturalism*, as advocated by Aristotle and the scholastics, maintains that the beings possess a ‘nature,’ in virtue of which they are specifically distinct substances with specific properties and activities. Each material nature is a compound consisting of a ‘material’ and a ‘formal’ element as its constituent causes. By means of their powers and actions they change other beings—either in an accidental or substantial manner—thereby acting as ‘efficient’ causes. Such changes do not occur in an entirely haphazard manner. On the contrary, the hierarchical arrangement of natural beings according to a definite plan by physical laws, seems to show clearly that all things in the universe follow certain tendencies and ends. According to the theory of naturalism, thus, four types of causes account for the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of all beings: *material, formal, efficient, and final*.

Aristotle, the first to attempt a thorough analysis of causes, gives the following explanation of the number and character of the four causes just mentioned. “We aim at understanding, and since we never reckon that we understand a thing till we can give an account of its ‘how and why,’ it is clear that we must look into the ‘how and why’ of things coming into existence and passing out of it, or more generally into the essential constituents of physical change, in order to trace back any object of our study to the principles so ascertained... Well, then (1) the existence of *material* for the generating process to start from (whether specifically or generically considered) is one of the

essential factors we are looking for. Such is the bronze for the statue, or the silver for the phial (material causes). Then, naturally (2) the thing in question cannot be there unless the material has actually received the *form* or characteristics of the type, conformity to which brings it within the definition of the thing we say it is, whether specifically or generically. Thus the interval between two notes is not an octave unless the notes are in the ratio of 2 to 1; nor do they stand at a musical interval at all unless they conform to one or other of the recognized ratios (formal causes). Then, again (3) there must be something to initiate the process of the change or its cessation when the process is completed, such as the act of a voluntary agent of the smith, (for instance, making a bronze statue, as mentioned in Bk. II, Ch. II), or the father who begets a child, or more generally the prime-conscious or unconscious-*agent* that produces the effect and starts the material on its way to the product, changing it from what it was to what it is to be (efficient causes). And lastly, (4) there is the *end* or *purpose*, for the sake of which the process is initiated, as when a human takes exercise for the sake of his health. 'Why does he take exercise?' We ask. And the answer 'Because he thinks it good for his health' satisfies us. (Final causes). Then there are all the intermediary agents, which are set in motion by the prime agent and make for the goal, as means to the goal. Such are the reduction of superfluous flesh and purgation, or drugs and surgical instruments, as means to health. For both actions and tools may be means, or '*media*' through which the efficient cause reaches the end aimed at. This is a rough classification of the causal determinants of things."

If we want to determine why there are just *four causes*, no more and no less, the *necessity* lies in the following reasons: A cause is that on which the production of a being depends. This caused being can be considered in a twofold way. If we consider it absolutely, the cause of the being-making it to be actually what it is—is its *form* (*formal cause*). If we consider it as a potential being becoming an actual being, two factors are necessary to reduce it from potency to act. There must be the material factor, or *matter* which is reduced from potency to act (*material cause*); and there must be the *agent* which reduces it from potency to act (*efficient cause*). Since an agent can act only according to the tendency of its own determined nature which implies a definite direction or end; this *end* also determines the production of the caused being (*final cause*). To put it in a different way: 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. Since these answers explain the whole thing in its being and production, we have all the causes which account for its 'how and why', and these causes are just four in number.

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. Matter and form are constitutive principles of things entering into the very composition of their being. This is especially the case with material beings where prime matter (substantial matter) and substantial form are the essential constitutive principles which combine to constitute the material compound. 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'. These two types of causes



(efficient and final causes) are found in material as well as in spiritual beings. Their nature is more of a metaphysical character.

---

### 2.3. 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, and actualisable. 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. In an *accidental* change this matter or material cause is the *complete substance* which acquires some accidental act or form. For example, a block of marble has the potentiality of receiving the shape of a statue, a column, an urn, a fountain, a bench, a table, etc. It is the matter or material out of which any of these things can be fashioned. In a *substantial* change, there is the change of one substance into another as when non-living substance is changed into living substance. This substratum is the *prime matter*. It is present in all organic and non-organic elements. It is present when the elements are changed into the living substance of the plant. It is also present when the plant substance is digested by the animal and becomes animal substance. Hence prime matter is the principle of the capacity, or potentiality, of being changed from one kind of substance into another. Hence prime matter is a true cause (material cause) *out of which* something is made. 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. Matter is potentiality, whereas form is act. Matter is determinable, whereas form determines. Matter is actualisable, whereas form actualizes. Matter is that ‘out of which’ something is made, whereas form is that ‘through which’ a thing is made to be what it is.

Since changes are accidental or substantial, the form acquired in the change will also be *accidental or substantial*. An accidental form is some quality determining the complete substance, such as quality or quantity, or a modification of quality or quantity. When a drop of water freezes, the crystalline structure is an accidental form. When the mind thinks, these thoughts are accidental forms or acts perfecting the perfectible mind. In all these cases, the substance as such remains intact throughout the change. But in substantial changes, the *nature or substance* is transformed into a new nature or substance through the acquiring of a new substantial form. The substantial form united with prime matter constitutes a *specific nature*. It is that essential and constitutive principle which makes a human to be specifically a human, a lion to be specifically a lion, a dog to be specifically a dog, and so forth. Prime matter is common to all these beings. If matter were the only essential principle present in them, there would be no specific difference between them. What makes them specifically different among themselves is the specifically different substantial form present in them, determining the indifferent prime matter to be just this kind of being and no other. When the substantial form changes, the species changes. The substantial form is intrinsically united to prime matter and takes away all its indifference and indeterminateness from the latter. The substantial form is truly a *cause* as it assists intrinsically in the production of a being by means of a positive influence. For, together with prime matter it is a *constitutive principle* of the composite substance, determining it essentially in the line of substantiality and specific perfection. It actualizes the potentiality of prime matter and makes it to be a definite substance of a definite species. All material

beings are thus essentially composed of prime matter and substantial form, called *hylomorphic theory*.

---

#### 2.4. 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. When the expansive power of electricity drives a train along the rails, its action produces the motion and it is the efficient cause of the motion. When hydrogen and oxygen are brought together under proper conditions, their action upon each other results in the formation of water. They are the efficient cause of the new compound. And so is it with other agencies in nature. Whenever a real production takes place, the agent responsible for it is an efficient cause.

Efficient cause may be viewed from a variety of standpoints which gives rise to a number of classifications. First cause and second cause: *First cause* is the one whose causality is *absolutely independent* of any other cause or being, and on which all other causality depends. This is God who is absolutely independent of all other causes. God is the uncaused cause of all other causes. *Second cause* is the one whose causality is dependent on some other cause or being. All creatures are second causes as they depend on the First Cause. *Physical and moral cause*: A 'physical' cause is one which produces an effect by its own *direct action*. For example: the carpenter who makes a table, the boxer who defeats his opponent by knocking him unconscious, the boy who throws a snowball through a window, the violinist who draws his bow across the strings, the philosopher who thinks. A 'moral' cause is one which *induces a free agent to act*. This may be done by an appeal, by a threat, by a promise, etc. For instance, a politician is a moral cause, when one induces an official to give him/her a position by paying a sum of money. A criminal, who extracts money from a victim by means of blackmail, is a moral cause. *Principal and instrumental cause*: A 'principal' cause is an efficient cause which produces an effect *in virtue of its own power*. An 'instrumental' cause is an efficient cause which produces an effect *in virtue of the power of another cause*. Principal and instrumental causes are correlatives; the one implies the other. A carpenter uses a saw to cut a piece of wood; the saw is the instrumental cause, the carpenter is the principal cause. A hunter kills a deer by shooting it with a rifle; the rifle is the instrumental cause performing its action under the direction and control of the hunter. It should be noted that both causes exert their own distinct causality. The saw cuts and the rifle shoots; but they would not act at all and not in this particular manner, were it not for the direction and control of the principal cause. *Cause per se and cause per accidents*: A cause is said to be a cause *per se*, if it has the *natural tendency* to produce a particular effect or if it is a free agent that *intends freely* to produce it. It is a cause *per accidents*, if it produces an effect toward which it has *no natural tendency* and without a free intention. When I take a hammer and deliberately drive a nail into a board, I am the cause *per se* that the nail enters the wood; but if I thereby hit my finger, I am the cause *per accidents* for that, because I did not intend that particular effect as the result of my hammering. *Proximate and remote causes*: A 'proximate' cause is one which produces its effect *directly*, in virtue of its own action, without using the action of some intermediate cause. When I walk, eat, push a cart, swing a stick, catch a ball, etc., I am the proximate cause of these effects, because they are the results of my own direct action.

A 'remote' cause is one which produces an effect through the direct action of some *intermediary cause* or causes. When my finger pulls the trigger of a rifle and explodes the charge of the cartridge, a bullet is ejected which travels through the air and kills a deer at a considerable distance; the bullet is the proximate cause of the death of the deer, while the exploding charge, the action of my hand and arm, and the deciding influence of my will are the remote causes of the killing. Naturally, the ultimate cause in this particular chain of causes is myself. *Total and partial cause*: A cause is said to be 'total', when the *entire* effect is produced by its action; if only a *part* of the entire effect is attributed to a particular cause, it is a 'partial' cause. The masons, carpenters, plumbers, plasterers, etc., who assist in the construction of a building, are all part-causes of the construction. But when I lift a plank, push a table, walk a mile, dig a hole, throw a ball, etc., I am the total cause of these effects. *Coordinated and subordinated causes*: Coordinated cause is the same as partial cause and thus accounts for only part of the effect; whereas subordinated cause is a cause which depends upon another cause. If such a cause depends upon another cause for the exercise of its causality, it is called an *essentially subordinated* cause. Such a cause produces the whole effect, but in dependence upon the other cause. For instance, the chisel of a sculptor is a cause which exercises influence upon the whole statue, but is dependent upon the sculptor in the very exercise of its causality. If a cause depends upon another cause, but not in the exercise of its causality, it is said to be *accidentally subordinated* to this cause. For example, a son depends upon his father for his existence as upon a superior cause, but in the act of generating a son the latter does not depend upon his father. Hence the son is only accidentally subordinated to his father in so far as the act of generating a son is concerned. *Univocal and equivocal cause*: A 'univocal' cause is one which produces an effect *similar to itself in nature*. For instance, coconut produces a coconut, dog a dog, human a human. Living beings, therefore, which reproduce their own kind, are univocal causes in this respect, because these effects are similar to themselves in nature. An 'equivocal' cause is one which produces an effect *dissimilar to itself in nature*. A painter is the equivocal cause of paintings, a writer of writings, a builder of buildings, because the effects are different in nature from oneself as their cause. *Necessary and free cause*: A 'necessary' cause is a cause which is *determined by its nature* to produce a certain effect when the required conditions are present. If I throw a stone into the air, gravity must pull it back to the earth, because gravity is a necessary cause and is determined to a definite time of action without choice. A 'free' cause is a cause which is *not compelled or determined to act*, even though all the required conditions for action are present. For example, a human is free in very many of one's actions, like walking, eating, smoking, playing etc. One can perform them or omit them, as one chooses.

*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 it into proper lengths, and 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* - excludes the possibility that the likeness



comes about by accident. *That determines its end for itself* - indicates 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. In other words, only in the case of rational agents who are directed in their action by their ideas is there the question of exemplary causality. The exemplary cause is a *true cause*; for it exercises a positive influence upon the being of the effect inasmuch as it influences the intellectual agent to act in a definite way. It is *not an efficient cause*; for it is not of itself the first principle of movement in the order of execution, but merely the form in imitation of which something comes to be. Hence it belongs to the order of intention rather than to the order of execution. It is also *not formally the same as the final cause*. For, formally speaking, the final cause moves the agent to act insofar as it is a purpose to be achieved; whereas the exemplary cause specifies the effect to be produced since it is the form to be imitated in the effect. However, *materially* speaking, the final and the exemplary causes are the same. For it is the specific form which, insofar as apprehended as good, moves the agent as the final cause. Insofar as it specifies the action of the agent, it directs the agent as its exemplary cause. Now we know the reason why exemplary cause is called a *formal extrinsic* cause. It is formal because it specifies the effect; it is extrinsic because it specifies the effect not from within but from without.

**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.

---

## 2.5. ALLIED CONCEPTS: 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. They then 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 insofar 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 a 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 insofar as its influence is positive. Occasion also differs from cause insofar 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. If the activity of all the causes involved is foreseen, the effect cannot be attributed to chance. For instance, if one considers that a pirate buried the chest in a particular spot, and someone else later starts digging in exactly the same place, the treasure trove is not the effect of chance with respect to that person. But if one does not consider the effect produced by one of these causes, the pirate, the finding of the treasure happens 'by chance'. Therefore, chance exists only in the mind of one who does not know all the causes which exercise influence upon the effect.

### Check Your Progress

**Note:** use the space provided for your Answers

1) What are the main divisions of cause?

-----  
 -----  
 -----

2) Explain the relation between cause and its allied concepts such as condition, occasion, chance, and sufficient reason.

-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----

## 2.6. LET US SUM UP

Cause is a real principle which positively brings about an effect. A cause is always a real principle from which effect proceeds. Traditionally, cause has been identified as material, formal, efficient, and final, following the teaching of Aristotle. Later philosophers have further grouped 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. Matter and form are constitutive principles of things entering into the very composition of their being. *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.' Cause, as an ontological principle, is distinct from condition which does not exercise a positive influence in the production of something, but is only a prerequisite for the action of the cause. Cause is also distinct from occasion which provides a favourable opportunity for the free exercise of a cause. Condition is distinct from sufficient reason, which is adequate explanation for something. Sufficient reason challenges the possibility of chance, which is an effect produced by the concurrence of two or more causes operating independently and thus produce an effect which is *unforeseen* by anyone.

---

## 2.7. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

---

- Aristotle. *Physics*. BK.II, Ch. III. Translated by P.H. Wicksteed and F.M.Cornford London: Harvard University Press, 1929.
- Bittle, Celestine. *The Domain of Being*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1950.
- Celestine N. Bittle, *God and his Creatures*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1953.
- Koren, Henry J. *An Introduction to the Science of Metaphysics*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1963.
- Owens, Joseph. *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*. Houston, Texas: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1985.
- Panthanmackel, George. "Causality." In: *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. I. Edited by Johnson Puthenpurackal and George Panthanmackel. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010.
- Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives*. Bangalore: ATC, 1999.



---

## UNIT 3 BEING AND ANALOGY

---

### Contents

- 3.0. Objectives
  - 3.1. Introduction
  - 3.2. Analogy of Being from Western Perspectives
  - 3.3. Analogy of Being from Indian Perspectives
  - 3.4. Let Us Sum Up
  - 3.5. Further Readings and References
- 

### 3.0. OBJECTIVES

---

Being is that which is in some way or something. Humans encounter Being in the horizon of history which is also the horizon of Being. This historical horizon of Being includes, in a special way, the metaphysical horizons of the West and India. In this Unit we study the relation between Being and analogy:

- From Western perspectives
  - From Indian perspectives
  - From a comparative perspective
- 

### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

---

Being is that which is in some way or something. That which is in some way or something, comes to us in many ways, in and through each and every being that we encounter in the horizon of history which is also the horizon of Being. Insofar as it comes to us we understand it. As we understand it we are able to consider it as it is, inasmuch as it is, i.e., being as being. But the moment we make an effort to grasp it, to understand it fully, it escapes us in some way, goes away from us without leaving us completely. The finite being is the 'junction' of this 'coming' and 'going'. It is the 'meeting point' of the 'arrival' and 'departure' of Being. Being does not meet each being in the same way, but distinctly in the horizon of the same Being, which is originally, one. Each being is both identical with and distinct from both Being and beings. It is identical with being (one) insofar as each being is in being belonging to Being; it is also distinct from being (many) since it is not the absolute fullness of Being. Hence every being is an identity-in-distinction or one-in-many. But each being is not a one-in-many in the same way, but differently, in its own way, in an analogous way. Each being is analogous because being itself is originally analogous; for Being, that which is in some way, is in its own way. In other words, Being is analogous in itself. It is 'realized' diversely, yet proportionately, in all beings whatever.

---

### 3.2. ANALOGY OF BEING FROM WESTERN PERSPECTIVES

---

There is a steady dynamism in human knowledge which assumes the form of a dialectical process. This dynamism proceeds beyond everything laid down in concepts, unfolding the conditioned and limited nature of knowledge. In the awareness of the limit as limit, the human intellect goes beyond the limit, pushing our thematic knowledge of being ever further and deeper. However, our knowledge can never be fully conceptualized. This dialectics of our knowledge about Being is a manifestation of the *analogy of Being*. The term 'analogy' has its origin in the Greek mathematical vocabulary. There it meant sameness of ratio or proportion between the respective terms of different pairs. "Two is to four as three is to six" exhibits the same proportion or ratio in each pair, that of

half. Outside arithmetic the sameness does not have to be equality, for instance: “As a point is to a line so a surface is to a solid”, or “As sharp is to the sense of touch, so is shrill to the sense of hearing”. The sameness of proportion in such cases is not equality but merely similarity. It is a likeness in the respective ways in which the terms are related to each other in pairs, and the likeness is found in a feature that differentiates the instances. Conversely, the various instances while different in themselves exhibit in that very difference itself sufficient similarity to require expression in one and the same notion. The one identical notion is partly the same and partly different. The sameness and the difference are in the one notion.

Before we analyze the concept of analogy further we shall consider the meaning of the terms ‘univocal’, ‘equivocal’ and ‘analogous’. *Univocal term* is one which is said of many in a way which is always the same. It designates a number of things in an identical sense. It is predicated of diverse things according to exactly the same concept. For example, the term ‘metal’ can be used to designate gold, silver, copper, tin, etc. An *Equivocal term* is one which stands for concepts with totally different meanings, and thus also for totally different things. It stands for diverse things with diverse meanings. It is predicated of diverse things according to an entirely different concept,

- e.g., Bark - bark of a dog.  
                   - bark of a tree.  
 Pen - an instrument for writing.  
                   - an enclosure for animals.  
 Coach - a vehicle.  
                   - an athletic director.  
 Page - a leaf of a book.  
                   - an attendant at court.

An *Analogous term* is one which is said of many in a way which is somewhat same and somewhat different. It is one and the same name predicated of many according to concepts which are not entirely different, but agree in some common point. In analogous predication the external term remains the same, but the concept of which the term is a symbol neither remains exactly the same, as is the case in univocal predication, nor becomes entirely different, as happens in equivocal predication, but *varies*, i.e., while changing it retains something. The reason why it does not remain exactly the same is that such a concept does not completely abstract from the differences of its inferiors. As a result, these differences have to be taken into consideration when the concept is predicated of different subjects. Thus the unity of such a concept is not absolute but only relative. For example, when my eyes perceive a material object, I can say: “I see”; and when my intellect understands a problem, I can also say: “I see”. The act of sense perception in the first instance is completely different from that of intellectual perception. Nevertheless, there is a certain relative unity because as the eye is related to sense perception, so the intellect is related to intellectual perception. Consequently, one and the same term may be used to express both actions. But when one predicates this term of the eye and of the intellect, the concept signified by the term “to see” has to be adjusted accordingly as required by the subject (the eye or the intellect). In this way, one concept can be predicated of things which are completely different insofar as they are relatively the same. It is the condition of the possibility of both univocal and equivocal terms. Univocal and equivocal terms presuppose analogous terms; for without the ultimate, all-encompassing unity, all beings and all relations between beings would disappear. This ultimate unity is no longer univocal but analogous. In other words, univocal and equivocal terms presuppose a plurality of different



contents which are separated from each other. At the same time they presuppose an ordered unity of different beings. Such a unity can only be analogous.

An analogous term implies two analogues: *primary analogue and secondary analogue*.

*Primary analogue* is the object which first deserves the term or of which it is first predicated. *Secondary analogue* is the object which possesses in a lesser degree the perfection indicated by the term or to which the term is later applied. In other words, the primary analogue means the analogue to which such a term belongs principally, and secondary analogues are analogues of which such a term is predicated in dependence upon the primary analogue. For example, if one predicates "healthy" of human, fresh air, and medicine, human is the primary analogue, and fresh air and medicine are the secondary analogues.

Analogy is broadly distinguished into *intrinsic and extrinsic*. *Intrinsic analogy* is one in which the term is verified according to its definition in both the primary and secondary analogues. It can be further distinguished into two: *intrinsic analogy of participation and intrinsic analogy of proportionality*. *Intrinsic analogy of participation* is the analogy in which the analogues not only verify the *definition* of the perfection, but also stand to one another in a relation of participation of that perfection, e.g., finite intelligence and infinite intelligence. Here finite intelligence intrinsically participates in the perfection of the infinite intelligence of God. *Intrinsic analogy of proportionality* is the analogy in which the analogues verify the definition of the perfection with a certain similitude of proportions, e.g., the proportions of their intelligence to their respective essences. Perhaps this fact can be made clear by illustration. Intelligence is certainly an analogous concept: God is intelligent; angel is intelligent; human is intelligent. In all these, intelligence is an intrinsic reality; yet it differs widely in each case. Intelligence as predicated of God differs widely from intelligence as predicated of angel or human. The concept as applied to all these beings manifests a proportion between two notes in the concept of this perfection; and the proportion must vary in accordance with the nature of each individual or class of individuals, and still retain the same fundamental definition, so that intelligence in all these may be said to be somewhat same and somewhat different. The following may serve as a formulation of this proportion: *Intelligence is to the nature of God as it is to the nature of an angel as it is to the nature of human*. Certainly there is proportional similarity in these concepts, although this proportion does not postulate identity of concept. In God, the proportion is of identity. With the angel, on the contrary, because of the real distinction between its essence and being, the proportion is quite different; and human, whose essence is a composite of spiritual form with matter, must have the grade of intelligence demanded by such a nature. *Extrinsic analogy* is the one in which the term is predicated only according to its definition of the primary analogue, while it is predicated of the secondary analogues in a connected sense which may fall short or go beyond that of the definition. It can also be further distinguished into two: *attribution and proportionality*. *Extrinsic analogy of attribution* is analogy in which the nature signified by the concept is intrinsically realized only in the primary analogue, but attributed to the others only insofar as they have a relationship to the primary analogue. The traditional example is the concept of health. We say: Philip is healthy; fresh air is healthy; medicine is healthy. In its proper and accepted meaning health means that the various parts of a living body function properly in relation to the whole. Hence the perfection of health is intrinsically realized in the primary analogue, Philip. When health is predicated of fresh air and medicine, it is attributed to them merely because in fresh air and medicine there is something by which they are related to the health of a living body as contributing factors of health. Hence in calling them healthy one merely

wants to affirm this relationship. For this reason fresh air, medicine, etc. are said to be healthy by relation, attribution, or extrinsic predication. The analogy of attribution is thus also called analogy of relation or proportion. *Extrinsic analogy of proportionality (metaphorical analogy)* is analogy in which the nature signified by the term is realized formally and intrinsically in one of the analogues; and in the other or others extrinsically and virtually, i.e., only with respect to a secondary characteristic, such as the activity, proper to this nature. Take for example, the term “lion”. The nature signified by the term is realized formally and intrinsically only in the animal called “lion”. A human cannot be called lion in the formal sense; for a lion is essentially irrational, whereas human is essentially rational. However, it is proper to the nature of a lion to act courageously in the face of danger. Hence we may consider this secondary aspect of the nature of a lion and predicate the term “lion” of a human who is courageous. In doing so we convey the idea that in the face of danger this human acts in the same way as a lion is supposed to act. Hence we say that ‘he is a lion’ because of his resemblance to a lion in the order of activity.

**Being is neither Univocal nor Equivocal but Analogous:** At first Being is *not a univocal concept*. For a univocal concept abstracts from the differences of its inferiors, whereas Being actually includes these differences. For instance, a substance is a being in the sense of something whose being is a being in itself. An accident is a being in the sense of something whose being is a being in another. Again God’s being is different from that of any creature because unlike any creature He is His own being. Hence it is clear that the diversity of relationship to Being prevents the univocal predication of Being. Secondly, Being is *not equivocal*. For, if equivocity occurs when there is no foundation in reality why should diverse things be called by the same name? But we predicate the name ‘Being’ of diverse things because each of them is something which has a reference to Being. Hence there is a foundation in reality for the predication of the term, so that Being is not equivocal. Consequently, it follows by exclusion that the notion of *Being is analogous*. Since we have thus distinguished two modes of analogy, *intrinsic and extrinsic*, we must now investigate which mode of analogy applies to the notion of Being. For obvious reasons we can immediately exclude *extrinsic analogy of proportionality or metaphorical analogy*. For otherwise, many beings would be beings only according to a secondary aspect; with regard to their primary aspect these beings would be non-beings, which is impossible. Being is thus analogous according to the *intrinsic analogy of participation and proportionality*. *Intrinsic analogy of participation* rests on a relation of participation by which the finite beings participate in the Infinite Being. *Intrinsic analogy of proportionality* rests on a similitude of proportions in which each being is a proportion of the act of existing to its essence. Is Being also analogous by *extrinsic analogy of attribution*? As we have seen above, a term is analogous by analogy of attribution if the perfection signified by it is found intrinsically in the primary analogue, and is attributed to others only because of a consideration of their causal relationship to the primary analogue. Now the perfection of Being is realized intrinsically in each of the analogues. Hence, it is clear that—formally speaking—Being cannot be analogous by extrinsic analogy of attribution.

---

### 3.3. ANALOGY OF BEING FROM INDIAN PERSPECTIVES

---

The Indian philosophical tradition approves 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. In one of the passages of the Chandogya Upanishad, Uddalaka Aruni teaches his son Svetaketu: “In the beginning, my dear, this world was just Being (*sat*), one

only, without a second. To be sure, some people say: 'In the beginning this world was just non-being (*asat*), one only, without a second; from that non-being Being was produced.' But verily, my dear, whence could this be?...How, from non-being could Being be produced? On the contrary, my dear, in the beginning this world was just Being, one only, without a second" (*Ch. Up.*, VI. 2, 1-2).

The text itself indicates that it is preceded by earlier discussions about Being and non-being. The theory of the origination of Being from non-being, to which the text explicitly refers, is found not only in the Upanishads, but also in the Brahmanas, and even in the Rgveda itself. Norman Brown has proposed a concrete cosmological interpretation of the Rgvedic uses of *sat* and *asat* as we find them in the famous hymn X.129, or in X.72, according to which *sat* would be realm of humans and gods and of the cosmic order (*rta*), and *asat*, the chaotic underworld of the demons. Discussions of *sat* and *asat* in the Brahmana texts are usually in the line of ritualistic and mythical identifications and personifications. There are very few philosophically significant occurrences like the equation what is (*asti*) with what is 'immortal' in the *Satapatha Brahmana*. Being in this sense is a familiar characteristic of Brahman, and they (Being and Brahman) may even be used as synonyms.

There is no systematically developed terminology of Being in the Upanishads, and the applicability of *sat* to *Brahman* in its primeval unity often remains ambiguous. It is obvious that in these discussions the question of unity takes precedence over the question of Being. The *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanishad* associates *sat* with that aspect of Brahman, which is 'formed,' 'mortal,' and 'stationary,' and then it is contrasted with the other aspect of Brahman, which remains beyond (*tyat*). The *Taittiriya Upanishad* referring to the same terminology of *sat* and *tyat*, presents *sat* and its separation from *tyat* as a result of Brahman's self-procreation, putting *sat* on the side of the 'defined,' 'based,' 'conscious,' 'real.' Being in these passages appears as a step into diversity. Brahman is Being insofar as it coincides with the world, with what there is. But there remains the aspect of transcendence, and *sat* alone falls short of the primeval unity of Brahman, as Being is both transcendent and immanent, identity and difference. Entities *are*, but Being alone *is*. Being transcends.

The Advaita Vedanta reflects upon the Upanishads and systematically develops these and similar questions. Sankara's references to Brahman as *sat* or *sanmatra* (pure being) remain somewhat casual; the triad, 'being,' 'consciousness,' 'bliss,' is not found in his authentic writings. Later *advaitins* too seem to be more interested in refuting false conceptions of Being than in establishing their own view of the absolute in terms of Being. However, Mandanamisra devotes special care to re-examining the notion of Being and its applicability to Brahman. 'Pure Beingness' or *sanmatra* is interpreted as the one and all-pervasive content of the immediate, non-relational, pre-predicative perception (*nirvikalpakapratyaksa*). The supreme unity of all reality is thus presented as the implicit unconditioned condition of all conditions, namely, percepts, concepts, particulars, categories, imagination, and thought. However, Buddhists generally reject, avoid, or even ridicule any such theorizing in terms of Being, with its connotations of self-nature, permanence, and self-sufficiency.

**Being as *Tad Ekam*:** Here, in this Unit, the original *Rig Vedic* notion *Tad Ekam* (That One = Being = *Tad Ekam*) is preferred to all other terms as it corresponds well with the notion of Being



as ‘that which is in some way or something.’ The hymn where the notion appears is the *Nasadiya-sukta* (Rgveda X. 129), which has been praised as containing ‘the flower of Indian thought.’ This hymn is the quintessence of Indian metaphysics. All things are traced to one principle. Opposites like being and non-being, life and death, night and day, are shown to be the self-unfolding of ‘That One.’ *Tad Ekam* is the ground of the universe. Because it is devoid of differences and definiteness, it is referred to as ‘That One’ which is in some way. It is neither a particular being nor non-being (nothing) but ‘something’ which is beyond them while being their core and ground, the Unconditioned Condition of all conditions. *Tad Ekam* had within it the latent power out of which the universe, including the gods, emerged. The point to be noted here is the conception of the ultimate Being as dynamic or self-unfolding, and as requiring no outside Power to guide and shape it. It is a hymn of Being. It is an invocation to the Being that transcends all the other beings of knowledge. It provides an experiential insight into the making of that Being. It does not deal with the beginning of the cosmos or with its evolution. It expresses a luminous awareness that Being is beyond being (existent = *sat* = *ens*) and non-being (non-existent = *asat* = *non-ens*). Being is beyond being and non-being while being in them as their only Ground.

The following is a brief summary of the seven stanzas of the hymn: Stanza one: In the hymn, *Tadanim* (“Then”) refers to the time when time was not. In fact, words such as ‘before’ and ‘after’ are not suitable to describe it, as they themselves belong to time-sequence. The Being of beings is neither in space nor in time. It is beyond both, and above all categories of understanding and description. It is the unconditioned condition of all existence. Stanza two: In that state when there was neither space nor time, neither before nor after, neither beginning nor end, neither mortal nor immortal, neither night nor day, there was only the Absolute One, Being itself, self-contained and self-sustained. Stanza three: In the unknown, unknowable, primal state, it was sheer darkness uncompassed and concealed by greater darkness. It was a state of absence of all knowledge. Like an absolute expanse of water (ocean), the One (Being) was featureless and distinctionless. The all-embracing and all-transcending *Abbu* was concealed by its indescribable, unaccountable nature, *tuccya*. Its transcendence and self-concealment are accomplished by its own *chit-tapas*. Stanza four: The *manas*, whose basic quality is *karma*, is the faculty by which the One (Being) becomes many (beings); it is the principle by which the immortal *prana* descends into the phenomenal world, by which *sat* becomes *asat*. Stanza five: It is the interaction between the infinite life-power (*anit-svadha*) and consciousness-force (*chit-tapas*) that creates the world of manifestation. With this infinite activity of eternal consciousness came into existence spatial extension. It was the beginning of change in that which was otherwise changeless and immutable. It is a self-initiated, self-caused and self-propelled process. Stanza six: The origin, purpose, and end of the world are totally unknown and unknowable. No one really knows the beginning of the process. When did this diversification originate? The gods cannot explain it as they came into manifestation only after the world was created. Stanza seven: There must be something, supreme and beyond, out of which creation proceeds. Perhaps, there is a witness to all this seated in the seventh heaven, who knows the beginning and the reason of this world-movement. Only he who is beyond space, time, and causation may know it, or he too does not quite know it. Indeed, there can be no such being above or below other than the Supreme One who truly knows of this all. ‘That One’ neither preaches agnosticism nor promotes atheism. It speaks of creation as an unfolding and a fulfilment.



From the analysis of the Hymn we can gather the following meanings. 1) *Tad Ekam* as Mystery: *Tad Ekam* is the mystery of a primal non-differentiation of being and non-being. The origin of the world was enveloped in this primal mystery of *Tad Ekam*, which by its inherent power gave rise to the desire of a creation from which the universe sprang forth through a series of mysterious gradual processes. 2) *Tad Ekam* as the Unconditioned Ground: It is the primal positive absolute being from which the whole existence follows. This primal unconditioned ground (condition) of all beings (conditions) cannot be characterized by anyone as either existent or non-existent. It is the most transcendent which transcends space, time, death, and immortality, and beyond which there cannot be anything. It is the first cause, which breathed by its own power. 3) *Tad Ekam* as the Purely Spiritual Embryo: *Tad Ekam* is the purely spiritual embryo, the world-seed. The void is the envelope of the world embryo which leads to the birth of the world begotten of That One, which is the pure manas in which develops heat, desire, and creative impulse. 4) *Tad Ekam* as Consciousness: The 'heart,' mentioned in the hymn as the place of search, reminds one of the abode of mind, namely, of consciousness, and Brahman. In the world of human experience, consciousness is the only power that embraces the manifold without losing its identity and unity. A multiplicity of thoughts, objects, and contents of consciousness do not disrupt but rather reinforce the unity (That One) of consciousness. Consciousness, as one in many and as the overwhelming plurality of the world of our experience, reverts to a unity in the recesses of our consciousness. Being over and above consciousness is a contradiction in terms; for by the very fact we define 'Being' as 'that which transcends consciousness,' we are including it in our consciousness of Being. Hence, *Tad Ekam* is not the object of consciousness, or even the subject, but pure consciousness which has no support. *Tad Ekam* is this non-support. Thus the understanding of *Tad Ekam* does not allow for this reflection, i.e., for a second understanding of the understanding. If one really understands *Tad Ekam*, one does not understand that one understands it. If one understands that one understands, then one does not understand *Tad Ekam*, but only one's own understanding of it. *Tad Ekam* has no consciousness, but is consciousness. 5) *Tad Ekam* as a Unique Neutral Principle: It is a unique neutral principle, which accounts for the origin of the world and the multiplicity of things. The use of the neuter shows that That One is above sexual difference. 6) *Tad Ekam* as Indefinable: *Tad Ekam* is an indefinable principle with manifested and unmanifested aspects. The entirely undefined principle found itself in darkness till it manifested itself through the power of tapas. 7) *Tad Ekam* as Sat and Asat: Being is That One which has manifested itself, and Non-being is That One which has not manifested itself. Hence, sat and asat, Being and Non-being, are two aspects: the manifested and the unmanifested aspects of the One Ultimate, *Tad Ekam*. 8) *Tad Ekam* as the All-inclusive a priori Condition: *Tad Ekam* is not seen against any horizon as it is the infinite horizon which includes every other horizon. It includes within it both being and non-being. It is the necessary a priori condition of every being and existence. It is the all-encompassing Being, of the positive and the negative, of evil and good, which underlies, penetrates, transforms, and unifies everything that is. 9) *Tad Ekam* as the Eternal Word: The word (Vac) is *Tad Ekam* itself; it is the self of *Tad Ekam*. It is the revelation of *Tad Ekam*. It was before all creation, pre-existing before anything came into being. 10) *Tad Ekam* as Brahman: The Vedas have described the One as neither being nor non-being, and the Gita repeats the same idea by affirming *Tad Ekam* as neither transcendent nor immanent but both at the same time in a unique manner. The Ultimate is the source of all, yet is itself not contained or limited by anything. That One transcends all immanence and is immanent in all transcendence. It is the ultimate cause of the world. It is styled as *ekam*, the One and the only One without a second. It is the transcendent, the *paratpara* which is unqualified and without the

support of laws. It is Brahman himself who exists by his own power, a mystery beyond explanation or utterance.

The term 'analogy' has its origin in the Greek mathematical vocabulary. There it meant sameness of ratio or proportion between the respective terms of different pairs. "Two is to four as three is to six" exhibits the same proportion or ratio in each pair, that of half. Outside arithmetic the sameness does not have to be equality, for instance: "As a point is to a line so a surface is to a solid," or "As sharp is to the sense of touch, so is shrill to the sense of hearing." The sameness of proportion in such cases is not equality but merely similarity. It is a likeness in the respective ways in which the terms are related to each other in pairs, and the likeness is found in a feature that differentiates the instances. Conversely, the various instances while different in themselves exhibit in that very difference itself sufficient similarity to require expression in one and the same notion. The one identical notion is partly the same and partly different. The sameness and the difference are in the one notion. Hence, *analogous term* is one which is said of many, in a way which is somewhat same and somewhat different. It is one and the same name predicated of many according to concepts which are not entirely different, but agree in some common point. In analogous predication the external term remains the same, but the concept of which the term is a symbol neither remains exactly the same, as is the case of univocal predication, nor becomes entirely different, as happens in equivocal predication, but *varies*, i.e., while changing it retains something. The reason why it does not remain exactly the same is that such a concept does not completely abstract from the differences of its inferiors. As a result, these differences have to be taken into consideration when the concept is predicated of different subjects. Thus the unity of such a concept is not absolute but only relative. For example, when my eyes perceive a material object, I can say: "I see"; and when my intellect understands a problem, I can also say: "I see". The act of sense perception in the first instance is completely different from that of intellectual perception. Nevertheless, there is a certain relative unity, because as the eye is related to sense perception so the intellect is related to intellectual perception. Consequently, one and the same term may be used to express both actions. But when one predicates this term of the eye and of the intellect, the concept signified by the term "to see" has to be adjusted according as required by the subject (the eye or the intellect). In this way, one concept can be predicated of things which are completely different insofar as they are relatively the same.

**Meaning of Maya:** *Tad Ekam* however did express itself in manifoldness. Assuming name and form (*namarupa*) it became this entire universe. The key word used for explaining the manifested aspect of *Tad Ekam* (*Brahman*) is *maya* which has multiple meanings. Basically it is the manifestative (creative) and manifested power (creation) of *Brahman*. *Maya* reveals and conceals *Brahman*. As *maya* reveals, it is a projection of *Brahman* (*vikshepa*). What is thus projected is not *Brahman* but only a *namarupa* (name and form) of *Brahman*, which inevitably conceals *Brahman* in itself. Hence *maya* is the *avarana* (veil) of *Brahman*, the *avarana-vikshepa*, the concealing-revealing dynamism of *Tad Ekam*. What is revealed is only a means to understand what is not yet revealed. The plurality is understood as the expression of *Tad Ekam* revealing and concealing the same in all its manifestations. Since *maya* is *avarana* and *vikshepa*, concealing and revealing, it is *sat* and *asat*, real and non-real. Insofar as *maya* manifests *Brahman* it is said to be real; but insofar as *maya* conceals *Brahman*, pointing to that which is really real, it is said to be unreal. Therefore *maya* is defined as *sat-asat-anirvachaniya*, an

indefinable being and non-being. So according to the *maya* theory, both *Brahman* and the universe are real but not in the same way, but each in its own way.

**Maya as Analogy:** Aquinas developed the notion of analogy of participation under the influence of the Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic Greek thought. It was Plotinus (270 A.D) who maintained that the Absolute Good reflects in all creation in successive levels of participation. Thus the reflection of the Absolute is seen in every being in some way, proportionate to its essence. In the Indian thought *Brahman* is seen as life, mind, consciousness, and bliss respectively. *Brahman* is there in the innermost chamber of one's own existence. *Brahman*, remaining in the centre, yet manifesting itself in all layers and levels of existence, is the real *maya* which is the appearance of *Brahman* in non-*Brahman* forms (*namarupa*). *Maya* assumes a variety of meaning. It points to that internal dynamism in *Brahman*, which makes revelation possible. Thus *Brahman* that is manifested is not *Brahman* but indication to *Brahman*; *maya* is real only insofar as it points to *Brahman*. *Maya* confuses human intelligence with its semblance of reality and leads human to a thorough misunderstanding which tempts one to accept the phenomenal as ultimately real. Hence *maya* is also known as the root cause of all ignorance. *Maya*, however, has its own non-permanent reality which is characterised by being and non-being (*sat-asat*). The *maya* power of *Brahman* by which one becomes many, though one alone is really real, and the *maya* character of the universe by which many appear to be real, though they are ultimately unreal, make the understanding of being possible at two different levels. At both levels being is realized. But they differ greatly in the proportion in which they are realized. Both *Brahman* and *maya* are beings; *Brahman* is pure being (*sat*) and hence really real (*satyasya satya*) and *maya* is being with non-being (*sat-asat*). *Brahman* is the source. *Maya* is being by the unfolding of *Brahman* (*vivarta*), a notion similar to being (*Tad Ekam*) by analogy of participation.

### Check Your Progress

**Note:** use the space provided for your Answers

1) Explain briefly: analogy from Western perspectives

-----  
 -----  
 -----

2) Explain briefly: analogy from Indian perspectives

-----  
 -----  
 -----

### 3.4. LET US SUM UP

In the classical Western Philosophy, metaphysics is understood as the core and ground of human knowledge which underlies, penetrates, transforms, and unifies all other disciplines of knowledge.

It originates from the 'experience of something' or 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*, 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. That which is not particular is still *something or in some way*. Hence, *Being is that which is in some way or something*. The original *Rig Vedic* notion of *Tad Ekam* (That One = Being = *Tad Ekam*) corresponds well with the notion of Being as 'that which is in some way or something.' Besides, the multidimensional meaning of *Tad Ekam* as mystery, the unconditioned ground, the purely spiritual embryo, consciousness, unique neutral principle, indefinable, *Sat* and *Asat*, the all-inclusive *a priori* condition, the eternal Word, and Brahman, is in conformity with the classical Western notion of Being which is analogous. We predicate *Tad Ekam* of diverse beings as each of them is something which has a reference to *Tad Ekam*. Hence there is a foundation in reality for the predication of the term, so that *Tad Ekam* is not equivocal. Consequently, it follows by exclusion that the notion of *Tad Ekam* is analogous.

---

### 3.5. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

---

- Agrawala, Vasudeva S. *Sparks from the Vedic Fire: A New Approach to Symbolism*. Varanasi: 1962.
- Coreth, Emerich. *Metaphysics*. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.
- Dasgupta, Surendranath. *A History of Indian Philosophy*. Vol.1. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1997.
- Halbfass, Wilhelm. "On Being and What There Is: Indian Perspectives on the Question of Being." In *The Question of Being*. New Delhi: India Book Centre, 1995.
- Hiriyanna, M. *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy*. Bombay: Blackie and Son, 1973.
- Mahadevan, T.M.P. *Invitation to Indian Philosophy*. New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann Publishers, 1979.
- Koren, Henry J. *An Introduction to the Science of Metaphysics*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1963.
- Mookenthottam, Antony. *Towards a Theology in the Indian Context*. Bangalore: ATC, 1980.
- Owens, Joseph. *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*. Houston, Texas: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1985.
- Panikkar, Raimundo. *The Vedic Experience*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979.
- Panthanmackel, George. "Being (Indian)." In: *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. I. Edited by Johnson Puthenpurackal and George Panthanmackel. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010.
- Panthanmackel, George. "Being as *Tad Ekam*: Western Scholastic and Indian Approaches to Metaphysics." In *Western Encounter with Indian Philosophy*. Edited by Augustine Thottakara. Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2002.



Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives*. Bangalore: ATC, 1999.

Peters, John A. *Metaphysics*. Louvain: Duquesne University Press, 1963.

Radhakrishnan, S. *Indian Philosophy*. Vol. I. London: 1962.

V. Francis Vineeth. *Foundations of World Vision*. Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1985.

V. Madhusudan Reddy. *The Vedic Epiphany*. Vol. I. Hyderabad: Institute of Human Study, 1991.



---

**UNIT 4 BEING AND THE PROBLEM OF ONE AND MANY**

---

**Contents**

- 4.0. Objectives
- 4.1. Introduction
- 4.2. Early Western Perspectives
- 4.3. Early Indian Perspectives
- 4.4. Being as One in Many
- 4.5. Finite Being as One in Many
- 4.6. Let Us Sum Up
- 4.7. Further Readings and References

---

**4.0. OBJECTIVES**

---

There is an inseparable relation between One and many. 'Many' cannot be without 'One.' The 'many' has its foundation in the 'One,' which sustains and supports the many. In the same way, the One never remains in isolation apart from 'the many.' It is because the One by its very nature is 'relational,' social, and self-giving by allowing itself to be limited in the finite other so that the finite is made possible by the infinite One. In this Unit a humble attempt is made to:

- Explain the problem of one and many from the philosophical perspectives of the Western and Indian philosophers
- Establish that Being is One in Many

---

**4.1. INTRODUCTION**

---

A discussion on the 'problem of one and many' has been on the increase throughout the centuries. It has been a much debated question both in the East and in the West. It was first posed in the West by the pre-Socratic philosophers. The problem is implicitly present in the discussion of Heraclitus (c. 540-480 BCE) and has its explicit starting point in the fragments of Parmenides' poem which had also much influenced the metaphysical thinking of Plato (428-348 BCE) and Aristotle (384-322 BCE). Lively debates on the problem are also predominantly present in the philosophies of the East, especially in the Vedic, Vedantic, and non-Vedic systems of India. In this article we examine only the most important origins of Western and Indian philosophies on the issue that definitely influenced the later thinkers of various schools of thought, so as to arrive at a fair synthesis of the same.

---

**4.2. EARLY WESTERN PERSPECTIVES**

---

*Heraclitus*: For Heraclitus, the fundamental thought is that the one universe is in a state of ceaseless change. 'One cannot step twice into the same river,' for other waters are ever flowing on. To signalize the notion of incessant activity Heraclitus chooses as his first principle the ever-living fire which is the vital principle in the organism and the essence of the soul. The fire of Heraclitus is not the abiding substratum of his predecessors, but that which is constantly being transformed into other things. The primal unity itself is in constant motion and change. Its creation is destruction and its destruction is creation. This view is opposed by Parmenides who interprets reality to be permanent without any change.

*Parmenides*: Parmenides, the metaphysician of the Eleatic school, challenges Heraclitus' teaching that everything changes— that fire becomes water, and water earth, and earth fire—that things first are and then are not. How can a thing both be and not be? How can anyone think such a contradiction? To say that it can, is to say that something is and something is not. Or, if Being has *become*, it must either have come from non-Being or from Being. If from non-Being, it has come from nothing, which is impossible; if from Being, then it has come from itself and is identical with itself, and thus has always been. Then, it is evident that from Being only being can come, that whatever is always has been and always will be, that everything remains what it is. Hence, there can be only one eternal, unchangeable Being.

*Plato* (428-348): The idea or form comprehends or holds together the essential qualities common to many particulars. The essence of things consists in their universal forms. The ideas or forms are not mere thoughts in the minds of humans or even in the mind of God (the divine thought is itself directed toward them). Plato conceives them as existing in and for themselves, possessing substantiality— i.e., they are substances— real or substantial forms, the original, eternal transcendent archetypes of things, existing prior to things and apart from them, and thus uninfluenced by the changes to which they are subject. The particular objects of perception are imperfect copies or reflections of the eternal patterns. Particulars may come and go, but the idea or form goes on forever. Humans may come and go, but the human-type is eternal. There are many particular objects or copies, but there is only one idea of class of things. The variety and diversity of independent forms or ideas is endless.

*Aristotle* (384-322): For him, metaphysics is the First Philosophy that deals with the Unmoved Mover. The Unmoved Mover is the first being or first substance. As the Unmoved Mover is the first, the philosophy which deals with this kind of being is the First Philosophy. Since God is the first being who is studied in the first philosophy, it is also called theology. In other words, according to Aristotle, metaphysics is the first philosophy and the science of being as being. It is the science of substance, especially of the first substance, of the First Cause, which is immovable, eternal, independent, and without matter, i.e., God. Thus, first philosophy or ontology is at the same time theology. The object of metaphysics is all beings – visible and invisible. It investigates all beings in so far as they are beings – the totality of beings and all particular domains of beings.

---

### **4.3. EARLY INDIAN PERSPECTIVES**

---

In India, the problem of one and many is expressed through a rich variety of thoughts and practices that have developed over more than three thousand years. There is no single Indian view on the problem, but rather a plurality of ways of understanding and interpreting reality as reflected in the *Vedas*, and particularly in the classical systems of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. The problem becomes thematic at various levels and in different contexts, in debates concerning the status of certain concepts as the soul, God, substances, universals, time, change, permanence/impermanence, etc.

When worship was accorded to any of the Vedic deities, the worshippers tended to make that deity the supreme one, having all the attributes of a monotheistic deity, of whom all others were forms or manifestations. This is known as henotheism, distinct from monotheism. Of course, these synthesizing processes, classification of gods, simplification of divine attributes and

powers are all evidences of the problem of one and many. The Vedic Indians were sufficiently logical to realize that the attributes of creation and ruling of the world could be granted only to one being, namely, *Prajapati*, the Lord of creatures, *Vsya-karman*, the world-maker. Thus, the logic of religious faith asserted itself in favour of religious monotheism and metaphysical monism. The monistic emphasis led the Vedic thinkers to look upon the Vedic deities as different names of the One universal Godhead. The real that lies behind the tide of temporal change is One, spoken of in different ways. The One pervades all things just as air or ether (*akasa*) pervades the universe. The One animates the world just as the life-breath (*prana*) animates the human body.

The Vedic seers did not stop with a mythological view of Reality. They did not rest content until they had a vision of the unlimited Being (*Tadekam*). The hymn where the unlimited Being appears is the *Nasadiya-sukta* which has been praised as containing 'the flower of Indian thought.' This hymn is the quintessence of Indian metaphysics. All things are traced to one principle. Opposites like being and non-being, life and death, and night and day, are shown to be the self-unfolding of that 'One.'

Though the Upanisads do not work out a logically coherent system of the problem of one and many, they give us a few fundamental doctrines which are truly metaphysical: *atman* and *Brahman*. The term *atman* was used in the *Rgveda* to denote the unborn part or the immaterial soul of human. *Atman* is the essence or ultimate reality of anything. The *atman* is the changeless principle behind the changing factors in human. This changeless aspect of human can be discovered only after a process of introspection which helps us transcend phenomenal aspects to reach the inner reality of *atman*. The word '*Brahman*' is derived from the root '*Brh*' which means to grow, to evolve. In the beginning it meant sacrifice, then prayer, and then it acquired its present meaning of ultimate reality. It is the ultimate cause of the universe which spontaneously bursts forth as nature and soul. Thus, *Brahman* transcends all, and yet underlies all as their background. The lower is transformed to the higher. *Brahman* is the immanent inner controller of all (*antaryamin*) and the self of all (*sarva-bhutantaratma*). As all spokes are contained in the axle and the wheel, so all beings are contained in *Brahman*. In the early *Upanisads*, *Brahman* stands for the superpersonal ground of the cosmos (objective) and *atman* is the principle of individual consciousness (subjective). But further thinking about the Unity of the Ultimate Reality, the One without a second, compelled the Upanisadic seers to resume that there cannot be a distinction between the essence or inner reality of the cosmos—the *Brahman*—and the inner reality of human—the *atman*—because *Brahman* cannot be taken into parts, and because the Absolute Consciousness cannot be thought of as being in any way other than the consciousness seen in the individual humans.

---

#### 4.4. BEING AS ONE IN 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 sensations that are spread out in space and that succeed one another in time. But to a human experience there also belongs (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 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, and 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 fullness and 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. The philosophical positions of monism, dualism, and of radical pluralism - all depend upon the ontological solution offered to the problem of one and many. But how can Being be *identical and diverse* at the same time?

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. Being reveals itself as an absolute everywhere. 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.

---

#### 4.5. FINITE BEING AS ONE IN MANY

---

**Action as One in Many:** 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. Here, action

consists of exercise and determination; action is in the elements of the action. The One action is in its many elements. Thus, the One action is in many actions.

We know well that 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, insofar 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 it 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 also has 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 insofar 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. This One, Absolute Ground of beings is in essence. The One is in many.

**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, determined by Being which is present in every finite being.

**Substance in Accidents:** Finite beings are composed of a relatively permanent principle, which remains primarily the same throughout secondary changes and secondary principles. These principles 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 is 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 its being. There is no accident which is not permeated and penetrated by substance, which sustains and supports them. The *one* substance is there *in many* accidents.

**Form in 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 the 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, and 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.'

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 a '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 as 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. Matter is there in every finite material substantial form. Matter is in form. One material principle (prime matter) is there in every material substantial form. One is in many.

**Act in Potency:** 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, and 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 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, and 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 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. Act is there in every material finite being which is in potency. The One act is there in several potencies that a material finite being possesses.

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 – should also be one in many.

**Check Your Progress**

**Note:** use the space provided for your Answers

1) What are the early perspectives on the problem of one and many (Indian and Western)?

-----  
 -----  
 -----

2) Establish that Being is one in many.

-----  
 -----  
 -----

**4.6. LET US SUM UP**

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 or the presence of Being (One) in beings (many) is an undeniable fact.

**4.7. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES**

Aune, Bruce. *Metaphysics: The Elements*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.

Bittle, Celestine. *The Domain of Being*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1950.

Bogliolo, Luigi. *Metaphysics*. Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1987.

Coreth, Emerich. *Metaphysics*. Edited by Joseph Donceel. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.

Glenn, P.J. *Cosmology*. London: Herder, 1962.

Hättich, Manfred. "Pluralism." In: *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. 5. Edited by Karl Rahner et al. Bangalore: TPI, 1978.

- Koren, Henry J. *An Introduction to the Science of Metaphysics*. Milwaukee: Bruce, 1963.
- L. De Raeymaeker. *The Philosophy of Being*. New York: Herder, 1966.
- Macquarrie, John. "The One and the Many: Complementarity of Religions." In: *Meeting of Religions*. Edited by Thomas A. Aykara. Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1978.
- Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives*. Bangalore: The Asian Trading Corporation, 1999.
- Owens, Joseph. *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*. Milwaukee: Bruce, 1963.
- Panthanmackel, George. *One in Many: An Investigation into Metaphysical Vision of Karl Rhner*. Bangalore: SFS Publications, 1993.
- Panthanmackel, George. *Society in Being: Metaphysical Foundation of Sociology*. Bangalore: The Asian Trading Corporation, 2003.
- Peters, John A. *Metaphysics*. Louvain: Duquesne University Press, 1963.
- Renard, Henry. *The Philosophy of Being*. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1953.
- Ross, W. D. *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Vol. I. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.



Indira Gandhi National Open University  
School of Interdisciplinary and  
Trans-disciplinary Studies

MPYE – 008

Metaphysics

**Block 4**

**NOTION OF BEING**

**UNIT 1**

**Categorial Notion of Being (Being and Categories)**

**UNIT 2**

**Agapeic Notion of Being (Being and *Agape*)**

**UNIT 3**

**Transcendental Notion of Being (Being and Transcendentals)**

**UNIT 4**

**Absolute Notion of Being (Being and Absolute)**



**Expert Committee**

Prof. Gracious Thomas Director, School of Social Work IGNOU	Dr. Jose Kuruvachira Salesian College & IGNOU Study Centre Dimapur, Nagaland
Prof. Renu Bharadwaj School of Humanities IGNOU	Dr. Sathya Sundar Sethy Dept of Humanities IIT, Chennai.
Prof. George Panthanmackel, Senior Consultant, IGNOU	Dr. Joseph Martis St. Joseph's College Jeppu, Mangalore – 2
Dr. M. R. Nandan Govt. College for Women Mandya - Mysore	Dr. Jaswinder Kaur Dhillon 147, Kabir park Opp. GND University Amristar – 143 002
Dr. Kuruvila Pandikattu Jnana-deepa Vidyapeeth Ramwadi, Pune	Prof. Y.S. Gowramma Principal, College of Fine Arts, Manasagangotri Mysore – 570 001
Dr Babu Joseph CBCI Centre New Delhi	
Prof. Tasadduq Husain Aligarh Muslim University Aligarh	
Dr. Bhuvaneswari Lavanya Flats Gangai Amman Koil St. Thiruvanmiyur Chennai – 600 041	
Dr. Alok Nag Vishwa Jyoti Gurukul Varanasi	

**Block Preparation**

Units 1-3

Prof. George Panthanmackel  
Suvidya College,  
Electronic City, Bangalore.

Unit 4

Dr. Kuruvila Pandikattu  
Jnana-deepa Vidyapeeth  
Ramwadi, Pune

**Content Editor**

Dr. V. John Peter  
IGNOU, New Delhi.

**Format Editor**

Prof. Gracious Thomas  
IGNOU, New Delhi.

**Programme Coordinator**

Prof. Gracious Thomas  
IGNOU, New Delhi.

---

## BLOCK INTRODUCTION

---

Classification is a necessary item of any system. The categories reduce chaotic mass to order and system. They arrange all reality into a few general classes, and thus assist the mind in interpreting the manifold of experience. They are the fundamental under which we can classify finite beings in their particular modes of Being. As fundamental concepts, they are as general as possible. However, they are not absolutely general or transcendental. They have the notion of Being 'above' them as all-inclusive and as applicable to every finite being. They are analogous realization of the notion of Being and the most general diversifications of everything which experience shows us to be possible, real, or necessary. Originally and fundamentally Being gives itself to beings, so that beings are made possible. Beings come from Being. Ontology, by its very nature, is *agapeic* ontology. Being also possesses the transcendentals such as oneness, truth, goodness, and beauty.

**Unit 1** presents the categorical notion of Being. As Being in itself can neither be defined nor objectified clearly, Being escapes human definition and objectification. However, the various manifestations of Being experienced in finite beings can be objectified and classified. Categorisation includes within it, both objectification and classification. In this unit the understanding of metaphysical categories of Being is solicited both from Western and Indian perspectives.

**Unit 2** investigates into the notion of Being as love and free. It affirms that Being is love, *agape*. Being gives itself to beings in total freedom. Being gives itself to beings so that there can be beings. Being is self-giving or love (*agape*). If Being is self-giving or *agapeic*, then every being is expected to give itself back to Being and to other fellow-beings in return. When a being gives itself to another in love, harmony and peace follow. Thus, the path from violence to peace is the path of *agapeic* ontology, the ontology of *agapeic* love characterized by kindness, compassion, gentleness, patience, humility, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

**Unit 3** considers the transcendentals such as Oneness, Truth, Goodness and Beauty which are transcendental properties of Being. As we consider a being in its relation to its constitution, it is *one*. As we consider it in its relation to another, in relation to a knowing intellect, it is *true*. As we consider it in relation to an appetitive power (will), it is *good*. As we consider a being as a combination of truth and goodness, it is *beautiful*.

**Unit 4** brings to the conclusion the course on metaphysics with a deeper understanding of Being by identifying the notion of Absolute with that of God cautiously. The profound meaning of Being which is the source of everything is a challenge to respond to. It opens up to the students the limits of metaphysics where the mystical begins. Here an attempt is made to understand the dynamic meaning of Being, to bring in the notion of the Absolute and relate it to God.

---

**UNIT 1 CATEGORIAL NOTION OF BEING (BEING AND CATEGORIES)**

---

**Contents**

- 1.0. Objectives
- 1.1. Introduction
- 1.2. Early Western Perspective: Aristotle
- 1.3. Early Indian Perspective: Vaiseshika School
- 1.4. Let Us Sum Up
- 1.5. Further Readings and References

---

**1.0. OBJECTIVES**

---

Being in itself can neither be defined nor objectified clearly. Being escapes human definition and objectification. However, the various manifestations of Being experienced in finite beings can be objectified and classified. Categorisation includes within it, both objectification and classification. The present Unit's object is to understand categories:

- From early Western perspectives
- From early Indian perspectives

---

**1.1. INTRODUCTION**

---

The term 'category' is from the Greek root '*kategoria*' meaning an 'accusation' or 'charge' in a court of law. Aristotle (384-322 BCE) transferred the word from legal use to a logical use in attributing one thing to another as done in predicating a quality of a subject. Just as the courts of law render their judgments on 'accusation' or 'charges' brought before them, so does the human mind make its judgments on ideas that appear before it by way of affirmation or denial. Hence, the primary meaning of category is one of *the supreme classes of predicates* found in our judgments and propositions. The categories in this sense belong to the science of logic. Even Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) recognizes this fact. For Kant, categories are transcendental conditions of knowledge. Transcendental means a condition which must be in the mind for cognition to take place. The first of these transcendental conditions are the a priori forms of sensibility: space and time. They are in the senses making possible the cognition of sense experience. Kant's categories are such transcendental conditions for intellectual knowledge. They are subjective forms or modes into which the data of sense experience are fitted. Our cognition arises from the union of these forms with the phenomena of sense experience. These categories or forms are part of the furniture of the mind. They are applied to the phenomena according to the law of the mind's nature so as to give us the knowledge we have. Such knowledge is not a representation of things but a representation of the mind's own subjective states, and thus it does not reveal anything of the *noumena* (things-in-themselves). Kant lists twelve categories that correspond to twelve classes of judgments. They are pure mental constructs entirely independent of experience, and pre-existing as modes of thought antecedent to all knowledge derived from experience. Their purpose is to unify the manifold of sense experience and to impose on it the forms of necessity and universality. They do not tell us anything of the reality independent of the mind. Hence, they are different from the Aristotelian categories which are classes of direct universal ideas and modes of real being.

---

**1.2. EARLY WESTERN PERSPECTIVE: ARISTOTLE**

---



For Aristotle, there are ten categories: substance, quantity, quality, relation, action, passion, place, time, habit, and position. 1) *Substance*: Aristotle calls the first category *ousia*, which literally means *beingness* or substance, sometimes this term has the formal-abstract meaning of the essence of the subsistent being. It is a reality, bodily or spiritual, suited to exist as itself. The name substance is from the Latin *substans* or 'standing under;' for a creatural substance is capable of 'standing under' the accidents of which it is the subject. It supports accidents in being. 2) *Quantity* is Being as dispersed in parts outside parts. It is an accident proper to bodies; it is the extension of bodies in space. To say a thing is big or little is not to speak of quantity; for quantity deals with measurements. Big and little indicate qualities. If we say a human is six feet tall we indicate quantity; so also we indicate quantity when we say 'forty rupees,' or 'a nine by twelve rug, or 'a kilometre walk,' etc. 3) *Quality* is Being as determined in itself. It is an accident which determines the sort or kind of a thing. Nearly all adjectives indicate qualities. Quality is a very broad and inclusive category. Thus it indicates: (a) *dispositions and habits* such as prudence, industriousness, strength, weakness, gullibility; (b) *abilities or capacities* such as capability, keen-sightedness, quick-mindedness; (c) *passive characteristics* such as colour, the state of being esteemed, age, temperature (age and temperature can also be *quantities* when expressed in definite numbers, that is, they can be quantities by analogy). 4) *Relation* is Being as referring to other things. It is an accident which determines a thing in its standing to or towards another. It is unique among accidents because it involves two realities and does not really exist in either but *between* them. Examples of relation are: equality, similarity, unlikeness, paternity, loyalty, servitude, etc. 5) *Action* is Being as actuating its reference to others. It is an accident which determines a reality as doing something, as producing an effect; for example, talking, writing, speeding, striking, painting, etc. 6) *Passion* is Being as undergoing the action of others in being acted upon. It is an accident which determines a reality as undergoing something, as affected by some action; e.g., being talked to, being written, being struck. As action is expressed by the active voice of verbs, passion is expressed by the passive voice. 7) *Place* is Being as finding itself somewhere. It is an accident which determines a reality as to its position with reference to other realities. It is an accident which, strictly speaking, is proper only to bodily substances. Place finds expression in such terms as, in the room, at the corner of the main street, in this country, on the surface of the earth, on that chair. 8) *Time* is Being as movement. It is an accident which determines a reality in its position with reference to *before* and *after*; e.g., at midday, this evening, at five o'clock, next Tuesday, in 1492, before midnight, after supper, etc. 9) *Habitus or Possession* is Being as the state or condition with reference to external things. It is an accident proper to bodies, which determines its subject with reference to its clothing or external accoutrements or adjuncts; e.g., well-dressed, armoured, moss-covered, ivy-hung, bearded, swaddled. In one aspect, habit is also *quality*. Mental and moral habits are always merely qualities. *Habit* as a predicament or category means some kind of bodily *dress* or bodily adornment or bodily swathing. 10) *Position or Posture* is Being as referring to attitude, the disposition of the parts of a being. It is an accident to bodies which determines its subject with reference to the arrangement or disposition of its own part; for instance, sprawled, sitting, standing, lying down, huddled up, erect, prone, cross-kneed, outstretched, etc.

---

### 1.3. EARLY INDIAN PERSPECTIVE: VAISESHIKA SCHOOL

---

The Indian term for 'category' is *padartha*, which means 'the object or meaning (*artha*) of a word (*pada*).' A *padarth* is an object which can be thought (*artha*) and named (*pada*). *Prasastapada* defines *padartha* as a knowable thing (*jneya*), or as a validly cognizable thing (*prameya*), or as a nameable thing (*abhidheya*). The approach of the *Nyaya-vaisheshika* to the

universe is purely a realistic one in which one regards all the objects of the universe as real things. Such objects are cognized either through the external sense-organs or through the internal ones. In the former case, the external objects of cognition are the specific attributes of the five *mahabhutas*: *rupa*, *sparsa*, *gandha*, *rasa*, and *sabda*, which are cognized through their respective sense-organs. In the latter case, the objects of the sensible world are cognized through the internal organs, and hence are subtler elements like *paramanus*, *tanmatras*, etc. Kanada divides the whole reality into six categories. The seventh (non-existence) was added afterwards. Of these seven categories, the first three, i.e., substance, quality, and action possess a real objective existence. The next three, i.e., generality, particularity, and inherence are products of intellectual discrimination. These six categories have existence, nameability and knowability, which are not logical notions (as that of Gautama's classifications) but ontological entities. The seventh category, i.e., non-existence is also an ontological category which is not mere negation of a substance in thought, but real non-existence of a substance. When a jar is destroyed, there is a real negation of the jar. It is to be noted that neither Kanada nor Prasastapada speak of non-existence as a separate category, but Sridhara, Udayana, Vyomasiva, and Sivadiya add the seventh category of non-existence.

**Substance (*dravya*):** Substance is the substratum where actions and qualities inhere and which is the co-existent material cause of the composite things produced from it. It is the substratum of all things. A substance is destroyed only by the destruction of its substratum. It is not destroyed either by its own effect or by its own cause. It means that the relation of the destroyer and the destroyed does not exist between two substances which have entered into the relation of effect and cause. Thus the *Sutra* states: "Substance is not annihilated either by effect or by cause" (VS I, 12). For Prasastapada, 'substance is the main category, and all categories depend on it for their existence. So it is first named.' Being the substratum of qualities, it is different from qualities. For instance, in the case of a white cloth, the white colour is experienced as a property residing in the substratum, cloth. Therefore, white colour and cloth are different in their essence. The word 'property' does not mean only qualities, but is used in a wider sense and includes all the five kinds of properties (i.e., substance, quality, movement, the universal, and *visesha*), which subsist in their substrate by inherent relation. A substance does not possess qualities at the first moment of its production. If the qualities arise simultaneously with substances, there cannot be any distinction between them, and if the qualities do not arise, then substances would be free from qualities. Then the definition of substance, as that which possesses qualities, would be violated. To meet this difficulty, it is said that substance is the substrate of qualities either in the relation of intimate union (*samvaya sambandha*) or antecedent negation (*pragbhava*). Qualities inhere in a substance from the second moment of its production until its destruction. A substance is also the material cause of its composite product. For example, threads are the material cause of cloth made by their combination. Only substance is capable of producing an effect out of its stuff. These substances are nine: earth, fire, air, water, ether, time, space, spirit, and mind. The *Vaiseshika* philosophy is pluralistic and realistic but not materialistic since it admits spiritual substances. Out of the nine substances, the first five (i.e., earth, water, fire, air, and ether) are called physical, since each of them possesses a unique quality sensed by the external sense. Smell is the unique property of earth, and other substances have smell only if mixed with some quantity of earth. There is smell in muddy water, but not in pure water. In the same way, taste is the property of water, colour that of light, touch of air, and sound of ether. The substances – of earth, fire, water, and air – are both eternal and non-eternal. The atoms of earth, water, fire, and

air are eternal, as an atom is indivisible and can neither be produced nor destroyed. All others are non-eternal as they are produced by the combination of atoms and are subject to destruction. There are four kinds of atoms: earth, water, fire, and air, each having its own special quality. Ether is the fifth physical substance, the substratum of the quality of sound. The sound is perceived, but not ether. It is one and eternal as it is indivisible and does not depend on any other substance for its existence. It is all pervading as it has an unlimited dimension whose effect is perceived everywhere. Time and space are also eternal, all-pervading, imperceptible, infinite, partless, and indivisible. Time causes our cognitions of past, present, and future; and of 'younger' and 'older.' Space (*dik*) causes our cognitions of east and west, here and there, near and far. There are innumerable souls that are independent, individual, eternal, and all-pervading spiritual substance, the substratum of the quality of consciousness. The souls are divided into two: the individual and the Supreme. The Supreme is only one, the Creator of the world. The individual is internally perceived as possessing some quality when one says, 'I am happy', 'I am sorry', and so on. The individual is not one but many, being different in different bodies. Mind is an internal sense which is atomic, many, eternal, and imperceptible. Each self has a mind through which the self comes into contact with the objects. Its existence is inferred from the fact that the self must perceive internal states through an internal sense, just as it perceives external objects through external senses. Moreover, the mind is selective in the perception of external objects. We perceive colour, touch, taste, smell, and sound subsequently, even though all the external senses may be in contact with objects simultaneously, coming into contact with one sense only at a time.

Hence, one can distinguish between two points of view from which the concept of *dravya* can be studied: first, as a cosmological and nature-philosophical concept, and second as a functional-categorical concept. From the cosmological and nature-philosophical concept of view, *dravya* is the cause of its qualities; from the functional-categorical concept of view, it is the subject of qualities and other determinations such as relations and universals.

**Quality (*guna*):** A quality cannot exist independently; it inheres in a substance which is its substrate. "Inhering in Substance, not possessing Attribute, not an independent cause in Conjunctions and Disjunctions, - such is the mark of Attribute" (VS I, 16). It is the non-material cause of things as it determines only their nature and character, but not their existence. All qualities must belong to substances without qualities themselves having qualities. Kanada lists seventeen qualities: colour (*rupa*), taste (*rasa*), smell (*gandha*), touch (*sparsa*), number (*samkhya*), size (*parimana*), individuality (*prthaktva*), posteriority (*aparatva*), knowledge (*buddhi*), pleasure (*sukha*), desire (*iccha*), aversion (*dvesha*), and effort (*prayatna*). Prasastapāda adds seven more: heaviness (*gurutva*), fluidity (*dravatva*), viscosity (*sneha*), merit (*dharma*), demerit (*Adharma*), sound (*śabda*), and faculty (*Samsara*). Some others add lightness (*lagutva*), softness (*mrudutva*), and hardness (*kathinatva*) to the twenty-four qualities. But these are not separate qualities. For lightness is only the absence of heaviness, and softness and hardness represent different degrees of conjunction. The qualities that belong to eternal substances are called eternal and to the transient ones, non-eternal. Those that subsist in two or more substances are known as general, while those in only one substance are called specific. Number, magnitude, distinctness, conjunction, disjunction, remoteness, nearness, derived fluidity, gravity, and velocity are general qualities while colour, taste, smell, touch, viscosity, natural fluidity, knowledge, pleasure, pain, desire, hate, effort, merit, demerit, faculty, and sound are special



qualities which help to distinguish objects which possess them from others. Qualities are of three kinds: (a) those perceived through one external sense-organ: colour, taste, smell, touch, and sound; and (b) those perceived through two external sense-organs: eyes and the skin, viz., number, magnitude, distinctness, conjunction, disjunction, remoteness, nearness, fluidity, and viscosity; and (c) those perceived through any sense-organ: gravity, merit, demerit, and faculty. The qualities of the self – cognition, pleasure, pain, desire, hate, and volition – are perceived through the mind (*manas*).

Colour, perceived by the visual organ, only resides in earth, water, and light, though in the latter two the colour is permanent. It varies in earth when heat is applied. There are seven colours: white, blue, yellow, red, green, brown, and variegated (*citra*). Taste (*rasa*), possessed by earth and water, is the quality of things apprehended only by the gustatory organ. The tastes are of six kinds: sweet, sour, salty, pungent (*katu*), astringent (*kasaya*), and bitter. Odour (*gandha*), residing in earth, is the quality apprehended only by the olfactory organ. It is of two kinds: fragrant and the non-fragrant, i.e., bad smell. Touch (*sparsa*) – residing in earth, water, light and air – is the special quality apprehended by the tactual organ. Touch is of three kinds: hot, cold, neither cold nor hot. Water is cold, light is hot, and earth and air are neither cold nor hot. Sound (*sabda*) is a quality perceived by the auditory organ. Number (*samkhya*) is a generic quality (*samanyaguna*) of things. Of these numbers, unity (*ekatva*) is eternal in eternal substances and transient in transient substances. Magnitude (*parimana*), the specific cause of measurement, is of four kinds: minuteness, largeness, length, and shortness. Ether has extreme largeness (*paramamahattvam*) and extreme minuteness (*pariman dalya*). The dimension of non-eternal substances is determined by the number, magnitude, and arrangements of the parts. *Dyads* are minute, while the others are of limited magnitude. *Individuality* (*prthaktva*) is the principle of distinction. It is eternal in eternal substances, and transient in transient substances. *Conjunction and disjunction* refer respectively to the union of separate things and separation of things which are in union. *Remoteness and proximity* are the principles of the notions of ‘remote’ and ‘near’. Each of them is of two kinds: spatial and temporal. Knowledge, pleasure, pain, desire, aversion and effort belong to the soul. *Knowledge*, both valid and invalid, is the apprehension of objects, a quality of the self. Valid knowledge is of four kinds: perception, inference, comparison, and testimony; invalid knowledge is of four kinds: doubt, illusion, indefinite knowledge, and dream. *Pleasure* is produced by the interaction of the sense-organs with desirable objects. *Pain* is a feeling of self-abasement. *Desire* is a craving for the attainment of an unattained object. *Aversion* is the feeling of rage which arises from pain and recollection of painful objects. It causes effort, remembrance, merit, and demerit. *Effort* enables one to the attainment of the desirable and to the abandoning of the undesirable. *Gravity* (*gurutva*) causes things to fall to the ground. *Fluidity* (*dravatva*) causes flowing, and it exists in earth, water, and light. *Viscosity* (*sneha*) is the quality of water. It is the cause of cohesion, smoothness, etc. *Merit* (*dharma*) and *demerit* (*adharma*) respectively cause happiness and misery.

**Action (*karma*):** Action is that which inheres in one substance, devoid of qualities, and is the direct and the immediate cause of conjunction and disjunction. “Residing in one Substance only, not possessing Attribute, an independent cause of Conjunctions and Disjunctions – such is the Mark of Action” (VS I, 17). It resides in a substance, but it is its temporary feature, whereas a quality is its permanent feature. Conjunction resides in many substances which are conjoined with each other, but action is present only in one substance. For example, conjunction of a book



with a table resides in two substances, whereas the action of a fan resides only in it. Action, an unconditional cause of conjunction and disjunction, is destroyed by conjunction. For example, the action of a vehicle is the immediate cause of its disjunction from one part of the ground and conjunction with another part of it. The vehicle, which is a substance, is the inherent cause of its disjunction and conjunction. But its action is their cause. All actions subsist in corporeal substances such as earth, water, fire, air, and the mind. The incorporeal substances – such as *akasa*, time, space, and soul – cannot change their position. An action cannot produce another action. If an action produces another action, then every action will go on producing another action of its own type *ad infinitum*. Similarly, an action does not produce any substance since at the time of the production of a substance action does not exist. The actions are classified into five: *utksepana*, *apaksepana*, *akuncana*, *prasara%oa*, and *gamana*. *Utksepana* is the cause of the contact of a body with some higher region due to weight, effort, and conjunctions, e.g., throwing a ball upward. *Apaksepana* is the cause of the contact of a body with some lower region, e.g., throwing downward. *Akuncana* is that by which the upper parts of an extended substance are disjoined with those parts with which they were connected before and are combined with the parts at the bottom so that the substance becomes curved, e.g., clenching of the fingers. *Prasarana* is that by which the upper parts of a substance become disjoined with the parts of the same substance at the bottom, and become connected with the upper parts with which they were disconnected before so that the object becomes straight, e.g., opening one's clenched hand. *Gamana* – which embraces different kinds of action as rotatory action (*bhramana*), going up of flames, flowing down of liquids, falling down due to weight, etc. – is any type of action not covered by the varieties mentioned above.

**Generality (*samanya*):** Generality refers to an abstract characteristic that is singular and eternal and yet pervades many. “And from a commonly observed mark (there is) no (inference of anything in) particular” (VS III, 7). For instance, individual jars are designated by a common name ‘jar.’ Hence, every object has both general and particular aspects. The same property which is general in relation to one class may be particular in relation to another. Universal is a real entity which corresponds to a general idea or class-essence. There is the class-essence or general idea of human in all individual humans. It is one, though it inheres in many individuals. It is eternal, though the individuals in whom it inheres are subject to birth and death. We know individual humans as belonging to the same class because there is the same class-essence of human in all humans. The generality subsists in substances, qualities and actions. ‘Jarness’ of the jar subsists in individual jars which are substances; ‘colourness’ of colour subsists in individual colours which are qualities; and the class-essence of movement subsists in all individual movements which are actions. However, the universal does not subsist in another universal in order to avoid infinite regress. All particular cows have the same essential qualities, as the same class-essence subsists in them all. The universal exists in each individual wholly and never partially, because it has no parts. When a particular individual comes into existence it is already related to the universal. The universals are distinguished in three classes, i.e., the highest, the lowest, and the intermediate. “Being-ness” is the highest universal as it includes all, and is not included in anything. The lowest kind of generality has the most limited referents, such as Americanness, Indianness, potness, and chairness, present in all Americans, Indians, pots, and chairs. The genus of substance is intermediate between the highest and the lowest since it is wider in relation to substances like earth, water, etc., and narrower in relation to the universal ‘being-ness’ which belongs to substance, quality, and action. A distinction is also made between

*jati* and *upadhi*. The *jati* is inborn, natural, and eternal, while *upadhi* is adventitious and transitory. Every general characteristic is not a *jati*. Since some persons are blind, we cannot speak of a *jati* of blindness. If it were so, blind humans and blind brutes would be grouped under the same class. Humanity distinguishes humans from other animals, but blindness does not differentiate blind humans from blind cows. So, the classification of humans as humans is a *jati*, while their grouping according to blindness is an *upadhi*. The following are some of the conditions which exclude generality: *Abheda*: Generality inheres in many individuals. If there is only one individual, it can have no generality. *Tulyatvam*: Potness and pitchness are not two different classes as they are mutually implicative synonyms. *Sankara*: If there is a cross-classification between two classes, they cannot be true universals. Four kinds of atoms (i.e., earth, water, fire, and air) and ether are physical substances while the four atomic substances and the mind are corporeal substances. Ether is physical but not corporeal; mind is corporeal but not physical. So physicality and corporeality cannot be generalities, because they involve cross-classification. *Anavastha*: No generality can subsist in another generality leading to infinite regress. *Rupahani*: Generality cannot subsist in particularities contradicting their nature. For, generality is inclusive, whereas particularity is exclusive. So particularity refuses to allow the inherence of generality in it. *Asambandha*: Since there is no relation of inherence between generality and inherence, there cannot be generality of inherence.

**Particularity (*visesha*):** Particularity (*visesha*) distinguishes a thing from all other things, distinguishing the smaller from the larger. “It is smaller, it is larger, - such affirmations, in respect of one and the same object, arise from the existence of the species, or of the peculiarity [particularity], and from the non-existence of the species, or of the peculiarity [particularity]” (VS VII, 11). Everything in this world is differentiated from another on account of different attributes, qualities, and universals. But two objects (e.g., two jars) – which have not only the same universal but, being quite similar, have the same qualities – are differentiated on account of the difference of their parts. Even two atoms of the same class – say of earth, which have the same universal and the same qualities, and which have no parts – possess an ultimate differentiating characteristic called particularity by means of which it is distinguished from all other atoms. What is true of atoms is also true of other eternal substances (e.g., *akasa*, *kala*, *dik*, *Atman*, and *manas*). Kanada defines *visesha* as the ultimate distinguishing feature of an eternal substance. Prasastapada also defines it as the ultimate distinguishing features of eternal substances. They are the causes of the ultimate distinction of their substrates from one another. They are the final distinctive character of eternal substances. From these definitions we may say that particularity is an aspect of every object which causes the notion of its differentiation from other objects. It inheres in each of them, which distinguishes it from the other eternal substances. Particularities are thought to be eternal because we cannot conceive of any eternal substance remaining undifferentiated from others at any time. Particularity is thus an independent, self-sufficient principle of differentiation, which is the unique feature of a single individual, and so its only function is to differentiate. It is ultimate because it functions even when every other means of differentiation fails. Particularities do not require other particularities to distinguish them from one another since that would lead to infinite regress. They perform, in fact, a double function: firstly, they distinguish the eternal substance from other eternal substances, and secondly, they distinguish themselves from other particularities. *Visesha*, according to *Vaisesika*, is a unique type of real, which cannot be brought under any other category. It is not substance as it is not the substratum of quality. It is not quality or action, for it does not participate in a universal. It is not

a relation and so cannot be identified with inherence. Each particularity inheres only in one eternal substance and is, therefore, not a universal which is supposed to be related to many individuals. In the same way, mutual non-existence, which exists in two entities and are dissimilar, cannot serve the purpose of *visesha*. There is a mutual non-existence of a cloth and a jar in each other. But particularities exist in two eternal substances, which have similar qualities, and distinguish themselves from each other. So, mutual non-existence cannot serve the purpose of particularities. Therefore, the existence of particular must be inferred to account for the ultimate distinction of eternal substances.

**Inherence (*samavaya*):** Inherence plays a very important part in upholding pluralistic realism. That principle which relates two inseparable entities is recognized as inherent relation. It is necessary to relate a substance to its quality, action, generality, and particularity. Kanada defines inherence as that combination which produces, in respect of cause and effect, the notion of this being contained in that or here. “That is Combination by virtue of which (arises the intuition) in the form of ‘This is here,’ with regard to effect and cause” (VS VII, 26). From this definition it seems that the conception of *samavaya* at first originated in connection with the relation of cause and effect. But after Kanada, the scope of inherence was extended to the subsistence of qualities, movements or universals, and later on, when a separate category ‘*visesha*’ was formulated, it was also held to be residing in atoms or other eternal substances. Prasastapada understands inherence as the relation which subsists among inseparable things, which relate to one another as the container and the contained. The two entities necessarily stand in the relation of the container and the contained. That which cannot exist without the other is always the contained; and the other which can exist independently is always the container. Inherence always subsists in inseparable things such as the whole and the parts, quality and substance, action and substance, generality and the individual, and particularity and an eternal substance. The whole inheres in the parts; quality inheres in substance; action inheres in a substance; generality inheres in an individual; and particularity inheres in an eternal substance. Inherence is one eternal relation; it is one, because it has the same distinguishing feature. One inherence can account for all notions, and so it is useless to assume many inherences. Inherence is also eternal; for all positive produces are produced in their material cause by the relation of inherence, and if inherence is produced, it will require another inherence, and so on ad infinitum. So in order to avoid infinite regress, inherence is regarded as eternal.

**Non-existence (*abhava*):** “In consequence of the non-application of Action and Attribute (to it), (an effect is) non-existent prior (to its production)” (VS IX, 1). Here, *the Vaseshika Sutra* begins the ninth book with a demonstration of ordinary or popular and extra-ordinary or hyper-popular perception produced from proximity or presentation due to other causes. For the author, the category of non-existence is necessary for a metaphysics of pluralism, which holds that every experience has its counterpart in the external world. When a jar is destroyed, there is the experience of its non-existence. This experience must have its counterpart in the world, i.e., non-existence of the jar should have an objective reality. Since the non-existence of the jar is not unreal, the non-existence of the jar is the reality of a negative kind. If things simply exist without becoming non-existent, then all things should be eternal. Non-existence is mainly divided into two kinds: *samsargabhava* and *anyonyabhava*. *Samsargabhava* means the absence of something in something else. *Anyonyabhava* means the fact that one thing is not another thing. A jar is not a cloth. Here is mutual non-existence of the jar and the cloth. *Samsargabhava* is of

three kinds: *pragabhava*, *pradhvamsabhava*, and *atyantabhava*. *Pragabhava* (prior non-existence) is the non-existence of an effect in its material cause before its production, e.g., the non-existence of the cloth in the threads before its production. Thus prior non-existence is not produced but destroyed. If it is not destroyed the effect cannot be produced. This is the basis of the *asatkaryavada*. *Pradhvamsabhava* (posterior non-existence) is produced by the destruction of the thing, e.g., when a jar is destroyed, it has posterior non-existence. *Atyantabhava* (absolute non-existence) is the absence of a connection between two things in the past, the present, and the future. Colour did not exist in the air in the past, does not exist in the present, and will not exist in the future. So there is absolute non-existence of colour in the air.

### Check Your Progress

**Note:** use the space provided for your Answers

1) How do you interpret the Aristotelian understanding of categories?

-----  
 -----  
 -----

2) What do the Vaiseshikas say about categories?

-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----

---

### 1.4. LET US SUM UP

---

Since there is no science that deals only with the individual as such, classification is a necessary item of any scientific system. The number of particular items of knowledge that can be predicated of an individual is infinite, and they differ from time to time. It would be chaotic and impossible to try to enumerate everything that could be said of a thing during every moment of its existence. The categories reduce this chaotic mass to order and system. They arrange all reality into a few general classes, and thus assist the mind in interpreting the manifold of experience. They are the fundamental concepts which are distinct from one another without being mutually and irreconcilably opposed, but merely juxtaposed, and under which we can classify finite beings in their particular modes of Being. As fundamental concepts, they are as general as possible. However, they are not absolutely general or transcendental since they are distinct fundamental modes of Being, which may be found only in the finite being. They have the notion of Being 'above' them as all-inclusive and as applicable to every finite being. They are analogous realization of the notion of Being and the most general diversifications of everything which experience shows us to be possible, real, or necessary.

---

### 1.5. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

---



- Gradinarov, P.I. *The Moon-Light of Logic: Studies in Laugksi Bhaskara's Tarka-Kaumudi*. Delhi: Ajanta Books International, 1991.
- Koren, Henry J. *An Introduction to the Science of Metaphysics*. Milwaukee: Bruce, 1963.
- L. De Raeymaeker. *The Philosophy of Being*. New York: Herder, 1966.
- Noonan, John P. *General Metaphysics*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1957.
- Panthanmackel, George. "Categories." In: *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. I. Edited by Johnson Puthenpurackal and George Panthanmackel. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2010.
- Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspective*. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1999.
- Peters, John A. *Metaphysics*. Louvain: Duquesne University Press, 1963.
- Renard, Henry. *The Philosophy of Being*. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1953.
- Ross, W. D. *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Vol. I. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.
- Schokhin, Vladimir. "What are the Sixteen Padarthas of Nyaya? An Attempt to Solve the Dilemma of Long Standing." *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research (JICPR)*. Vol. XVI No. 2 (April-June 2001) 108.
- Sharma, Chandradhar. *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1976; Tigunait, Pandit Rajamani. *Seven Systems of Indian Philosophy*. Pennsylvania: The Himalayan International Institute of Yoga, 1983.

---

## UNIT 2 AGAPEIC NOTION OF BEING (BEING AND AGAPE)

---

### Contents

- 2.0. Objectives
- 2.1. Introduction
- 2.2. Notion of Being
- 2.3. Being as Agape (love)
- 2.4. Let Us Sum Up
- 2.5. Further Readings and References

---

### 2.0. OBJECTIVES

---

Being is love, *agape*. Being is love, because Being gives itself to beings in total freedom. Being gives itself to beings so that there can be beings. This Unit:

- Investigates into the notion of Being
- Investigates into the notion of love and freedom
- Affirms that Being is love

---

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

---

A lover who tries to love the beloved must face towards the beloved and concentrate full attention on the latter. This full attention draws upon all four levels of the lover's being: biological, psychological, moral, and ontological. This full attention of the lover to the beloved calls for total devotion or dedication of the lover to the beloved. Hence, this total dedication is total self-giving or self-donation of the lover to the beloved. It is the self-giving of the being of the lover to the beloved. The best gift is self-gift, i.e., giving of one's being to another. That is *agape*. *Agape* is not merely giving what we have but what we are. In this way, it is distinct from *eros* and *philia*. In *eros* we give only what we desire (like) to give; in *philia* we give in proportion to what we receive. Hence, in *eros* and *philia* we give what we have, but in *agape* we give what we are. When we give what we are, we also give what we have. Consequently, *agape* does not exclude *eros* and *philia*, but includes and transforms them. It is because originally and fundamentally Being gives itself to beings, so that beings are made possible. Without Being there cannot be beings. Beings are possible because Being gives itself out of itself. In this way, Being by nature is self-giving or love. Being is love. Since Being is love, it calls for loving response on the part of beings.

---

### 2.2. NOTION OF BEING

---

**Being as Distinct from Beings:** Being as such is distinct from particularized being. *Particularized being* is being which is studied by the diverse sciences of nature. It is the sensible and mobile beings which are either the object of the philosophy of nature or of the other empirical sciences. Particularized being marks and envelops the metaphysical notion of Being. The metaphysical notion of Being is not disengaged from the particularized being, but is present in it in a disguised and invisible manner. All our notions and concepts are resolved in the metaphysical notion of Being. It is the first of all our notions, of which all the rest are determinations. Being is determined by the difference which arises within and not outside itself. It is Being which the intellect perceives first

and before anything else. Hence, the metaphysical intellect must disengage Being and know it in its distinctive mystery. Being as such is real being in all the purity and fullness of its distinctive intelligibility – or mystery. All objects express this being. They utter it to the intellect – not to all intellects but only to those capable of hearing it. Being, seen in its distinctive properties, is trans-objectively subsistent, autonomous, and essentially diversified. When the intellect makes its first judgement in regard to Being (*esse*), it forms its first idea, the idea of being (*ens*) by which the intellect, through simple apprehension, ‘crosses over’ to judgement and lays hold of what properly belongs to judgement, the act of Being.

**Being as Act:** Being (*Esse*) is the very act which turns a possible into a being. Essence is not the highest perfection in the order of being but *esse* (act of Being). However, essence is an element of finite being of absolute necessity and very high nobility, as each essence is the possibility of an actual being endowed with its own finite degree of perfection. Finite being is also act and perfection. The world of finite beings is made possible by the very essences of the things which their own *esse* makes to be true beings. In this way, everything is called a being because of its *esse*; while everything is also called a thing on account of essence or quiddity. As long as one keeps within the notion of the Pure Act of Being, essence cannot be distinguished from it. But as soon as one begins to think of a being, it becomes necessary to conceive it as a participation in the Pure Act of Being, which is the source of its dynamism.

**Being as Dynamic:** The human intellect is not a mirror that passively reflects the objects which come within its field; rather, it is active, fundamentally oriented towards its final goal, the absolute Being. The intellect is dynamic and active. It is a faculty in quest of its intuition, i.e., of assimilation with Being which is pure and simple, supremely one, without limitation, without distinction of essence and existence, and of possibility and reality. Tending towards the infinite, it is not fully satisfied by any finite object. However, to the extent that a finite object participates in the infinite, the intellect finds a partial goal for its appetite in the object, affirms it categorically, and makes a judgement of reality. Hence, truth is found in judgement. The judgement is a *synthesis* through concretion. It unites a subject of inherence and a form. The substantial unity of the knowing subject renders possible the *conversio ad phantasma* without which the intellect could not think of the material singular, nor bring about the concrete synthesis of the judgement. Judgement is not only a synthesis, but an *act of affirmation* too. The affirmation is the essential element of the judgement; for it makes the synthesis which has been effected into an ‘object.’ It endows it with truth by relating it to the absolute Being. Affirmation is an absolute objectification of the subjective form. It transforms subjective form into an ‘ontological object’, an affirmation of Being which is a necessity. *The necessity of affirming Being* is identical with the very necessity of thought. Since only Being can become a content of thought, it follows that the necessity of thought is identical with the affirmation of Being. *The affirmation of Being is the a priori condition of the possibility of every object in consciousness*; and in every affirmation of the finite, the mind goes beyond the finite to the infinite. In other words, human necessarily judges. Judgement implies affirmation of Being. In the affirmation of Being, human experiences a movement, a dynamism. This dynamism has its ultimate source in Being which is necessarily affirmed in every judgement. Human intellect is dynamic because Being, which is absolute, is dynamic. In fact, there takes place a twofold movement: human intellect moving towards Being and Being moving the human intellect towards itself. However, the ultimate source of this twofold movement is the Absolute Being, without which no

movement is possible. It is the objective of the pure desire to know. Pure desire to know means the dynamic orientation manifested in question for intelligence and reflection. It is the a priori and enveloping drive that carries the cognitional process from sense and imagination to understanding, from understanding to judgement, from judgement to the complete context of correct judgements that is named knowledge. It moves human to seek understanding, and then it prevents one from being merely content with one's own imperfect, subjective personal experience. It moves human to reflect, to seek the unconditioned, and to grant unqualified assent only to the unconditioned and the unrestricted.

**Being as Unrestricted Notion:** At the root of all that can be affirmed or conceived is the pure desire to know. It is the pure desire which underlies all judgement and formulation, all questions and all desire to question, that defines its all-inclusive objective (pure desire defines Being). The objective of the pure desire to know is Being. It is the source not only of answers, but also of their criteria; not only of questions but also of grounds on which they are questioned. In other words, there is a cool, detached, disinterested desire to know at the root of cognitional process, and its range is unrestricted and spontaneous.

**Being as Spontaneous Notion:** There is a distinction between the spontaneously operative notion and theoretical accounts of its genesis and content. The spontaneously operative notion is invariant. It is common to all human beings. It functions in the same manner irrespective of what theoretical account of it a human may come to accept. The theoretical account of the content and genesis of the notion are numerous. They vary with philosophical contexts. Spontaneously operative notion is present, invariant in all. The notion of Being is such a notion present in all, and thus extends to everything that is known and unknown. It is true that Being is known in judgement. It is in judgement that we affirm or deny. Until we are able to affirm or deny we do not yet know. Although Being is known only in judgement, the notion of Being is prior to judgement. For judgement presupposes reflection. Reflection presupposes question. Question presupposes the desire to know. The desire to know is the desire to know Being which is immanent to self or spontaneously operative. It is all-pervasive and underpins all cognitional contents and penetrates them all, constituting them as cognitional. All cognitional contents such as ideas and concepts are responses to the desire to know, and all judgements are responses to the demand for the unconditioned. It is the notion of the to-be-known through that content which is prior to every content. The 'to-be-known through the content' passes without residue into the known through that content as each content emerges. The Notion of Being also constitutes all contents as cognitional (can be known) levels of knowing: experience, understanding, and judgement. *Experience* is the first level of knowing. It presents the matter to be known. *Understanding* is the second level of knowing. It defines the matter to be known. *Judgement* is the third level of knowing by which the experienced is thought and the thought is affirmed or denied. Hence Being is really known in judgement by which it is known as Being. Hence, knowing is knowing Being spontaneously as it is the core of meaning.

**Being as the Core of Meaning:** The notion of Being is the core of meaning as it underpins all contents, penetrates them, and constitutes them as cognitional. Meaning can be distinguished from the viewpoint of its sources, acts, terms, and the core. A *source of meaning* is any element of knowledge such as data, images, ideas and concepts, the grasp of the unconditioned and judgement, and the detached and unrestricted desire to know. *Acts of Meaning* are of three kinds: formal, full, and instrumental. *The formal act* of meaning is an act of conceiving, thinking, considering, defining,



supposing, and formulating. *The full act* (of meaning) is an act of judging. *The instrumental act* (of meaning) is the implementation of a formal or of a full act by way of words or symbols in a spoken, written, or merely imagined utterance. The *all-inclusive* terms of meaning is Being, since apart from Being there is nothing. In this way, the *core* of all acts of meaning is the intention of Being. A given judgement pertains to a context of judgements. It is from the context that the *meaning* of the given judgement is determined. For, the meaning of the judgement is an element in the determination of the universal intention of Being, which is the act of existence.

**Being as the Act of Existence:** Being is grasped only as the act of existence of entity. Being is at once separate and united to a receptive subject that is distinct from it. In other words, in the pre-apprehension we grasp Being only through the concept of a specific, sensibly presented, and particular entity. In the same way, every entity is apprehended in the pre-apprehension of the unlimited scope of all the possible objects of thought. This means that entity is apprehended at the moment when it finds itself with the totality of its possible objects. This totality is the one original ground of all determinations of the possible objects or 'beings,' which are the manifestations of Being.

**Being Manifests Beings:** When Being is conceived, it is conceived in the manner of an 'object' in the world, in the manner of an appearance. Being in general, and all that is immaterial, is conceived in the manner of material beings. That is to say, it is considered as a being which 'has' Being. One cannot conceive a thing existing in itself, in any other way. Hence the origin of all human concepts is through the senses. Even non-material beings cannot be comprehended by human, apart from reference to an appearance through which this non-material being becomes a datum. Hence, Being – both in direct knowledge and in metaphysical reflection – can be grasped only through beings manifested by Being. Even transcendental reflection on Being is effected necessarily through beings. In appearance or manifestation, human finds Being in general opened to it. In the pre-apprehension that goes beyond the appearance, Being in general is disclosed to the human spirit as an objective grasping of appearance. In the pre-apprehension, the most general structures of Being are simultaneously known. Being is being-present-to-itself; Being is knowing or luminosity; Being is self-affirmation, the will, and the good. Therefore, Being in general is disclosed to human in the appearance or manifestation of beings insofar as these most general definitions of Being in general are known through beings, through question.

**Being as the Absolute Fact of Question:** Human Question is something final and irreducible. Every attempt to place the question in question (i.e., to question the question) is itself again raising a question. So human is bound to question. Hence it is the absolute fact which refuses to be replaced by another fact. This question is a metaphysical question. The metaphysical question is the reflexive articulation of the question about Being which pervades the ground of human existence itself. It turns upon itself as such and thereby turns upon the presuppositions of the question. The transcendental question does not merely place something asked about in question, but also the one questioning and the question itself; thus Being is the end of question itself.

**Being as the End of Human Question:** When we ask questions, we not only know how things are in relation to us but also how they are absolutely, in themselves - what it is in itself. In this way, the unconditioned, absolute Being puts an end to human question. The very act of questioning reveals that even if we only explicitly inquire about a relative validity for us personally, this relative validity

itself is posited as Absolute. Behind the relative horizon there is always an absolute horizon. 'Validity for me' can be spoken of only because we contrast it with 'validity in itself'. The horizon of our questioning is the Unconditioned. The unconditioned is expressed in the word *IS* (Being). Here Being is the unconditioned condition of all questioning. It is the absolutely necessary. It is always and necessarily presupposed as the condition of every question. It is co-affirmed in the very act of questioning without any limit.

**Being as the Unlimited:** If the horizon of our knowing is limited, then our knowledge cannot be absolute. In a limited horizon, we cannot ask about the ultimate, absolute, unconditioned point of view. Hence, the horizon must be unlimited. To penetrate into the *intensively* deepest core of Being, we must reach the *extensively* widest range of Being. That which constitutes the ultimate, unconditioned reality of things is *Being*, and that which affects absolutely everything, without any limitation, is also Being. Therefore, Being is the ultimate reality both intensively and extensively. The horizon of Being within which we ask the question as question is unlimited, as it is knowing and not-knowing at the same time.

**Being as Knowing and Not-Knowing:** Every question implies that we know about Being. For, we cannot question about something of which we do not know anything at all. However, the question also presupposes that we do not know about Being. In this way question manifests both the identity of Being and knowing, and the distinction between them. In other words, our knowledge about Being consists in the identity of Being and knowing, and our not-knowing about Being consists in the non-identity of Being and knowing. Thus, Being is the principle of all beings.

**Being as the Principle of Beings:** One may ask two basic questions about everything: *whether* it is and *what* it is. The first question is about the thing's *act of Being*; the second is about its *essence*. Should something possess only an essence without the act of Being, then that would not be a real being, but a mere possible. The real differs from the possible as the act of Being is added to its essence. Hence, the act of Being is that in the entity which makes it real. It distinguishes the entity from a merely possible thing. It is the inner principle or ground of that which really is. It is the inner ground through which beings are in themselves. It is that through which every entity is real. The whatness of each entity receives its reality from the act of Being of the same reality. The Act of Being makes real whatever is real, including all determinations of the entities, including its whatness. Being is the universal ground or principle of all entities and of their determinations.

---

### 2.3. BEING AS AGAPE (LOVE)

---

Beings come from Being. If beings come from Being, how do they come from Being? Why should they come from Being? Why should there be beings rather than nothing? It is a clear fact of experience that we are beings and what we encounter are all beings. One reasonable explanation for the presence of beings is that they all come from Being. Are they there on their own? They cannot be there on their own power because they are finite or limited. Hence, these must be there because of Being which is by its own power. If Being is there totally on its own power, it must be all-powerful. If it is all-powerful, it must be unlimited. If it is unlimited, it must be infinite. If it is infinite, it must be eternal. If it is eternal, it must be the ultimate. If it is ultimate, it must be the unconditioned condition of all other conditions. Hence, Being – which is the all-powerful, infinite, eternal, ultimate, and the unconditioned – is the principle of all finite beings. Since all finite beings come from Being the finitude of the finite beings must also come

from Being that is infinite. The finite beings must be limited by Being, only since there is nothing outside the domain of Being. If it is so, then, is Being finite? The question is contradictory because the infinite cannot be finite. Although the infinite cannot be finite, the infinite can allow itself to be limited so that finite beings are possible. In this way, there takes place always, an 'ontological incarnation' by which the infinite on its own freely allows itself to be limited in the finite for the sake of the finite. The infinite Being is infinitely free to give itself to the finite so that finite can respond itself in freedom. In other words, Being gives itself so that finite can be. The finite beings are the instances of the self-giving of the infinite Being. This self-giving of the infinite, completely for the sake of the finite, is *agapeic* in nature. That is, Being by its very nature is self-giving or *agapeic*, love. Thus, Being is *agapeic* or love; ontology, by its very nature, is **agapeic ontology**. One could be justified in saying, *I love therefore I am*. If Being is self-giving or *agapeic*, then every being is expected to give itself back to Being in freedom. There can be no genuine love without freedom.

**Freedom as Condition of Love:** A determinist is one who denies human freedom. The determinists reason that every human action is a definite, determined act. Since the act of choice is determined, it is caused, and hence not free. According to them, an act is an unavoidable response to a stimulus. The true cause of our actions may not always be clear to us; it may be hidden from our consciousness. What we normally call choices is firmly controlled by factors that lie beyond the individual's control. If the controlling factor is physiological, then the determinism is hereditary, or genetic, which means that through certain inherited characteristics, one is led to choose and to choose unalterably the way one does. If the controlling factor is one's past patterns of behaviour and one's fundamental mind-set, then the determinism is psychological. If the controlling factor is one's cultural and educational background, then the determinism is environmental. Finally, the determinism is theological, if the controlling factor is attributed to the divine will or heavenly bodies.

**Free will** is the ability of the will, all conditions for action being present, to decide whether to act or not to act, and whether to act in this manner or in that manner. Freedom (in the widest sense) is absence of external coercion or force; (in the narrow sense) it is absence of intrinsic necessity or determination in the performance of an act. 'Intrinsically necessary' means that which is determined by its very nature to be what it is and to act as it does. The will is free from intrinsic necessity or determination in at least some of its acts, i.e., will is capable of choice when all the conditions for acting are present. It does not mean that will is free in every respect. For instance, it is governed by intrinsic necessity or determination in seeking happiness. Besides, the will acts impulsively and indeliberately in many circumstances. The advocates of free will also admit that certain states and mental conditions make it impossible for the will to exercise its freedom, such as sleep, absent-mindedness, delirium, hypnosis, insanity, etc.

We shall consider four arguments justifying freedom: (1) the argument from common consent, (2) the psychological argument, (3) the ethical argument, and (4) the philosophical argument. *Argument from Common Consent:* The great majority of humans believe that their will is free. This conviction is of the utmost practical importance for the whole of human life. Therefore, if there is order in the world, the majority of humankind cannot be wrong in this belief. Hence the will is free. *Psychological Argument:* We have said that most people naturally hold that the will is free. Why do they cling to that conviction? This is because they are directly and indirectly aware of the freedom

of their own decisions. They are directly aware of their freedom in the very act of making a free decision; they are indirectly aware of it because of the many instances of behaviour which can only be explained by admitting the freedom of the will. *Ethical Argument:* If there is no freedom, there is no real responsibility, no virtue, no merit, no moral obligation, no duty, and no morality. The necessary connection between freedom and these spiritual realities is quite obvious and is demonstrated in Ethics. This is a strong argument, because the sense of duty and the belief in morality and moral obligation come naturally to human, and even those who deny their existence in theory live in practice as if they admitted it. Kant, who claimed that the existence of freedom was not demonstrable by theoretical reason, nevertheless was convinced that human is free, and he derived this conviction from the fact of duty, which he considered to be immediately evident to the practical reason. *Philosophical Argument:* Every kind of knowledge evokes a corresponding kind of striving as my knowledge is always knowledge of (after) 'something'. In knowledge, my mind freely tends or strives towards the object of my knowledge. This follows from the fact that knowledge and striving are the two fundamental immaterial functions or aspects of a rational being. In other words, there is in human an immaterial kind of knowledge. Hence, there must also be in human an immaterial kind of striving. Immaterial striving is intrinsically independent of matter which is one of the principles of limitation or restriction of a material finite being; the other being an infinite principle, namely, the Absolute Being. And since immaterial striving in itself is independent or free of matter, there is in human a free principle which is the principle of free striving, i.e., free-will which is relatively free (but not absolutely free as it is not free of the absolute Being).

Philosophically speaking, freedom is also an analogous concept predicated in different ways of different types. The various forms of attribution indicate a formal relation which remains the same. This relation can be put negatively or positively. Negatively, freedom means 'being free from,' i. e., the relation of not being bound, of being independent from something. This negative concept is also a relative one since every finite being is related to other beings in the world. It may be free from direct relationships to this or that, but not from all things. Beings, for instance, which are free from insertion into civilization and history, are all the more fully involved in nature and the universe. A being fully free in the negative sense could not be a being in the world. A fully isolated being, without any relationship, would be based on nothing and be nothing. Negation is always based on something positive. If negative freedom was conceived as an absolute, such a fully indeterminate being would be without a world and reduced to nothingness. In contrast to the negative and relative concept, there is a positive and absolute concept of freedom. A being is positively free insofar as it is in possession of itself with the sufficient condition for all its being and relations. Hence, freedom means self-possession, of being completely present to oneself. Self-possession is the essence of 'person' too. A person is in possession of oneself and is not possessed by another.

When we look at freedom in this way, human freedom is neither merely negative and relative nor fully positive and absolute. Of course, human has some dominion over oneself and so also over parts of the world. But one is at the same time inserted into the world and dependent on the beings among which one finds oneself. Thus human freedom is constituted by isolation and power, and being 'free from' and being 'free to.' This basic mode of human freedom may be called 'transcendental freedom' which is the fundamental property of human by which human alone can say 'is.' Human can contrast all things with oneself as 'beings' and so comprehend them in being. In this way, human has the capacity of distancing all things from oneself and oneself from all things



and even from oneself. This universal freedom of distancing is transcendence, 'being over and beyond' every individual being. Thus, freedom is the foundation of human's self-transcendence. This capacity for self-transcendence is the basis of *agapeic* or self-giving love. If a being does not give itself to Being and beings, then it goes against its very nature as being.

**Agapeic Love:** In classical Greek, especially in Plato's *Symposium*, there are two terms for love. These are *eros* and *philia*. *Eros* is based on strong feelings toward another. It usually occurs in the first stages of a man-woman relationship. It is based more on physical traits. For example, when a man says he has 'fallen in love' with a woman because 'she looks like an angel', or when a woman 'falls in love' with a man because he is intelligent and he has good breeding, etc. It is based more on self-benefit, on what can benefit oneself rather than the other person. When one person doesn't feel happy anymore in loving the other person, she/he is led to believe that she/he has fallen out of love. *Philia*, as we mentioned earlier, is love based on friendship between two persons. Undoubtedly, friendship is the foundation of a successful relationship. This is true whether it is marriage, relationship between family members, relationship with co-workers, one's employer, etc. This is in contrast to a man-woman romantic relationship which starts out by *eros*. With *eros*, one sees only each other's strengths/good side; everything is rosy. *Philia* is based on 'give-and-take', where two people enrich each other in a mutual relationship. One partner is still concerned with what she/he can take, but at the same time is also concerned with her/his partner's benefit and therefore gives back in return. It is a higher type of love than *eros*. *Philia* is a mutual, 'give-and take' relationship, while *eros* is a self-based form of love that is more concerned with self-benefit. There is also a third Greek term '*agape*', which occurs rather infrequently in Greek usage [of course, the verb *agapao*= 'to love' was common in classical Greek], and occurred in the Septuagint (LXX) borrowed from the popular Egyptian dialect. It is love above *philia* and *eros*. It is a love that is totally selfless, where a person gives out love to another person even if this act does not benefit her/him in any way. Whether the love given is returned or not, the person continues to love even without any self-benefit. Say for instance, one helps another person, even though that person hates her/him. Or one takes insults from one's partner without hitting back, all the while forgiving and praying for the partner to amend her/his ways.

**Agapeic Love as Love for Peace:** Indian ontology, though the term 'ontology' is symptomatically Western, denotes the ontological speculations of prominent Indian thinkers, ancient or modern, Hindus or non-Hindus, theists or atheists. Even in the ancient writings of the orthodox Hindu philosophers, like the *Sarva-darsana-samgraha* of Madhavacarya which tries to present in one place the views of all (*sarva*) schools of philosophy, we find the views of atheists and materialists like the Carvakas, and unorthodox thinkers like the Bauddhas and the Jainas, along with those of the orthodox Hindu thinkers. Indian ontology is marked, in this respect, by a striking breadth of *agapeic* inclusiveness, other-centered outlook which only testifies its unflinching devotion and love to the other in its search for truth. Though there were many different schools with various views, each school took care to learn the views of all the others and did not come to any conclusion before considering thoroughly what others had to say. This *agapeic* spirit led to the formation of a method of ontological discussion. A thinker had to first state the views of one's opponents before one formulated one's own theory. The statement of the opponent's view came to be known as the prior view (*purvapaksa*); then followed the refutation (*khandana*) of this view; last of all came the statement of the philosopher's own position, which, therefore, was known as the subsequent view (*uttarapaksa*) or the conclusion (*siddhanta*).

This *agapeic* commitment to the knowledge of reality, of giving oneself to the knowledge of rival positions with humility and concern, was more than rewarded by perfection that each philosophical school attained. If we open a comprehensive work on the Vedanta, we will find in it the statement of the views of all other schools – Carvaka, Bauddha, Jaina, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, Nyaya, and Vaiseshika – discussed and weighed with all care. Similarly, any good work on the Bauddha or Jaina philosophy discusses the other views with an *agapeic* openness. If the *agapeic* openness of mind – the willingness to listen to what others say – has been one of the chief causes of the greatness of Indian philosophy in the past, it has also a definite moral for the future, especially for the Indian Christian Philosophizing. If Indian philosophy is once more to revive and continue its onward march, if the Indian Christian philosophizing is to be relevant in today's context, if the Association of Christian Philosophers of India is to be of significance to the thinkers of this country, it can do so only by taking into consideration the new ideas of Being, reality and life which may originate from a vast multitude of peoples – the Blacks, the Whites, the Dravidians, the Aryans, the Semitics, the Mongolians, the Dalits, the Tribals, the scientists and technologists, from all religions of the world and their problems – and only by being *agapeic*. In this way, as we go through the history of Indian ontology, we find India's ontology, despite several diametrically opposed doctrines, to be an outstanding ontology of unity in diversity rooted in an *agapeic* openness. Our fellow-citizens, passing through the inevitable process of struggles and cooperation, have been giving themselves to the promotion of love, harmony, and peace. Moreover, by strengthening harmony – one of the most practical aspects of *Ahimsa* – they have been attracting the attention of the people of the world to the predominant feature of Indian ontology as *agapeic*, and thus, as an ontology of love and peace. Influenced by the Indian concept of peace, not only the Greeks and the Chinese, but many others too reached the Indian soil. They stayed here for months and years, and went back to their respective countries with the eternal message of *agapeic* love and peace.

### Check Your Progress

**Note:** use the space provided for your Answers

1) What is the relation between Being and *agape*?

-----  
 -----  
 -----

2) How do you explain that *agapeic* love is love for peace?

-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----

### 2.4. LET US SUM UP

From our presentation and analysis of the notion of Being we know that Being is self-giving or love (*agape*). If Being is self-giving or *agapeic*, then every being is expected to give itself back to Being and to other fellow-beings in return. When a being gives itself to another in love,

harmony and peace follow. Thus, the path from violence to peace is the path of *agapeic* ontology, the ontology of *agapeic* love characterized by kindness, compassion, gentleness, patience, humility, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The *Agapeic* ontology of love permeates the philosophies of India, and is very much implicit in the life and activities of Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa of Kolkata. Thus, we can rightly conclude that *agapeic* ontology, as an ontology of love, is a fitting and challenging philosophical response to the present day evils of our society.

---

## 2.5. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

---

Aristotle. *Metaphysics*. New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 2002.

Benedict XVI, Pope. *Deus Caritas Est*, Encyclical. 25 December 2005.

Coreth, Emerich. *Metaphysics*. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.

Donceel, J.F. *Philosophical Psychology*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963.

Hassel, David J. *Searching the Limits of Love*. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1985.

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: Asian Trading Corporations, 1999.

Panthanmackel, George. 'Ontology, Agapeic' In: *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. II. Edited by Johnson Puthenpurackal and George Panthanmackel. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporations, 2010.

Panthanmackel, George. "From Violence to Peace: Agapeic Ontology as a Philosophical Response." In: *Violence and its Victims: A Challenge to Philosophizing in the Indian Context*. Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporations, 2010.

Rahner, Karl. *Spirit in the World*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1968.

---

## UNIT 3 TRANSCENDENTAL NOTION OF BEING (BEING AND TRANSCENDENTALS)

---

### Contents

- 3.0. Objectives
  - 3.1. Introduction
  - 3.2. Being as One
  - 3.3. Being as True
  - 3.4. Being as Good
  - 3.5. Being as Beautiful
  - 3.6. Let Us Sum Up
  - 3.7. Further Readings and References
- 

### 3.0. OBJECTIVES

---

In this Unit we will consider the following transcendentals:

- Oneness
- Truth
- Goodness
- Beauty

As we consider a being in its relation to its constitution, it is *one*. As we consider it in its relation to another, in relation to a knowing intellect, it is *true*. As we consider it in relation to an appetitive power (will), it is *good*. As we consider a being as a combination of truth and goodness, it is *beautiful*.

---

### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

---

The ‘transcendentals’ are often called attributes or ‘properties’ of Being. In the strict sense of the term, ‘property’ is some attribute which flows necessarily from an essence integrally constituted. As such, it is a positive entity adequately distinct from essence itself. Applying this to the notion of Being, it is evident that there can be no such properties of Being. For a property adequately distinct from Being must be non-being, which cannot be the attribute of anything. Hence, we can describe them as certain *inadequate and intrinsic supreme modes or attributes necessarily present in every being. Transcendental means the notion which applies to each and every being.* The transcendentals are not confined to any particular category or classification of Being as they ‘transcend’ or ‘go beyond’ all particular beings.

---

### 3.2. BEING AS 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. For instance, God existed from eternity as the only one without the co-existence of any creature. 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 is 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 actually and potentially undivided; 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 insofar 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. Secondly, *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 and one are convertible as they are identical.

---

### 3.3. BEING AS TRUE

---

What is truth? This question is of central importance in the whole of philosophy, though different philosophers understood it differently. It was first explicitly considered in the didactic poem of Parmenides in which the goddess teaches the way of truth that is distinguished from mere opinion (*doxa*) which is fallible. Plato too contrasts opinion with truth. The myth of the cave describes the accessibility of the human mind to truth. Aristotle further reflected on truth and identified it as judgement. St. Augustine emphasized the necessary nature of truth which human reason discovers by the illumination from God who is the absolute, eternal, and changeless truth. For St. Thomas, truth is the "adequation of the intellect to the thing" (*adequatio intellectus et rei*). Descartes held God to be the guarantee of truth. Kant regarded truth as the "agreement with the laws of the intellect." For Hegel it is the Absolute Idea. Heidegger understands it to be the discourse or revelation of Being, and for the *Logical positivists* it is nothing but verifiability. These concepts from the history of philosophy must have contributed to the development of the most known theories of truth such as the correspondence theory, coherence theory, performative theory, pragmatic theory, and semantic theory. Truth is correspondence insofar as it is a correspondence between the mind and the object. It is coherence insofar as the truth of a proposition is in some way dependent on another. It is performative insofar as it endorses or confirms a proposition. It is pragmatic insofar as it is useful, and it is semantic insofar as it signifies and relates the metalanguage to the object language which in turn is related to the concrete objects. Hence, *truth is correspondence between the mind and the object that implies mutual dependence on and confirmation of propositions which are useful and meaningful*. Besides being conformity or correspondence, truth also implies an original identity of Being and knowing. For Being is what is known truly. Knowing is true by its relation to Being. Hence truth is a relation of knowing to Being. What is this relation? This relation is a relation of *identity or conformity*. In *identity*, knowing is Being. When there is such an identity of Being and knowing, truth consists in the absence of the difference between knowing and the known Being. *Conformity* or correspondence is the conformity or correspondence of the subject's affirmation and negation to what is and what is not. It is the same as the traditional definition of truth: '*truth is a conformity or correspondence between the mind and the object*'.

**Kinds of Truth:** *Logical Truth* is the conformity or correspondence of the intellect to the thing. Here the thing is prior, and the idea posterior. This relationship constitutes the true knowledge of a thing. It is clear that every being has its own peculiar entity and reality, independent of the intellect which thinks of it. Things are what they are even though no mind forms an idea of them. When a mind does form an idea of a thing in order to have some knowledge of it, this knowledge will either correspond ideally with the reality or will not. If it corresponds, it is true, otherwise it is false. The mind has knowledge of a thing when it forms ideas of its reality and unites them in a judgment which can be either affirmative or negative. It is opposed to falsity in judgement. *Moral Truth* is the due conformity or correspondence of expression and judgment (in speech, writing, etc.). When we make a judgment in our mind, regarding a certain fact, and then make a statement in speech which

expresses this judgment in words, we have moral truth, because our speech agrees with our thought; but when our speech disagrees with our judgment, then there is moral falsity (falsehood, lie). Thus, when a person is called upon to 'say the truth', the person should state according to one's understanding of the matter what one judges to be the fact. One may be mistaken as to the real nature of this fact, but so long as one's verbal statement agrees with one's mental judgment, one says the truth, even though the statement does not agree with objective reality. On the other hand, if one's verbal statement is the opposite of one's judgment, one will be telling a lie, even though the falsehood happens to correspond to objective reality. Moral truth may be considered as a form of ontological truth viewed from the standpoint of an agreement between intellect and thing. The mind's knowledge is the standard in ontological truth with the conformity of the thing to it in order to be true. In moral truth too, the mind's knowledge is the standard to which the verbal statement must conform to be true. *Ontological Truth* is the conformity or conformability of things to the intellect. There is always conformity of things to some kind of intellect, at least to the divine intellect insofar as God knows whatever is. In this sense, everything is true and nothing is false. Everything is true insofar as it is. There are two kinds of ontological truth: exemplary ontological truth and identical ontological truth. *Exemplary ontological truth* is that in which the intellect possesses an idea of the being which is taken as the norm, the standard, or the pattern of a being. A being must agree with this idea. Insofar as the object agrees with the type-idea which the intellect has of this object, it is ontologically true. Ontological truth, thus, resides in *objects* as they must conform to the intellect and its idea of the object. For example: An artist desires to paint a picture of the Madonna. He has not seen her, but he has within his imagination an image or type which he intends to reproduce on the canvas. He paints the image. If the picture agrees with the image previously present in his mind, it would be ontologically true; because it is in conformity with the image as conceived before the painting was made. *Identical ontological truth* is the original identity of Being and knowing, of Being and truth. Being is the fundamental unity since both the object and the subject are Being. Hence, Being is an identification of Being and knowing, i.e., Being is self-knowledge, and knowledge is the self-presence of Being. Consequently, Being and truth are also convertible. Truth, as an attribute of Being, is not nothing, but something. Something is Being and Being is something. Hence, Being is truth and truth is Being.

**Ultimate Criterion of Truth:** A criterion of truth is the rule or test by which we distinguish true judgments from the false ones. The final criterion, beyond which there is no appeal, is the ultimate criterion which is the internal, immediate, and objective evidence, or self-evidence. Objective evidence is that characteristic of reality whereby something becomes objectively manifest to the perceiving faculty. Objective evidence makes reality cognitively clear and intelligibly apparent to the intellect, like the luminosity of a shining body to one's eyes. It is the clear self-revelation of reality to the intellect, which is capable of forming a correct judgment by interpreting the reality as it exists in its objective being. Objective evidence is internal when the ground for our judgment is clearly perceived to lie in the reality affirmed by the judgments. Such, for example, would be the judgments, 'It is raining this afternoon', ' $2+2=4$ ', 'a circle is round', etc. Internal objective evidence is immediate when the reality interpreted (judgment) is directly present to the intellect or to the senses. In other words, the ultimate criterion of truth is the self-evidence (internal, immediate, objective evidence) of reality as it manifests itself to the intellect and is recognized by the intellect as such.

**Ultimate Foundation of Truth:** The ultimate foundation of truth, logical and ontological,



consists in the essential conformity of all beings to the Divine Mind. For, logical truth depends on the positive elements of being present in a thing, as it is the conformity of the intellect to the thing. Its foundation is the being of the thing known. Ontological truth, since it is the conformity of the thing to the intellect, has its ultimate foundation in that intellect which is the ultimate foundation of the intrinsic reality of things. Such an intellect is the divine intellect, according to whose type-ideas all things have been created. Hence, the ultimate foundation of all truth is the divine mind.

**Problem of Falsity:** Falsity is the disconformity between thing and intellect. As there are three kinds of truth, so are there also three kinds of falsity: moral, logical, and ontological. Moral falsity is the disconformity of speech with thought or judgment. Logical falsity or error is the disconformity of the intellect to the thing. It is evident in all the mistakes, confused opinions, frequent corrections, changing views, and conflicting systems of thought. In the same way, is there also ontological falsity? There is no absolute ontological falsity. Since every being is ontologically true, there cannot be absolute ontological falsity. In order to be ontologically false in an absolute sense, it would be necessary that a being disagrees with every possible intellect. If it agreed with a single intellect, it would no longer be ontologically false, but ontologically true. Now, every being must always agree with the intellect of God who created it according to the type-idea in His intellect. Hence every being is ontologically true with regard to the ideas of God. However, there is a relative ontological falsity in relation to the human mind. For, we do not always succeed in making the products of our skill and art agree with the plan or type we have in our mind. Hence we can say that there is no ontological falsity in an absolute sense, but only in a relative sense with reference to human, in a limited manner.

---

### 3.4. BEING AS GOOD

---

As Being is one and true, it is also good. Good is the object of desire. Hence Aristotle gives this definition: "Good is what all desire". When the good is attained, it is experienced as pleasant, enjoyable, and satisfying. But man experiences aversion no less than desire and pain no less than pleasure. Hence, good is always also coupled with its opposite – evil. A being is good inasmuch as it is appetible or desirable. Goodness, then, consists in the appetibility or desirability of a being. Desirability presupposes something in a being which is good and on account of which it is actually desired or desirable. What a being desires or seeks as good in another, depends also on the sort of the individual the being is. For example, a magnet seeks iron, a plant seeks sunlight, a lion seeks food, a man seeks knowledge, etc. Hence, good consists in this, that something is suitable to a being. Now, all beings have a nature or essence as members of a class and as individuals. And each such nature has a very real and definite *purpose or end within itself* which it tends to bring to full completion and perfection. A being is perfect when it has everything that it is supposed to have according to the exigencies of its nature, i.e., when it has attained its full actualization, having as much reality as its nature demands. For example, man has the natural purpose of actualizing himself as a fully developed human person. In this way, each nature implies a specific natural tendency within itself, and all beings will be 'good' for it insofar as they suit its nature. Hence, we can define good as the suitability of a being for that which has or seeks it.

**Kinds of Goodness:** *Physical Goodness is that which satisfies the demand of the nature of a being.* Each being has its own specific and individual nature, and as such it has a very definite end and purpose. For example, a human person is supposed to have a head, a trunk, two arms, two legs, two



eyes, two ears, etc. They are required if a person is to be considered physically good. *Moral Goodness* is that which satisfies the demands of the *moral law*. An action may be ontologically and physically very good but morally evil. For instance, a soldier defends one's country in a just war. In an attack by the enemy, the one kills an enemy soldier with one's rifle. On another occasion an enemy soldier comes toward the one carrying a flag of truce. The soldier kills the enemy soldier too with the rifle. In both cases human beings are killed. The action is ontologically good insofar as it is something. The action is also physically good insofar as it is physically successful. But the morality of the action is different in each action. In the first it is morally good as it is a justifiable homicide in defence of one's country. In the second it is morally bad as it is murder; for the moral law requires respect for the enemy with a flag of truce. *Ontological Goodness* is that which is good in its very being itself. Every being insofar as it is, is good. Every being is good insofar as it possesses a certain amount of reality. For its reality is suitable for the tendency of its own nature to be what it is, to perfect itself, and to retain its perfection. As beings are good in themselves by possessing their own being, they are capable of being desired and striven for, so as to perfect the nature of some other being. Ontological goodness is also called 'transcendental' or 'metaphysical' goodness, as it is also convertible with Being. The opposite of good is evil.

**Problem of Evil:** The problem of evil has always baffled the thinkers of every age, and it continues to be one of the most puzzling ones. Once, David Hume raised the old Epicurean question: "Why is there any misery at all in the world? Not by chance, surely. From some cause then. Is it from the intention of the Deity? But he is perfectly benevolent. Is it contrary to his intention? But he is almighty". "Why thus eternal punishment for the temporary offences of so frail a creature as man? Can any one approve of Alexander's rage, who intended to exterminate a whole nation, because they had seized his favourite horse, Bucephalus?" God is absolute good. Hence it is impossible for him to be the author of evil. He cannot will evil, and no shadow of evil falls on him. 'How can anything be or happen which is opposed to God and his goodness'? Or 'how can a just, omnipotent and an infinitely good God create evil or permit evil'?

Some thinkers have abandoned the omnipotence of God in favour of his goodness (J.S.Mill, William James, J.M.E. McTaggart and E.S. Brightman); others take as mere appearance (F.H. Bradley, B. Bosanquet, Absolutists, and Advaitins in India); for some others, evil is partially good insofar as it is instrumental to some higher good (G.W. Leibniz, R.A. Tsanoff); some others hold that natural and moral evils are inevitable in a morally directed world (F.R. Tennant and Mark Pontifex).

**Kinds of Evil:** There are two main kinds of evil: physical and moral. *Physical evil* is the privation of a perfection pertaining to the physical order. It is the privation of a physical good. Physical evil is an established fact in the world. Many beings lack some reality which they ought to have. Sickness and injuries deprive living beings of that physical integrity which they require. Beings are physically evil only insofar as some entity is missing in them. Whatever entity they possess is in itself good. For instance, a cancerous lung is a physical evil only because that portion of the body is infected, but the remaining parts are good. The rest of the body is not a physical evil. This privation is not an entity in itself, but something relative to an individual's needs. *Moral evil* is the privation of a perfection pertaining to moral order. It is also evident that moral evil is present among humans. Sin is an undeniable fact. Crime is an everyday occurrence. However, it would be false to consider moral evil as a positively existing entity. In fact, the sinful action as an action is ontologically good,

insofar as it is something. The action is also physically good if the action is performed in a manner conducive to the natural purpose of the act. But it is morally evil since this ontologically and physically good act is not in accordance with the requirements of the moral law. There is no morally evil entity here, but rather the defect or privation of an entity, namely, the defect of the proper relation between the act and demands of the law. Moral evil, therefore, does not consist in a positive entity or reality but in a privation that is relative.

**Nature of Evil: *Evil is Relative:*** Evil is the privation of perfection (good) which is due to a subject. Privation is to be distinguished from negation which is mere absence of perfection, which is not due to a subject. Negation indirectly asserts the existence of something positive. For example, when we say that this tree is not green, we indirectly imply that it has some colour other than green. It might be brown or yellow by virtue of which the term 'green' cannot be applied to it. In contrast, privation means the present absence of the quality of a thing, e.g., this man is blind. Of course, this man at the present time cannot see, but in future the man can be endowed with vision. In other words, privation of a perfection can be replaced by a positive quality. Now, if evil is the privation of perfection or good, then it means that in due course it will be replaced by the good. Hence evil is not absolute but relative.

*Evil is Mystery:* Gabriel Marcel makes a distinction between problem and mystery. A problem is a difficulty set before us quite detached from us and to which we respond with an increase in knowledge or technical skill. A problem may be solved. A mystery, in contrast, is that in which we participate and with which we are vitally involved. We cannot separate ourselves from a mystery as we can a problem, and no amount of increased knowledge or skill will dispel it. Mysteries are intrinsic to human existence and include life itself. In this way, evil is a mystery impenetrable by rational analysis. Even if we could arrive at a perfect theodicy, which accounts for the presence of evil in the world, we would still have to face evil. A perfect theodicy would not make the experience of evil less intense.

To sum up: We can explain in some detail *the fact* of evil. However, *the final cause* of evil is incomprehensible (Why is there evil?). A solution to the problem can be sought in those paradigms of the great personalities like Buddha and Jesus Christ who *accepted* evil and suffering in their own lives. Their acceptance had two consequences: they had to suffer evil, even unto death; death on a cross (in the case of Jesus). Secondly, it was their mission to save others from the same evil and suffering. It can be my own motto too: *accept evil and suffering in my life, but I will commit myself to liberate others from it.*

---

### 3.5. BEING AS BEAUTIFUL

---

According to Aquinas, "Beauty is that which pleases the mind when seen or apprehended." *It is the splendour of order by which a being can delight a cognitive faculty.* It is a transcendental which is the result of the unity of the true and the good. Its essence consists in a combination of truth and goodness. The beautiful is the good insofar as it satisfies our striving. It is the true insofar as it satisfies our desire for knowledge. The beautiful is the true insofar as it coincides with the good. It is the good insofar as it coincides with the true. Hence, beauty is the unity of truth and goodness. Now both truth and beauty express a relationship of conformity with the intellect. In the same way, both goodness and beauty also express suitability for the appetite. Yet, beauty is distinct from both truth and goodness. As regards truth, beauty adds an element of pleasure to the conformity; whereas truth

as such does not imply that pleasure is derived from it. For, sometimes truth can be very unpleasant. Regarding goodness, beauty expresses suitability for the appetite of the intellect, which comes to rest in its possession by contemplation; whereas goodness expresses suitability for appetite in general.

**Characteristics of Beauty:** *Beauty pleases:* Whatever is beautiful – whether it be a poem, a painting, a melody, a piece of sculpture, or an architectural structure – pleases, gratifies, and gives enjoyment. *Beauty gives disinterested pleasure:* The pleasure derived from beauty is called ‘aesthetic pleasure’. One experiences aesthetic pleasure when one derives pleasure from beholding it. If one owns a painting and takes pleasure in it because one knows one can sell it at an advantage, one does not have aesthetic pleasure. But if one is satisfied to contemplate and thus enjoy it, then one is enthralled with its beauty. There is beauty in the seas, in the stars, in the sunrise, in the waterfalls, and in the mountains. But there is no selfish enjoyment in these things. Things may taste and smell and feel good; but such pleasure is not the delight encountered in the enjoyment of the beautiful. Hence the primary object of beauty is not the pleasure derived from profit, consumption, possession, or even use, but the pleasure aroused through the contemplation of the beautiful. The eye, the ear, and the imagination are the faculties properly engaged in the production of aesthetic delight. They are mainly perceptive in character. *Beauty gives disinterested intellectual pleasure:* The Intellect is necessary for the enjoyment of beauty. Human is the only animal that appreciates beauty. Brutes do not contemplate and enjoy the beauty of the flowers, the hills, the woods, the sunsets, etc. They are concerned with beautiful objects only insofar as they are of assistance to them in their struggle for existence. For, order, proportion, unity, appropriateness, and the agreement between the ideal and the real are the fundamental elements of beauty judged only by a rational being. Hence beauty must have an intelligible content.

*Beauty gives a disinterested intellectual- sensuous pleasure:* The intellect perceives beauty through the mediation of the senses. The intelligible must be perceived in a sensibly pleasing appearance in order to be beautiful. Hence the artists pleasantly impress the senses with images and plastic forms. Ideas alone, without the beauty of form, are found in science, mathematics, and philosophy. But no one considers them as the proper medium of beauty. We go to the artist for beauty and enjoyment. The ideas are to be clothed in a sensibly pleasing form before we can consider them to be beautiful. The scientist, the mathematician, and the philosopher can enlighten others with their insights and ideas, but they may not give them aesthetic delight. The artist may express the same ideas less exactly but clothing them in impressive forms or figures. The way of art is twofold: the idea may be first and then the form, or the form may be first and then the idea: true idealism and sound realism, the idealized real and the realized ideal. Beauty is the happy combination and fusion of idea and form, corresponding to the composite nature of human. Consequently there must be equilibrium between the intellectual and sensible elements. An overcharge of idea or a lack of form would mean a lack of beauty, abstractness, or too much intellectuality. In the same way, an overcharge of form or lack of idea would mean shallowness or extravagance. *Beauty gives a disinterested intellectual-sensuous pleasure due to the radiant perfection of a thing:* Beauty is not merely subjective in character as it has its foundation in the things themselves. We experience the delight of beauty in consequence of some objective factors present in the objects. It is the perfection of a thing manifested in a pleasing, happy manner. It is resplendent, radiant perfection. For just as light, splendour, radiance, and colour produce a pleasing impression on the eye, so also does beauty. Beauty pleases, as perfection and goodness are its fundamental properties.



**Objective Factors of Beauty:** Some of these factors are more general and others are particular. The general factors can be identified with the transcendental properties of Being such as unity, truth, and goodness. *Unity:* Beauty and unity are closely united. Unity is a perfection which aids the intellect in grasping the underlying meaning of things. *Truth:* There is also an intimate relation between beauty and truth. For beauty is also apprehended and understood like truth in everything beautiful. *Goodness:* There is also a close relation between beauty and goodness. Beauty satisfies, pleases, and delights. These characteristics of beauty have a natural reference to an appetency, and thus a delectable good. The element of goodness, in this way, is present in the beautiful.

Besides these general factors, there are also the following particular factors of beauty: integrity, proportion, and clarity. *Integrity:* The first one is integrity or completeness. We enjoy beauty by contemplating on something as a whole. Any noticeable defect in a thing makes an unpleasant impression on the beholder. The mind is dissatisfied with this incomplete condition and makes an effort to restore the missing part in its imagination. We observe this when contemplating a dilapidated building, a damaged painting, a crippled body, an awkward dance, a melody out of tune, the badly memorized lines of a drama, etc.

*Proportion:* Proportion or balance is the index of a mind which works in an orderly fashion. The mind experiences aesthetic pleasure in detecting an orderly arrangement in what at first appears to be chaotic confusion. A mere jumble does not please. A heap of stones is not an aesthetic object. But if they are arranged in the orderly construction of a building, provided there be symmetry and balance in the arrangement, they form an object of beauty. In the same way, *unity without variety is not beautiful;* for in that case the energy of the perceptive faculty will be exercised in an unbroken, unrelieved strain. That would produce tension and fatigue, and not pleasure. *Variety without unity is also not beautiful.* For, then the mind's energy would be scattered and spent without being able to come to rest. That would disturb and hinder the normal, healthy, full, and vigorous activity of the faculties. Unity in variety, or one in many, acts like a focus bringing harmony into the manifold elements and making of them a simplified whole. This one in many facilitates the mind's activity, gives it a feeling of restful completeness, and thus produces in it the joy and delight so characteristic of beauty.

**Clarity:** Clarity or splendour is the third requirement. To be beautiful means to have a certain amount of compelling force. It must be impressive. It must possess a vivid presentation. It must attract and charm through its very appearance. That is why all the arts use contrast as an effective technique to set the splendour of beauty in a sharper light. The elements of aesthetic value then fairly leap into the central position of attention and thereby give the mind the proper perspective which enables it to survey the parts and the whole in a comprehensive glance. The opposite of beauty is ugliness.

**Problem of Ugliness:** Every being is beautiful insofar as it is. It means that every being has a form which is appropriate to it. Now anything with an appropriate form pleases when seen. Hence every being is beautiful. Now the problem is: What about all those things which we judge to be ugly? The answer is that, although everything is beautiful according to its own form, the human intellect is not always capable of perceiving this beauty. This incapacity may be accounted for certain subjective and objective reasons. *The subjective* reasons, such as the fashion of time or place, may pre-



establish more or less arbitrary norms of beauty and refuse to consider objects from the objects' own worth. Everything that does not conform to our pre-conceived ideas of beauty is judged to be ugly. *Objective reasons* mainly flow from the nature of human knowledge. Appreciation of beauty requires contemplation of an object. If anything prevents an objective contemplation, human cannot see the beauty of the objects of perception. The following are some of the reasons that may prevent our intellect from an authentic contemplation of the objects: a) If an object has a certain defect, human's attention is more or less irresistibly drawn towards this defect. As a result, the intellect cannot come to rest in the contemplation of the perfections that remain in the object. The more striking the defect is, the more irresistibly the intellect is drawn to it. For instance, if a beautiful face suffers the loss of its nose, the face is considered to be ugly because we are prevented from paying attention to the beauty which remains in the undamaged part of the face; b) Some beings remind us so much of others that we can consider them only as caricatures of the latter. For instance, the face of a monkey is generally thought to be ugly, because it resembles human so much that upon seeing the face of a monkey we unconsciously compare its face to that of human and conclude that the monkey is ugly; c) Human is so accustomed to many objects that their beauty no longer strikes the one. Hence such objects generally do not succeed in holding one's attention long enough to allow contemplation of their beauty. Yet when these objects are presented to human in a suitable setting so as to show forth their form in splendour, as is often done in advertisements, their beauty is sufficient to arrest human's attention.

### Check Your Progress

**Note:** use the space provided for your Answers

1) What is truth? What are the main kinds of truth?

-----  
 -----  
 -----

2) What is goodness? Do you agree with the statement that ontologically 'everything is good'?

-----  
 -----  
 -----  
 -----

### 3.6. LET US SUM UP

*Transcendental means the notion which applies to each and every being.* The transcendentals are not confined to any particular category of Being as they 'transcend' or 'go beyond' all particular beings. Thus, the 'transcendentals' are the invariant qualities of Being. In relation to Being, the concept 'transcendental' could be interpreted in a twofold manner – Being as a transcendental and Being as possessing transcendentals. Being is a transcendental insofar as Being underlies, penetrates, transforms, and unifies all things, as the most underlying principle of all things. Being also possesses the transcendentals such as oneness, truth, goodness, and beauty. Where there is Being, these transcendentals are also invariably present. Being is all-pervading; hence, the

transcendentals are also all-pervading. In this sense, every being rooted in Being is also one, true, good, and beautiful.

---

### 3.7. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

---

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Translated by James F. Anderson. New York: Image Books, 1955.

Aristotle. "Metaphysics." In: *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle by Thomas Aquinas*, translated by John P Rowan. Vol. I. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961.

Bittle, Celestine. *The Domain of Being*. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1950.

Bittle, Celestine N. *God and His Creatures: Theodicy*. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1953.

Blanshad, Brand. *The Nature of Thought*, Vol. I. London: Allen and Unwin, 1939.

Coreth, Emerich. *Metaphysics*. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.

Devine, Elizabeth et al. *Thinkers of the 20th Century*. New Delhi: Himalayan Books, 1987.

Edwards, Paul, ed. *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 6. London: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1972.

Grayling, A.C. *An Introduction to Philosophic Logic*. Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1986.

Hartshorne, Charles. *The Divine Relativity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964.

Hegel, George. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.

Hospers, John. *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis*. London: Routledge, 1989.

Panthanmackel, George. *One in Many: An Investigation into the Metaphysical Vision of Karl Rahner*. Bangalore: SFS Publications 1993.

Panthanmackel, George. "Problem of Evil: Hick's Sublimation of Plantinga." *Journal of Dharma* XXIII, 2 (April-June, 1998).

Panthanmackel, George. *Coming and Going: An Introduction to Metaphysics from Western Perspectives*. Bangalore: ATC, 1999.

Parkinson, G.H.R., Ed. *An Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. London: Routledge, 1988.

Peterson, Michael. *Evil and the Christian God*. Michigan: Baker Book House, 1982.

Steenberghen, Fernand Van. *Epistemology*. Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1970.

Whitehead, A.N. *Religion in the Making*. New York: Macmillan, 1926.

Wilson, Margaret Dauler. *Descartes*. London: Routledge 1986.

Woozley, A.D. *Theory of Knowledge*. London: Hutchinson, 1976.



---

## UNIT 4      ABSOLUTE NOTION OF BEING (BEING AND ABSOLUTE)

---

### Contents

- 4.0. Objectives
- 4.1. Introduction
- 4.2. Starting With Heidegger
- 4.3. The Notion of Absolute
- 4.4. God, the Unlimited Existence
- 4.5. The Be-ing of Beings is Personal
- 4.6. Be-ing is Bliss
- 4.7. Responding to Be-ing
- 4.8. Some Quotes
- 4.9. Let Us Sum Up
- 4.10. Key Words
- 4.11. Further Readings and References

---

### 4.0. OBJECTIVES

---

- To conclude the course of metaphysics with a deeper understanding of Being.
- To identify the notion of Absolute with that of God cautiously.
- To enable us to appreciate the profound meaning of Be-ing, who is the source of everything, is finally the challenge to respond to it.
- To open the students to the limits of metaphysics where the mystical begins.

---

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

---

In this concluding unit, attempt is made first to understand the dynamic meaning of Being. Then we try to bring in the notion of the Absolute and relate it to God. We take care to characterise this Absolute (or God) as unlimited and at the same time reaching out to the humans. The proper response of the humans then is to be open to the triad of faith-love-hope or *sat-cit-ananda* that is the fullness of existence.

---

### 4.2. STARTING WITH HEIDEGGER

---

In this unit we come to grips with the main work of metaphysics, according to Heidegger: the enquiry into the Being (act of existence) of beings (things that be). What occupies us mostly in this chapter, then, is to spell out and make explicit some of its implications.

We note, first, first of all, that the critical enquiry into beings as well as into Being is discovered to be intertwined and inseparable. As Heidegger himself admits, we have no direct access to Being: we can only attain it in and through things which we run into in our daily round, among which our own selves take the primacy. For, in making a critical enquiry into the act of existence



as it is manifested in our own selves, we already have an “insider’s view”, an intuition of what it is and involves. Our starting-point, the direct judgement, is a critical reflection on an undeniable activity of ours: hence, it lands us already in the existential order (i.e. Be-ing). Nor have we, like Descartes, imagined that we could elicit, as our most basic action, some inward-looking movement, divorced from all contact with the outside world. Indeed, there is no such thing: we can only know and affirm ourselves by knowing and affirming the external world in which we are. And such contact is grounded on their sensitive-rational act of direct judgement. Note what is relevant for us is the affirmation that something exists: we may be mistaken in what concerns its essence (what it is), but that something does exist is undeniable. In other words, it is and has always been Being that we have been focusing on throughout the process, whether it be my existence, the existence of direct judgement, or the existence of the affirmed object! Furthermore, the relentless analysis has shown that the ultimate goal of the existential act of direct judgement is yet another existence: pure, unlimited existence. Indeed, the only reason why “the things of this world” interest our intellectual activity at all is because they are partial realisations of that ultimate and unlimited existence which is responsible for our intellectual drive. We ended the quest by realising that we have to grant that this “unlimited existence” is not, cannot be, a mere mental fabrication (a concept) but something eminently real. Indeed, it is so real that all other realities derive their existence and actuality from it (Desbruslais 1977).

We shall now spell out some of the conclusions that can be derived from all this, after briefly understanding the notion of Absolute.

---

### 4.3. THE NOTION OF ABSOLUTE

---

The Absolute is the concept of an unconditional reality which transcends limited, conditional, everyday existence. It is sometimes used as an alternate term for "God" or "the Divine" (especially, but by no means exclusively) by those who feel that the term "God" lends itself too easily to anthropomorphic presumptions. The concept of The Absolute may or may not (depending on one's specific doctrine) possess discrete will, intelligence, awareness, or even a personal nature. It is sometimes conceived of as the source through which all being emanates. It contrasts with finite things, considered individually, and known collectively as the relative. As such, the word "Absolute" signifies a negative concept: non-relative, non-comparative, or without relation to anything else. This is reflected in its Latin origin *absolutus* which means "loosened from" or "unattached." (Wikipedia)

This term is employed in modern philosophy with various meanings, but applied generally speaking to the Supreme Being. It signifies (1) that which is complete and perfect; (2) that which exists by its own nature and is consequently independent of everything else; (3) that which is related to no other being; (4) the sum of all being, actual and potential (Hegel, Pace 1907).

In the first and the second of these significations, the Absolute is a name for God which Christian philosophy may readily accept. Though the term was not current in the Middle Ages, equivalent expressions were used by the Scholastic writers in speaking, e.g. of God as Pure Actuality (*Actus Purus*), as uncaused Being, or as containing pre-eminently every perfection. St. Thomas, in particular, emphasizes the absoluteness of God by showing that He cannot be classed under any genus or species, and that His essence is identical with His existence. Aquinas anticipates the difficulties which arise from the use of the term Absolute, in the sense of unrelated being. It was

urged that the Absolute could not consistently be thought of or spoken of as First Cause, for the reason that causation implies relation, and the Absolute is outside of all relation; it cannot, therefore, be conceived as producing effects. St. Thomas, however, offered a solution. He holds that God and created things are related, but that the relation is real only in the effects. It implies no conditioning or modification of the Divine Being; it is in its application to God, merely conceptual. The fashion of our thought obliges us to conceive God as one term of a relation, but not to infer that the relation affects Him as it affects the created thing which is the other term. This distinction, moreover, is based on experience. The process of knowledge involves a relation between the known object and the knowing subject, but the character of the relation is not the same in both terms. In the mind it is real because perception and thought imply the exercise of mental faculties, and consequently a modification of the mind itself. No such modification, however, reaches the object; this is the same whether we perceive it or not (Pace 1907).

Now it is just here that a more serious difficulty arises. It is claimed that the Absolute can neither be known nor conceived. "To think is to condition"; and as the Absolute is by its very nature unconditioned, no effort of thought can reach it. To say that God is the Absolute is equivalent to not saying that He is unknowable. The Absolute (or God), though incomprehensible, is nevertheless knowable according to the manner and capacity of our intelligence. The Agnostic contends that God, precisely because He is the Absolute, is beyond the range of any knowledge whatever on our part. Agnosticism, in other words, insists that we must believe in the existence of an absolute and infinite Being, and at the same time warns us that we can have no idea of that Being. Our belief must express itself in terms that are meaningless (Pace 1907). To avoid this conclusion one may reject altogether a term out of which all significance has evaporated; or (and this seems a wiser course) one may retrace the genesis of the term and hold fast to the items of knowledge, however imperfect and however in need of criticism, which that genesis involves. In proving the existence of God as First Cause or as Absolute Being, we take facts that are knowable and known as our starting-point. So far as, in reasoning upon these facts, we are led beyond them to the concept of an Absolute, some remnant of the knowableness which facts present must be found in that which is the ultimate explanation of the facts. If, "every one of the arguments by which the relativity of our knowledge is demonstrated distinctly postulates the positive existence of something beyond the relative", it follows that by getting clearly before our thought the meaning of those arguments and their force for distinctly postulating we must obtain some knowledge of the Being whose existence is thus established. Spencer, indeed, does not realize the full import of the words "positive existence", "ultimate reality", and "incomprehensible power", which he uses so freely. Otherwise he could not consistently declare that the Being to which these various predicates apply is unknowable. It is in fact remarkable that so much knowledge of the Absolute is displayed in the attempt to prove that the Absolute cannot be known. Careful analysis of a concept like that of First Cause certainly shows that it contains a wealth of meaning which forbids its identification with the Unknowable, even supposing that the positive existence of the Unknowable could be logically demonstrated. Such an analysis is furnished by St. Thomas and by other representatives of Christian philosophy. The method formulated by St. Thomas, and adopted by his successors, keeps steadily in view the requirements of critical thinking, and especially the danger of applying the forms of our human knowledge, without due refinement, to the Divine Being. The warning against our anthropomorphic tendency was clearly given before the Absolute had taken its actual place in philosophic speculation, or had yielded that place to the Unknowable. While this warning is always needful, especially in the interest of religion, nothing can be gained by the attempt to

form a concept of God which offers a mere negation to thought and to worship (Pace 1907). The Absolute, which philosophers seek to understand, may not be identified as God, at least initially. But at the end of our philosophical search or metaphysical journey, believer may equate both of them with proper care and caution.

---

#### **4.4. GOD, THE UNLIMITED EXISTENCE**

---

Coming back to our understanding of Being as proposed by Heidegger, we can claim that such a Being reveals itself to us (*Dasein*). All things that be, participate ontologically – that is, are totally and always dependent – on the unlimited existence. This, as we have seen, is nothing but creation seen from the point of view of the creative cause. Only God can create, for only uncreated, infinite, unlimited existence is God. In other words, God is existence, existence pure and simple, existence unrestrained by any composition or limitation (which comes to the same thing). In other words, the analysis of intellectual dynamism had revealed to us that the Being of beings is God! This doesn't mean that my existence is God: my existence is a finite, limited existence very specially participating in God: it is partially and secondarily what God is primarily and fully. Nor is the identification of God with unlimited existence anything startlingly new and unheard of. Thomas Aquinas did the same thing (by way of a questionable hermeneutics of Exodus 3:14). Thus, in *Summa Theologica* (ST Is, 13, 11), where he is discussing what the most appropriate name for God is, he concludes that “He who is” would be the best choice, even better than “The Good”, for it does not signify any particular form, but rather existence itself. Since the existence of God is His essence and since this is true of nothing else. . . ., it is clear that this name is especially appropriate to God, for the meaning of a name is the form of the thing named (Desbruslais 1977).

Hence the most proper name of God is one which designates his basic dynamism. Just for the record, when God tells Moses, in response to the latter's demand to know God's name, “Jahweh”, the meaning was not something like “I am the one whose very essence is to be”, or “I am pure existence, the one that must be!” Situating Moses' question in the context of Jewish culture, it was more than likely that he was desirous of knowing God's name so as to be able – hopefully – to manipulate Him: after all, in Jewish culture, to know the name of someone/something meant to have some power over that being! So, as Jewish scholars tell us, God's answer most likely meant something like, “I am who I am: it's none of your business!” A few others suggest that it might also imply, “I am the one who is true to his promises.” Whatever be the merit of Aquinas' metaphysical comment in this connection, it can hardly be derived from an exegesis of the text.

---

#### **4.5. THE BE-ING OF BEINGS IS PERSONAL**

---

As we have seen, there is no real composition in Be-ing, in God. Above all, there is no materiality, the basic principle of indetermination which resists presence of self, as Rahner (1994) so rightly deduces. Inasmuch as there is nothing in Be-ing to resist presence to self, Being is perfect self-transparency, perfect presence to self, and perfect consciousness. But as we have seen, an intellectual suppositum is a person. Now the most perfect form of presence to self, implies the most perfect form of knowing (or intellectuality, if you prefer). Thus God is personal. This, too, is nothing very revolutionary. Aristotle, approaching the issue from another path, concluded

that God by his very nature is *noesis noesos* (thought thinking of itself), again perfect self awareness (Desbruslais 1977).

However it is not at all difficult to show that Be-ing is also (and very specially), LOVE – which is the basis of the definition of person that I have championed, along with such giants like St. Albert the Great. For, we have noted that all beings participate ontologically in Be-ing which, thereby, is their creator. As (unlimited) Be-ing, God has no need of anything. Hence God, in creating, has nothing to gain: it is an act of pure giving, in which nothing is sought in return. This is nothing but another name for love (See The Bible I John 4:8) . The definition of God as Love is more revolutionary than we realise. Pascal culminated against “the God of philosophers” (like Aristotle) who is seen as a cold Absolute, more or less wrapped up in himself (*noesis noeseos*). John’s definition sees God as the very antithesis of a detached Absolute. Love is by its very nature relational. This necessary relational nature of God is seen in His/Her inner life whereby He/She is, in effect, a community (Trinity) and not an isolated monad. This relationally spills over in the free act of creation which binds all creatures to Him/Her inextricably. He/She creates but does so out of no lack or need – purely out of the unconditional act of sharing love!

---

#### 4.6. BE-ING IS BLISS

---

Be-ing is perfect self awareness and is devoid of any kind of limit whatsoever. Hence Be-ing is perfectly aware of its fullness, of the fact that there is nothing lacking. This, in turn, is but another word for BLISS, UNALLOYED JOY. Thus we can say, in agreement with the basic insight of Indian thought, that our enquiry into the Be-ing of beings (which gives us an insight into the Unlimited Be-ing in which they participate) is – as the ancient Indian sages had intuited – *sat-cit-ananda* (Being-consciousness-joy). Indeed, approaching reality from the more immanent perspective in keeping with our Indian tradition, one could make a case for these as the three basic transcendentals, corresponding to the one-true-good that swims into our ken when beings are viewed from the complementary Western, whereby we go out of ourselves in a cognitive act of exteriorisation. Of course the “Indian transcendentals” would also be applied analogically to beings, inasmuch as they participate or share in it at various degrees – in what the ultimate Be-ing is fully (Desbruslais 1977).

It is no slight encouragement to us when we discover that traditional Eastern and Western metaphysics show little difference in their final conclusions ... just as there is scarce any major discrepancy to be found in the sharings of the great mystics of all religions. While speaking of Rudolf Otto we can show that there is practical unanimity, that the core of the encounter with the *ganz Andere* (the wholly other) is the experience of the *mysterium fascinans*: one realises that what one is faced with is something wholly other than anything one has experienced in this world (hence “mystery” is the best name for it); one’s first reaction is awe and fear – one trembles as one suddenly becomes more and more aware of the all holiness of this other and of one’s pervasive unworthiness: indeed, one’s first reaction invariably is headlong flight; then comes a culminating, overwhelming conviction that the Other is gracious, grace-radiating and seems to be saying, “Come closer. Don’t be afraid.” Finally, the moment of loving mystical oneness (climaxing in adoration, prayer or worship) gives way to a prophetic sending forth to set others free. The grand finale of the meeting with God (or Be-ing) is the sense of commission, of being sent forth to do the work of justice. Of course, I have over-simplified and hurried things along a bit. It doesn’t always unravel itself in such a clear, chronological, and pointed direction,



but it can be discerned to be “at work” in that way nevertheless. Mystics and metaphysicians seem to meet each other at this climactic moment of union.

---

#### 4.7. RESPONDING TO BE-ING

---

A concluding word about the reactions and responses that the encounter with Be-ing elicits from us may be useful. There seems to be, once again, a threefold dimension, interrelated and intertwined here too.

There is first (logically, not necessarily chronologically) a moment of enlightened encounter. As one personally meets Be-ing, one is gradually purified of wrong notions and attitudes as regards the Supreme Reality. This calls for a lot of openness and honesty as it often entails letting go of some of our favourite prejudices and brain-washed rigidities. Then – since the will follows the intellect – comes the moment of love. Corrected, purified knowledge of Be-ing, derived from an inter-personal encounter, calls forth from one a great surge of love – love for the gracious goodness of the Other. And as one is more and more caught up in the outgoing, unconditional love of Be-ing, one cannot but find oneself seized and carried along that same outgoing movement of sharing, of unconditional love to other beings. In other words, there comes the third and final movement of action, benevolent and beneficent action for those in need of it – action for justice (Desbruslais 1977).

And, once again, we find we join hands with the great mystics and sages of India. For what are these three moments but the traditional *margas* or paths to the Absolute: *jnana* (knowledge), *bhakti* (devotion or love) and *karma* (action or service). What may need to be emphasised here, however, is that there is to be no water-tight compartmentalising of the three, much less an endless debate as to which of the three, in isolation, is “the most excellent way”. For knowledge cannot be liberative unless it be informed by love (else it could descend into proud Gnosticism) and love cannot be redemptive without being enlightened by knowledge (otherwise we would be led to all manner of fanaticism) and neither of the two are fully authentic until they spell themselves out in justice-seeking actions for all beings.

Finally we can find yet another assimilative echo of all these in the other well-known triad, faith-hope-love. Nor can these, in the last analysis, be separated from each other. Faith cannot be really salvific, if it is merely “belief that”. It has to be “belief in” and we can only believe in one whom we love. Hope is nothing but loving, trust-filled action for justice, an action that never wanes in spite of difficulties and apparent failures because it is filled with hope that is grounded in faith and love. I leave it to the student to discover for herself/himself how faith-hope-love, *jnana-bhakti-karma*, *mysterium-tremendum-fascinans*, *sat-cit-ānanda*, one-true-good, and Father-Son-Spirit are intimately bonded together. What God had joined together, let us not (by unwarranted metaphysical speculation) seek to put asunder. Understood thus we can make sense of the paradoxical statement: “My end is my beginning!” (Mary, Queen of Scots).

---

#### 4.8. SOME QUOTES

---

“To be or not to be – that is the question!” (Shakespeare, Hamlet)

“I am Who I am ...” (Exodus 3 : 14)

“Let us be moral. Let us contemplate existence.” (Mr. Pecksniff in Charles Dickens' Martin Chuzzlewit)

“We will now discuss in a little more detail the struggle for existence.....” (Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*)

“Man’s love is of man’s life a thing apart, ’Tis a woman’s whole existence.” (Byron, *Don Juan*)

“Instead of starting with the heavens and firmament, mountains and oceans and drifting clouds, with things, and peeling all these away in a vain search for something, somehow more precious at their center, do the opposite. Instead of withdrawing inward, toward some imagined bit, some atom (which will surely slip away the moment you think you have it) – instead of this, try to proceed outward, and see heaven and earth, mountains and oceans and drifting clouds, all you have been taught to regard as things, as others, as foreign and distant, see all these as they are. You will be momentarily astonished to find yourself and nature in one and the same; and far from dreading nothingness, which now seems like sickness, and hardly worthy of anyone, which is how you began all this, your state of mind will be just the opposite. You will rejoice in being, in nature, in your self, which will now have ceased to be any mystery, and you will finally understand without seeking further what Spinoza meant by the intellectual love of God (Taylor, *Metaphysics*, 126)

#### 4.9. LET US SUM UP

The absolute may be regarded as the Being, the beginning, and end of our metaphysical search. With care and caution, towards the end of our search, we can identify that Being or Absolute with God, for theists. Such a God or absolute can be seen as the unlimited existence, that is unalloyed bliss and perfect consciousness (*sat-cit-ananda*). We can respond to such a gift of existence personally or individually only through love.

#### 4.10. KEY WORDS

**Gnosticism:** The doctrines of certain pre-Christian pagan, Jewish, and early Christian sects that valued the revealed knowledge of God and of the origin and end of the human race as a means to attain redemption for the spiritual element in humans and that distinguished the Demiurge from the unknowable Divine Being.

***Mysterium-tremendum-fascinans:*** Numinous (from the Classical Latin *numen*) is an English adjective describing the power or presence of a divinity. The word was popularised in the early twentieth century by the German theologian Rudolf Otto in his influential book *Das Heilige* (1917; or *The Idea of the Holy*, 1923). According to Otto the numinous experience has two aspects: *mysterium tremendum*, which is the tendency to invoke fear and trembling; and *mysterium fascinans*, the tendency to attract, fascinate and compel. The numinous experience also has a personal quality to it, in that the person feels to be in communion with a Holy other. The numinous experience can lead in different cases to belief in deities, the supernatural, the sacred, the holy, and the transcendent.

***Ganz Andere:*** With regards to our understanding of the absolute (or God), *ganz Andere* implies that it is “totally other” or completely different.

**Be-ing:** Here Being is used with a hyphen to stress the dynamic or verbal aspect of Being.

*Noesis -noeseos*: Following Aristotle scholastic philosophers think of an Absolute Being Being Who is pure actuality, and Whose life is self-contemplative thought (*noesis noeseos*) or Thought thinking about Itself.

---

#### 4.11. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

---

Rahner, Karl. *Spirit in the World*. New York: Continuum, 1994.

Desbruslais, Cyril. *The Philosophy of Be-ing*. Edited by Kuruvilla Pandikattu. Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 1997.

Taylor, Richard. *Metaphysics*. 2d ed, Prentice-Hall Foundations of Philosophy Series. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974.

Pace, E. (1907). The Absolute. In *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Retrieved April 21, 2011 from New Advent:  
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01060c.htm>

Absolute (philosophy). (2011, April 8). In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 05:56, April 21, 2011, from  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Absolute\\_\(philosophy\)&oldid=422948826](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Absolute_(philosophy)&oldid=422948826)