IIndira Gandhi National Open University　　　　　**MPYE – 010**
School of Interdisciplinary and
Trans-disciplinary Studies　　　　　　　　　　**Philosophy of Religion**

Block 1

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

UNIT 1
Definition and Scope of Philosophy of Religion

UNIT 2
Importance of the Philosophy of Religion

UNIT 3
Philosophy of Religion and Other Disciplines

UNIT 4
History of Philosophy of Religion

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Every religion has three components: rituals, cultural and spiritual. There is scope for differences only in the first two. But the third, the spiritual element, helps us overcome conflicts arising from differences in the first two. Rituals including ceremonies relating to birth marriage and death are an important constituent of all faiths. Culture springs from the way of life, and its nature hinges a great deal on heritage and environment. The spiritual aspect is free of all differences and so is able to help us direct our mind towards the *Paramatma*. None of the mainline religions has proved itself to be always and everywhere a reliable friend of 'people struggling for liberation and emancipation. The most cruel and bloodthirsty wars have been inspired by religious differences, with each side proclaiming an exclusive *Gott mit uns* (God with us). Religion has often opposed scientific research and sided with obscurantism and superstition, against trends of enlightenment. If religion is to have some social significance, if it is to have some transformative, reformative impact upon society – inspiring people to work for justice and peace, or in support of the environment – it requires some kind of communitarian expression. We hold that the scope of philosophy of religion is the whole of religion. Thus we discussed briefly on organized religion and on the three C's that constitute religion. It is these very concrete, very visible and obtrusive elements that most often irritate serious and sincere religious people. It is these shameless bits of obscurantism, not' mention downright ignorance, that put off young people as well *as* religious seekers of a deeper, more personal conviction, driving them out of church, temple and other traditional places of worship. To call religion back to its original goal, we need discourse and criticism or philosophy of religion.

Unit 1 introduces the students to some of the issues of philosophy of religion, including the definition of religion. It seeks to study the scope of religion by speaking of the issues related to the philosophy of religion with the understanding of religion and its philosophical studies.

Unit 2 elaborates the scope and important of philosophy of religion. The scope of philosophy is any critical appraisal of religion. After seeing some of the basic features of religion, we attempt to understand the importance of philosophy of religion both theoretically and practically. Then we see its relationship to theology and metaphysics, emphasizing all the time its significance for human beings.

Unit 3 sees the relationship between philosophy of religion and other disciplines. It enables us to appreciate the relationship between myth, religion and philosophy and to see how contemporary sciences contribute to philosophy of religion.

Unit 4 takes up some significant themes as developed by some philosophers of religion and then give a general overview of the philosophers associated with philosophy of religion. Philosophy of religion is philosophical reflection on religion. Philosophy of religion is sometimes divided into philosophy of religion proper and philosophical theology. It is as old as philosophy itself and

has been a standard part of Western philosophy in every period. In the last half of the twentieth century, there has been a great growth of interest in it, and the range of topics philosophers of religion have considered has also expanded considerably.

COURSE INTRODUCTION

Philosophy of religion is an attempt based on reason, to criticize, evaluate and deepen religion. It may explain it, elaborate on it and even propose new theoretical concepts. Thus the American Philosopher, William P Alston defines Philosophy of religion as "a branch of philosophy concerned with questions regarding religion, including the nature and existence of God, the examination of religious experience, analysis of religious language and texts, and the relationship of religion and science" According to some people, the very idea of philosophizing about religion is blasphemy. Isn't it a form of the most crass arrogance and ir-religiosity to submit the notion of the Sacred, of God and of holy writ to the critical probing of finite, limited human intelligence? Would not the only appropriate human response - to the experience of the Sacred be humble - silent and respectful submission and adoration? Extreme polarizations are seldom productive and this is quite true of the "pure reason" vs. "blind faith" clash over religion. The "faith alone" approach opens the door to uncritical,' self-deluded psychotics and fanatics. Nevertheless "reason alone" is no improvement. Absolute rationalism ("I'll only accept what can stand up to a rigorous proof.) Among other things, it would exclude any possibility of inter-personal relationships, like love and friendship and not only religions faith. An absolute rationalist, were he or she to act consistently, would be condemned to a, lonely, loveless and friendless (and not just religious faithless) life. Philosophy of religion is an attempt based on reason, to criticize, evaluate and deepen religion. Between these two extremes of fideism and exaggerated rationalism comes philosophy of religion, which holds that religion can be critically examined.

Block 1 introduces Philosophy of religion which is philosophical reflection on religion. Philosophy of religion is sometimes divided into philosophy of religion proper and philosophical theology. This distinction reflects the unease of an earlier period in analytic philosophy, during which philosophers felt that reflection on religion was philosophically respectable only if it confined itself to mere theism and abstracted from all particular religions; anything else was taken to be theology, not philosophy. But most philosophers now feel free to examine philosophically any aspect of religion, including doctrines or practices peculiar to individual religions.

Block 2 discusses about the foundations of religion, such as religious experience, religious language, religious structures and institutions. While some experiences are private, a few are public, but the quality of the Religious Experience is often known through the life one lives thereafter. Religious language posed a problem for the thinkers as understanding the meaning of the religious experience. The discourse pertaining to religious language expanded its domain, and still continues to generate a very high and interesting amount of literature in this domain of study. Religious structures vary from religion to religion but some of the common features found in these structures can be identified.

Block 3 is crucial to philosophy of religion as it analyzes Atheism and A-theism in various forms such as rational atheism, deism, agnosticism and materialism. Since the common usage of the term "atheism" is a denial of monotheism, it would imply the denial of the doctrines. Mere denial of doctrines lead to two other kinds of "a-theism" called pantheism and deism. A-theism does not deny religious realism, but might deny any of the other theistic beliefs. Agnosticism is skeptical

of every belief and leads to uncertainty of many things. At the end, the major issue of problem of evil is elaborately dealt with.

Block 4 deals with Theism from all perspectives: definition, proofs for God's existence and various views of prominent theistic philosophers of both Western and Indian traditions. Believers might not need proofs for the existence of God; even so, we feel the need to speak of arguments in favour of the existence of God. While we agree that there can never be a universal proof for the existence of God, even so we can definitely speak of arguments in favour of the existence of God. Theism as understood commonly is a philosophically reasoned understanding of reality that affirms that the source and continuing ground of all things is in God; that the meaning and fulfillment of all things lie in their relation to God; and that God intends to realize the meaning and fulfillment.

UNIT 1   DEFINITION AND SCOPE OF PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Contents

1.0. OBJECTIVES

- To initiate the students to the issues related to the philosophy of religion.

- To have a general understanding of religion and its philosophical studies.

- To understand the different ways of understanding religion and philosophy of religion.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

What is philosophy of religion? How do we define it? What is its scope? These are some of the issues we will be taking up in this unit. This unit attempts to introduce the students to some of the issues of philosophy of religion, including the definition of religion. Then it seeks to study the scope of religion.

1.2. PHILOSOPHY AS A COMMUNITY PROJECT

Etymologically, the word philosophy comes from two Greek words – *philos*, lover (or friend) and Sophia, wisdom. Philosophy then is "a love of wisdom" and the philosopher is a friend or a lover of it. Some important conclusion can already be drawn this fact. Philosophy is not the *possession* of wisdom, a philosopher is NOT a proud Mr Know-It-All, who has all of the answers to everyone's question. He is a quester after truth, profoundly in love with Sophia, pursuing her, but never quite able to comprehend her elusive person. At most he touches her with his finger-tips, but she soon escapes his grasp. (I apologize for the sexiest-sounding implications of my

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words: it would seem that I am implying only males can be philosophers – as I have reserved the pronoun "he" to indicate the philosopher. My only excuse is that I want to see the image of lever and the beloved frequently in this text and Sophia, besides being feminine in Greek, is a very common girls' name in many languages.)

From this we could emphasize that humanity would be the first necessary qualification of any philosopher worth his/her salt. A philosopher is one who treks a weary, but ever so existing and adventure, way along paths less trod to an ever receding horizon. The truth is there, but is always, tantalizingly, just beyond his/her reach. A good philosopher leads us but one step nearer to the truth but is never so smug as to claim that we have ensured Dame Sophia once and for all in the meshes of human finite intelligence (Desbruslais 2000).

We might even go on add that philosophy must be a community project. There is only so much that an individual human mind can grasp. Reality is far too rich, far too complex to be stuffed into the slender limits of one individual brain, bet it that of Madame Curie or Professor Einstein. Besides, each of us approaches persons and things from our particular perspective (some have called this the "pre-understanding"), which comprises, among other things, our individual culture, our mother-tongue, family upbringing, religious background (even if we think we have rejected it long age). All these, somehow or the other, influence (if not prejudice) our perceptions. It is impossible to take a totally natural, unbiased view of things: at best we can try to become progressively more aware of our "pre-understating" and give up native assumption about objectivity; I am, rather asking us to be on guard against hasty and presumptions assertions that we have come to plain, unvarnished and objective visions of reality. Whatever, it should be quite clear that none of us deliberately and willfully admits prejudices, into our perceptional make-up. People hold prejudices unconsciously, as a rule: once they become conscious of the fact that they have been nourishing prejudices, they give them up (assuming they have the honesty and courage to do so). But how can we become aware if our prejudices? Only by dialoguing with people of other backgrounds (other nations, other cultures, other creeds). If I isolate myself with people who think exactly as I do and never venture to meet people with other worldviews, I and my gang will simply confirm each other in way favorite prejudices and narrow-mindedness (Panikkar 1970).

Check Your Progress I
Note: Use the space provided for your answers.
1. "Philosopher is not in possession of wisdom." Comment.
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2. How can we be aware of our own prejudices?
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1.3   PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE

For quite some time, especially since the advent of the scientific age, philosophy has had a bad press. In fact, many philosophers themselves (including the "father of modern philosophy, Rene

Descartes (1596–1650) lamented because philosophy lacked the precision and certainty of themselves. At the turn of the last century Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938) was still dreaming of a philosophy that would be an "exact science", yielding unquestionable certainty based on indubitable evidence and proofs. And it does look as if philosophy is a kind of third rate disciple, since – as we have said above – it cannot give us guaranteed "once and for all" exact answers. But is this really such a blemish? Let us take a closer look at the issue (Desbruslais 2000).

If I may borrow an insight from the contemporary French existentialist thinker, Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973), we should make a clear distinction between problems and mysteries (even though, in popular speech we use them almost interchangeably): a problem is a question of which I am not a part, whereas a mystery is a question of which I am a part. For example, take the question, "What is the chemical composition of table salt?" I am not part of that question, so it is a problem. However, the question, "Is there such a thing as true love?" or "Is there life after death?"- these are mystery-questions because they concern me, personally. True love and life after death are issues with which my life is intimately bound up. Even the question, "Does God exist?" or even, "What is God like?" are mystery-questions - not because I am trying to say that I am part of God, but because if God exists then I would somehow be very intimately linked with the divinity So far we've noted how problem and mystery differ from the point of view of the kind of question they ask. Let us move on to their answers.

Precisely because I am not part of a problem-question, I can detach myself from it, observe it objectively, submit it to experiments in the laboratory or elsewhere and, given enough time and equipment, work out a final, exhaustive, once-and-for-al1 answer. But I cannot do that with a mystery-question; inasmuch as I am part of it, I cannot detach myself from it any more than I can detach myself from myself. That is why I cannot, in principle, ever work out that kind of answer for a mystery. Science is busy with problems: that is why science can attain a high level of certainty and demonstration or proof (though even scientists, nowadays, are not so cocksure about their "certainties). Philosophy (like theology and religion) is busy with mysteries and that is why it can, at best, throw some more light on the complexities of the issue; no more, It should be clear, critical and coherent (Panikkar 1979).

But this does not mean that philosophy (or theology, or religion) are irresponsible and whimsical subjects to be pursued by dilettantes according to their fads and fancies. Even if its responses cannot partake of that level of absolute certainty that the positive sciences (allegedly) claim, it has to be orderly, painstaking and observant as any other study. It has to be critical of its presuppositions and pre-understanding, submit all its reasoning to the strict canons of logic and so on. Philosophy is not a science, but it is a systematic scientific discipline (Desbruslais 2000).

1.4 UNDERSTANDING RELIGION

Religion is one of those words that dictionaries tell us have an unknown or doubtful etymology. There is a Latin word 'religare' (to tie up again) which is the closest contender for its source, but that is highly doubtful. Is this meant to tell us that religion is a set of rules and regulations that bind us up again, after the civil code has finished enmeshing us? This would imply a very legalistic and uninspiring understanding of religion, indeed - one that would hardly inspire much commitment from most of us. Theology is a kind of close relative of it and it means, literally, God-talk. In practice, however, theology is usually associated with the study of some allegedly revealed book. Thus, Christian theology takes off from the Bible, Jewish theology starts from the Torah, Islamic theology studies the Quran, Hindu theology delves into, say, the Gita and so on. However, it would not be quite correct to link all religions with some scripture claimed to be

divinely revealed, for there are many tribal religions without a "holy book" — other than the Great Book of Nature in which God stands revealed to His people. Indeed, not all religions even accept the notion of God. At least two religions, Jainism and one school of Buddhism reject the whole idea of God (i.e. they are aesthetic).

What, then, is the most basic idea common to all religions? It is the idea of the sacred. Various authors have tried to give a rough summary definition of this as the wholly other (*Ganz Andere*), the highly powerful (and hence dangerous - high voltage, do not touch.) and so on. In general, there seems to come a time when we suddenly become convinced that there is more to life than all that we can merely see or hear or touch or smell or feel. This can happen when one is caught up in the mystery of child-birth: when a young mother holds in her exhausted arms the first babe she is ever given birth to or when the proud and humbled father holds in his trembling arms his tiny firstborn; or when one stands on the seashore and contemplates the mighty ocean rolling back and forth; or when one is hushed by the panorama of natural and serene beauty that life exposed from lofty mountain-top; or … in so many other cases where powerful emotions of love or anger or joy or resolve overwhelm us. Out of this arises the experience of the Sacred which some of as interpret merely as an aspect of ourselves ("the human shadow writ large") and others remind equally convinced that it is a genuine experience of the divine (Desbruslais 2000).

There is also the idea of salvation or liberation which is common to all religions, though it may be understood very differently. Don't we all feel, when we read the papers or watch TV that the time is really bad or that something has gone wrong, horribly wrong, with the world? Don't we all dream of a world of justice and love and peace, where all people will live in harmony as brothers and sisters and not bully or terrorise various groups on the basis of ethnic or other differences, just as Anna Hazare's team dream of a corruption-free India? And do not even the best of us recognise within ourselves what psychologists call a "shadow side", a strange inner urge to cheat and steal, to take the line of least resistance, to lie and exploit others. Very often we fight against these mysterious promptings ("temptations", as some prefer to call them)? Oftentimes we give in, due to pressure of circumstances, to peer influence or plain and simple cowardice and laziness. All religions offer us various ways and means to overcome these unpleasant tendencies: they offer us guidance and advise us to try' meditation, prayer and other ways to control our passions and less healthy drives.

Finally, all religions are communitarian expressions. Indeed, 'religions emerge when people come together, share their experiences and, somehow or the other, arrive at certain helpful structures which bind them to each other and facilitate the expression and celebration of their common vision. Thus religions, as communitarian expressions of shared Convictions, become structured or institutionalised. But this is what makes many serious-minded and sincerely religious people suspicious of religion, or to put it more precisely, at the highly organised and formal religious set-ups (or structures) that they are confronted with. Is it really necessary to pray and worship according to these strict and impersonal structures? Wouldn't it be more fulfilling, spontaneous and meaningful to do it quietly at home? And do we need to be bossed about by "religious leaders" who may be themselves self-centred?

1.5 PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION: TOWARDS A DEFINITION

According to some people, the very idea of philosophising about religion is blasphemy. Isn't it a form of the most crass arrogance and irreligiosity to submit the notion of the Sacred, of God and

of holy writ to the critical probings of finite, limited human intelligence? Would not the only appropriate human response - to the experience of the Sacred be humble - silent and respectful submission and adoration?. In the West, Martin Luther (1483-1546), the fiery German reformer, spear-headed this approach, fulminating against reason as "the devil's greatest whore", averring that it "can do nothing but shame and disgrace all that god says and does". For him there was a mortal enmity between faith and reasons "Faith strikes dead this reason, and kills this beast, which heaven and earth and all creatures cannot destroy." Among Eastern thinkers who have championed such a view, perhaps the most out spoken was the medieval Islamic scholar and mystic Al-Ghazali (1059 - 1111) who, in his *Destruction of Philosophers* tells us, in no uncertain terms, what he thought of those who used reason in the course of their search for God. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), later canonized by the Catholic Church, was more positive in his attitude towards reason and philosophy in the context of religion though he was no "'crass rationalist". The same, too, could be said of Ibn Sina (980 - 1036), whose name was Latinised into Avicenna by the Scholastics and whom Al-Ghazali saw as his arch-enemy, co-religionist of his though he was (Desbruslais 2000).

Extreme polarisations are seldom productive and this is quite true of the "pure reason" vs "blind faith" clash over religion. The "faith alone" approach opens the door to uncritical,' self-deluded psychotics and fanatics. But "reason alone" is no improvement. Absolute rationalism ("I'll only accept what can stand up to a rigorous proof.) is both impractical and irrational. Among other things it would exclude any possibility of inter-personal relationships, like love and friendship and not only religions faith. An absolute rationalist, were he or she to act consistently, would be condemned to a, lonely, loveless and friendless (and not just religious faithless) life. And, just for the record, it is interesting to note that the Catholic Church has officially condemned, as heresies, both of these attitudes: "fideism" (faith alone) and "exaggerated rationalism" (reason alone). From the preceding, we may conclude that the most appropriate response would be balanced "mid-point-between-the-two extremes" approach, which-I would venture to designate as "reasonable risk". Indeed, what we do to validate any inter-personal commitment, including love and friendship and not only religious faith. We establish some demonstrable ground to justify our commitment. However, since we are dealing with free persons and their invisible interior lives, there can never be fool-proof guarantee as to the certainty and security of the commitment one is making. There is a solid basis of reasonableness, but not absolute rationality. The commitment is not grounded on blind risk: there is some evidence in favour of one's personal commitment: it can stand up to considerable critical Inquisition. Yet the possibility of being mistaken is not totally rule out: hence, there is an element of risk. It is neither unfounded risk nor indubitable argument, but halfway between both, drawing upon the strengths of each to avoid the excesses of either (Desbruslais 2000).

Between these two extremes of fideism and exaggerated rationalism comes philosophy of religion, which holds that religion can be critically examined. So philosophy of religion is an attempt based on reason, to criticize, evaluate and deepen religion. It may explain it, elaborate on it and even propose new theoretical concepts. Thus the American Philosopher, William P Alston (1921-2009), define Philosophy of religion as "a branch of philosophy concerned with questions regarding religion, including the nature and existence of God, the examination of religious experience, analysis of religious language and texts, and the relationship of religion and science" (Alston 1967).

In short, philosophy of religion is a critical response to religion, where the faith of the seeker is bracketed out.

Check Your Progress II
Note: Use the space provided for your answers.
1. What is religon?
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2. Describe, if not define, what is philosophy of religion?
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1.6   NECESSITY OF ORGANIZED RELIGION

The scope of philosophy is any critical appraisal of religion. It is an ancient discipline, being found in the earliest known manuscripts concerning philosophy, and relates to many other branches of philosophy and general thought, including Metaphysics, Epistemology, Logic, and History. Let us briefly raise some pertinent questions related to the scope and relevance of philosophy of religion in the following pages.

Let us begin by admitting the fact that, historically, no organized religion Can stand up to honest criticism and come' out of it with an unblemished report card. None of the mainline religions has proved itself to have been always and everywhere a reliable friend of 'people struggling for liberation and emancipation. Often religions have added to the oppression, discrimination and blood-letting that have plagued the world since time began. The subjugation of women has often been given religious sanction. The most cruel and bloodthirsty wars have been inspired by religious differences, with each side proclaiming an exclusive *Gott mit uns* (God with us)., while hailing all opponents as hirelings of Satan incarnate. Religion has often opposed scientific research and sided with obscurantism and superstition, against trends of enlightenment. And politicians, especially in Third World countries, have learned that religion is the easiest handle with which to manipulate impoverished and oppressed masses, stirring up all kinds of mob violence and building up their "vote banks". Indeed, religious leadership seems to be the last bastion of male exclusivism, determined to holdout against "female: incursions" by all manner of pseudo-theological, philosophical and sociological argument, so. as to preserve power in the hands of men only. The priestly Conquerors. Club is a very powerful and jealously guarded coterie of old men who, with bulldog tenacity, clings with alarm to its ever shrinking list of "privileges and prerogatives."

Above all, it stands ready to flash its magic wand of "God's will" and "the divinely established scheme of things" to justify and protect the status quo (heavily loaded in its favour) and block any attempt at reform which just might among other things, help towards a more authentic encounter with God (Desbruslais 2000).

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On the other hand (there always is another hand, isn't it?) religions have also inspired many to selfless service of the downtrodden, have given the human race a rich legacy of art and beauty as well as played a not insignificant role in opening our eyes to the essential dignity of the human person, irrespective of race, colour or sex; Some religious personalities - Mother Teresa, Dorothy Day, Mahatma Gandhi, Oscar Romero, Desmond Tutu - have been true friends to liberation movements.

Yet, when all is said and done, it would appear that some kind of institutionalization or organisation of religion is inevitable - unless we are quite prepared to accept the consequences of reducing it to some sort of private, abstract and "spiritual" preoccupation. In fact, we can cite at least three major reasons why some kind of organization in religion is not merely to be tolerated an unavoidable, but even accepted as inevitable.

First, inasmuch as we are embodied beings, we cannot be satisfied with an intangible something, which remains at that level. Anything that we take seriously must be embodied, "tangibilised" in some way, through some manner of institutionalization, just as our love for our country has to be given tangible expression in flag-hosting and march pasts and our love for our family and friends has to be rendered incarnate in birthday parties and family gatherings. Anything less would but touch us lightly and leave us with a profound sense of frustration. Secondly, if religion is to have some social significance, if it is to have some transformative, reformative impact upon society - inspiring people to work for justice and peace, or in support of the environment - it requires some kind of communitarian expression. Finally, if it is not to become a fleeting, fly-by-night sort of thing, here today, and gone tomorrow, coming to birth and dying with each individual's alleged encounter with the powers that be, it must have some concrete form to ensure the sharing, preservation and development of its tradition.

Actually, if we look a bit more closely at the objections against organized religion, it would probably become clear that these objections are not so much aimed at the very fact that religions are organized but at rigid authoritarian way in which they have been organized. That is the real villain.

1.7   A TIMELY QUALIFICATION

I have maintained that organized religion is somehow inevitable and; even more, that it is not a bad thing. Indeed, there is no reason why we can not envisage institutionalized religions being organized in a more "user-friendly", democratic and less authoritarian way. Religions should encourage us to respect other traditions, religious or otherwise, learn from their insights and promote unity in diversity in lieu of upholding a soul less, monotonous uniformity.

In other words, my recognition of the necessity of organized religion does not, by any means, imply that I give my whole-hearted' and uncritical support to the actual way in which contemporary institutionalized religions are, in fact, organized: Par from it. And when, later, I use terms like "oppressive" and "liberative" when speaking of concrete religious set-ups in today's world, I will not be insinuating that any one particular religion and its structures are liberative and to be encouraged, while that of all others is simply oppressive and to be resisted. My contention is that every organized religion is susceptible of a liberative and an oppressive

interpretation. Indeed, there is even such a thing as oppressive and liberative: atheism (Desbruslais 2000): It is all a question as to whether the atheist or believer is ultimately seeking the enhancement and development of the entire human person or not. It's this that makes all the difference.

1.8 THE THREE 'C'S OF ORGANIZED RELIGION

The basis of authentic religion is a personal and mystical encounter with God, the *ganz Andere* or 'whatever be ones preferred description of whatever is experienced in religious activity. Nor is this "mystical experience" as esoteric and unattainable as many people think. All that it requires, on our part, is a pre-disposing attitude of humility, of openness, "the heart of a little child." And this *is* difficult because it is so easy. The More we consider ourselves "religiously learned", the more meticulous we are in performing our "religious duties", the bigger is the occupational hazard of mistaking the pointing finger for the moon, not to mention the hazards of falling into spiritual pride or intolerance.

In fact, it is the religious fanatic - whose mind and heart is too far removed from that of a little child to be open to any genuine encounter with the *ganz Andere*- who invariably becomes the self-appointed, overzealous and merciless enforcer of the rigid observance of the unholy trinity of code-creed-cult which is his (deliberate choice of the masculine) tyrannical substitute divinity. And the religious fanatic is basically unsure of his convictions: that *is* why he has to burn, maim or blow up those who don't reduplicate his approach. The existence of people who see or think differently from him is a threat to bin own insecure vision.

Creed *is* a kind of summary list of the particular doctrines to which all would be followers of a specific religion are required to give their unqualified assent. In a very tightly organized religion, failure to do so would invite unpleasant repercussions. To begin with, one would be hailed *a* "heretic", "schismatic", "infidel", "gentile" or whatever be the current term of opprobrium in the reigning fanatics' vocabulary. Once upon a time, such qualification would have resulted in one's death sentence: being kidnapped, carried away, stoned, hanged-drawn-and-quartered, removed from the land of the living by some form of ostracism, excommunication or, another ingenious and efficacious means of silencing dissent. In our more "enlightened" times, the fanatic has to settle for more "civilised" and "un- bloody" devices: censure, withdrawal of one's license to teach, banning and/ or burning of ones books... Of course, the believing community has every right to judge which: enunciations of faith-convictions authentically express the commonly held convictions of the general body of the faithful. But it should be the community, or a truly representative body of it, that sees, judges and acts - not an over-centralised, overaged, conservative and all-male select band of people with vested interests, closed to all other   points of view or perspectives. Such executive-legislative-judiciary power should not be allowed to be monopolised by a small, inbreeding Conquerors' Club, jealous of its power and position.

Code comprises all those moral rules and derived customs that followers of a particular organized religion are supposed to live by, day to day. These may include styles of dress, dietary prescriptions, allotted "holy days" for worship, "penitential times" for fasting and as on. Most religion seems to agree on basic moral principles as respect for elders, no stealing and the like. There is *a* difference of opinion, however, as regards certain issues on sex, such as birth-control and some other areas, as the use of violence, even in times of war and so on. There was a time when all religions were so intimately linked with State policy, that any contravention of the

religious code was considered a treasonous act against the State and the culprit was turned over to the secular arm for punishment. Nowadays, most religions have - voluntarily or reluctantly - relinquished such links and have had to content themselves with merely issuing moral condemnations against offenders, warning "true believers" against consorting with such persons or listening to their views, wale appealing to the recalcitrant to mend their ways. One might mention that penal sanctions for infringements of the religious code, whenever enforceable, have tended to be -rather inhuman, cruel, and undignified (Desbruslais 2000).

Cult refers to the various rubrics that govern how Official (individual or communitarian) worship of a particular religion is to be carried out. This may include a host of minutiae, such as 'who is authorized to conduct the form of prayer, what vestments the priests or officials are supposed to wear, what precise words and gestures are to be when, which symbolic objects are to be employed in what way and at what precise moment in the vent, and so on. The degree of meticulousness with which these are to be observed varies from religion to religion. Quite frequently it is required that the service be conducted in the same ancient language that was current when the religion first saw the light of day - even if the language's -a dead one, -a foreign tongue, in most cases, unknown to the vast majority of the devotees. Invariably the ritual is considered "invalid" and inefficacious if some item of these details has not been scrupulously observed.

Check Your Progress III
Note: Use the space provided for your answers.
1. Do we need structures in religion?
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2. Differentiate between oppressive and liberative understandings of religion?
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1.9   LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have attempted to give a definition of philosophy of religion. Then we tried to see its scope. We hold that the scope of philosophy of religion is the whole of religion. Thus we discussed briefly on organized religion and on the three C's that constitute religion. Then we noted that religion needs to be challenged and even purified by reason. It is these very concrete, very visible and obtrusive elements that most often irritate serious and sincere religious people. They want to encounter the divine in a community and express their devotion in words and gestures that rise spontaneously from themselves. But what happens when they enter a traditional place of worship? They are put into liturgical strait–jackets and told where they have to place themselves (far from *the* centre of activity), what passive roles they must play throughout (invariably, they are issued a handbook, with detailed instructions as to what pre-planned words and gestures they are permitted to use and at what' moment). And, quite often, they are not

permitted to address God in their own mother-tongue, the language of their hearts and most personal exchanges, but in some obscure discourse whose very alphabet (let alone meaning) is incomprehensible to them . As remote rituals, few can figure out what they are all about - save a handful of erudite archaic specialists. So much for cult.

What of the elements of creed and code? Many a time these are couched in a form that has remained impervious to the development of science and technology. If people dare to voice their questions or doubts, they are often, met with reproach and a call to practice the virtue of blind faith. It is these shameless bits of obscurantism, not' mention downright ignorance, that put off young people as well *as* religious seekers of *a* deeper, more personal conviction, driving them out of church, temple and other traditional places of worship (Desbruslais 2000)·

This is borne out by the mushrooming of all manner of charismatic and '"peoples' communities", where worship *is* more spontaneous and free, where leadership is shared by all the worshippers, who have a more active role to play, where clerical intervention is minimal, if not down to ·absolute zero. It's not organized religion that is the real problem for most people, but the inhuman way it is organized. To call religion back to its original goal, we need discourse and criticism or philosophy of religion.

1.10   KEYWORDS

*Ganz Andere***:** Rudolf Otto's ganz andere means "wholly other," or "of a different realm".

Fideism: Reliance on faith alone rather than scientific reasoning or philosophy in questions of religion. Alvin Plantinga defines fideism as an "exclusive or basic reliance upon faith alone, accompanied by a consequent disparagement of reason and utilized especially in the pursuit of philosophical or religious truth"

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UNIT 2 IMPORTANCE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Contents

2.0 OBJECTIVES

- To see the significance and importance of philosophy of religion.

- To have a deeper understanding of philosophy of religion and its relationship to theology/metaphysics.

- To understand evolution in the human understanding of God and its importance.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we make an attempt to understand the importance of philosophy of religion both theoretically and practically. After seeing some of the basic features of religion, we attempt to define both religion and philosophy of religion. Then we see its relationship to theology and metaphysics, emphasizing all the time its significance for human beings. For this unit we are deeply indebted to the significant work of the American Philosopher, Eric v d Luft (2004).

2.2 THE MYSTERY OF RELIGION

Religious people — understood broadly as theists, deists, atheists, gnostics, agnostics, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Taoists, Confucians, Shintoists, Zoroastrians, animists, polytheists, pagans, Wiccans, secular humanists, Marxists, or cult devotees — regard religion as a matter of ultimate concern. Everything they are and do finally depends upon such questions as whether there is a God, whether we continue to exist after death, whether any God is active in human history, and whether human ethical relations have spiritual or supernatural dimensions. If God is real, then this is a different world than it would be if God were not real. So our belief in God affects our commitment to the world.

In all of us there is a basic human longing for a better life – expressed as a search for salvation, deliverance, release, liberation, sunyata, nirvana, etc.. Such a longing seems to be among the main foundations of all religion. There may also be a basic human need for mystery, wonder,

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fear of the sacred, romantic worship of the unknown, awe in the presence of the completely different, or emotional response to the "numinous." The "numinous," a mysterious, awe-inspiring feeling, is the topic of *The Idea of the Holy* by German theologian Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) and *The Sacred and the Profane* by Romanian philosopher and anthropologist of religion Mircea Eliade (190-1986) and it may also be a foundation of religion (Luft 2004).

Do we really need mystery? It appears that the human need to *solve* mysteries seems to be more basic than any need to *have* mysteries. For example, mythology in all known cultures has emerged from either the need or the desire to provide explanations for certain types of occurrences, either natural or interpersonal. Thus they try to solve mysteries, rather than perpetuate them. Moreover, if any basic human need exists for deliverance, salvation, etc., then it may be manifest in part as a need for deliverance from mystery, salvation from ignorance, etc. As an answer we may claim that when some mysteries are solved, other deeper mysteries emerge.

Even after Enlightenment, the primeval feeling of a need for mystery continues. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), the founder of German critical philosophy, wrote *Sapere aude.* ("Dare to know.") in *What is Enlightenment?* — but "Daring to know" does not wipe away the genuine mystery from the face of the universe. Many remain sincere and unabashed about feeling a deep need for mystery in their lives. Such people are generally members of some kind of religious group.

The Supernatural –called by various names like God, Allah, Ishwara, Sunyata, etc. – form the basis of such a mystery. If one chooses to make the supernatural element a central aspect of one's religion, scripture and tradition will certainly support such set of beliefs. However — and this is well worth noting, according to the American Philosopher of Religion, Eric v d Luft (2004), — the various scriptures, "without adding more internal contradiction than is already present in their pages, will also support commonsensical, naturalistic, nonsupernatural, metaphorical, allegorical, or symbolic interpretations of their texts and theologies."

Such a plurality of interpretations is possible, not because the texts are vague. In fact indeed they are usually not vague. Plurality of interpretations is possible because the content of these texts is typically universal in its domain of application. :They are ambivalent rather than ambiguous in its language. Thus it is a strength, not a weakness, of most scriptures that they speak to otherworldly as well as this worldly interests" (Luft 2004). Thus they assure us that they will continue to speak to every era, nation, and successive *Zeitgeist* in world history.

Check Your Progress I
Note: Use the space provided for your answers.
1. What is "numinous"?
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2. What is the basis of the mysterious in religions?
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2.3   MAKING SENSE OF LIFE

German British philologist Max Müller (1823-1900), one of the founders of the modern
scholarly study of comparative religion, asserted   that whoever knows only one religion knows
none. Against this claim, German theologian Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930) responded in 1901
that whoever knows one religion knows them all. These assertions are not really contradictory
though they sound to be. Both are correct. They use the word knowledge in two ways. The
distinction remains ambiguous in English, but is clear enough for French and German speakers,
who have at their service the respective juxtapositions of *savoir / connaître* and *wissen / kennen*.
Müller means the scientific or objective knowledge (*savoir* or *wissen*) of a religion, which
naturally entails scrupulous comparisons with the data of other religions; while Harnack, on the
other hand, means the subjective acquaintance or familiarity (*connaître* or *kennen*) that only
an insider, i.e., a devout believer, can achieve. Moreover, Harnack refers specifically to
Christianity, implying that to know it intimately, i.e., to believe it, is in effect to know and
believe the true essence and meaning of all religions, since they all aim at the same spiritual goal.
In one word, Müller speaks as a philosopher; Harnack as a theologian (Luft 2004).

Religion must make sense to the believer, not necessarily easy common sense, but some sort of
sense. In other words, believers must be able to justify their beliefs, at least to themselves. At
the lowest level, such defense is accomplished by appeal to authority or tradition; at the highest
level, it is done either through philosophy or through philosophical or systematic theology. Here
lies the primary significance of philosophy of religion. That is the reason the preeminent
philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), held that "religion in its highest form
is philosophy, that philosophy in its true form is religion." This led him to hold that "the true
content of each is the same, even though their respective expressions may differ." He elaborates
this notion: "In their development they move toward each other, since in the historical
development of culture, the concept of God moves toward the philosophical, i.e., away from the
anthropomorphic and toward the ever more comprehensively spiritual" (Luft 2004).

2.4   FEW BASIC DEFINTIONS

A few definitions of key terms are necessary at the outset:

Theism: It comes from the Greek word for "God," *theos*, is belief in a God who is active in
human affairs. Deism, from the Latin word for "God," *deus*, is belief in a God who created the
world and then left it alone. Atheism, from the Greek meaning "no God," is belief in just that.
Atheism, theism, and deism are each claims to knowledge. Agnosticism, from the Greek
meaning "not knowing," *agnôstos* , is a refusal to decide.

Monotheism: it is derived from the Greek for "alone, "single," or "unique," *monos,* and
henotheism, from the Greek for "one," each denote belief in one God. Monotheism means one
God in and for the entire universe. But henotheism means one God for us, e.g., for our tribe, and
it does not deny the possibility that other tribes might have their own equally valid Gods.

Pantheism: It is the belief that everything is God. Animism is the belief that everything is spiritual, or that even apparently inanimate objects have souls. Panentheism is the belief that God completely permeates everything, like water in a saturated sponge. This term has become very popular in contemporary discussions.

Polytheism: This is the belief in many irreducible Gods, perhaps two, perhaps three, usually more. The Christian trinity is monotheistic, not polytheistic, because Yahweh the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each recognized as aspects of one God, not as three separate Gods, just as ice, liquid water, and water vapor are each recognized as aspects of a single substance, H2O, not as three separate substances. The Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, may be regarded as part of a polytheistic tradition.

Check Your Progress I
Note: Use the space provided for your answers.
1. Is "mystery" something necessary for modern human beings?
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2. What is the etymological meaning of "monotheism"?
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2.5   DEFINITIONS OF RELIGION

As for a definition of religion itself, that is very controversial. The word might have from the Latin *religare* ("to tie" or "to bind") and *religio* ("conscientiousness," "respect," "awe," or "sanctity"). The idea is that the soul is bound to God. Religion has been defined as everything from the immediate awareness of identity with the absolute, to the passionate striving (*eros*) for the transcendent, to the psychological projection of the idealized human self onto the infinite, to the consciousness of the highest social values. For German theologian Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834), religion is the feeling of utter dependence; for Danish philosopher Harald Höffding (1843-1931), the individual's desire to conserve value; for Kant, the recognition of moral duties as divine commands; for Dutch American anthropologist Annemarie de Waal Malefijt (b. 1914), any system of actions and interactions based on culturally shared beliefs in sacred supernatural powers; for Müller, the intuitive faculty of apprehending the infinite; for British historian Arthur Darby Nock (1902-1963), the human refusal to accept helplessness; for ancient Greek philosopher Plato (427-347 B.C.E.), the science of begging and getting gifts from the Gods; and for German socialist philosopher Karl Marx (1818-1883), the opiate of the people. For Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), the father of existentialism, religion is a matter of individual subjective passion and is a "leap" involving also "dread and fear".

In essence, religion is an attitude, or a sum of attitudes, constituting a way of life. Religion may thus be the total of an individual's sincere attitudes and predispositions toward that which serves as the final expression of his or her particular primary interest or goal. The various institutions of religion would arise only after a group shares certain attitudes that were first felt by an individual, and as a result of this sharing.

Perhaps the most accurate definition, according to Luft combines the ideas of two German Americans, liberal theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965) and psychologist Erich Fromm (1900-1980): "any system of thought, feeling, and action, typically shared by a group, which gives the individual a frame of orientation, a meaning of life, and an object of devotion, which is regarded as a matter of ultimate concern."

Check Your Progress II
Note: Use the space provided for your answers.
1. What is panentheism?
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2. What could be the most accurate definition of religion?
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2.6   PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

British American philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) wrote in *Religion in the Making*: "Religion is what the individual does with his [or her] own solitariness." But what the individual actually does with true solitariness, that curious amalgam of loneliness and reflectivity, is philosophize. In the same book Whitehead wrote, "Religion is force of belief cleansing the inward parts. For this reason the primary religious virtue is sincerity, a penetrating sincerity." But similarly, philosophy is force of thought cleansing the inward parts. Thus the primary philosophical virtue is precisely the same penetrating sincerity, that is demanded of religion. Here we see another relationship between genuine philosophy and religion.

Algerian French novelist and philosopher Albert Camus (1913-1960) wrote in *The Myth of Sisyphus* that there is only one truly philosophical question: suicide. His focus was perhaps too narrow, but he was on the right track. The same question, more broadly stated, is whether life is worth living. Philosophers have asked this broader version at least since Socrates in the fifth century B.C.E. If life turns out not to be worth living, then that in itself is not sufficient reason to commit suicide. We may prefer just to endure life. Conversely, if we judge that life is worth living, then that alone is not sufficient reason to avoid suicide. Socrates himself, who believed quite firmly that life, especially a philosophically examined life was worth living, unfortunately, had to commit suicide to preserve his moral integrity (Luft 2004).

So the central question is life. What, beyond the obvious physical or empirical aspects, is life? What does it mean? Why live? Why persevere? Why surrender? Why bother? Why care? Why strive? Why have children? Why laugh? Why cry? What can I hope for? Reason seems sometimes to be at a loss to answer these penetrating questions. The devout religious believers who deliberately reject any scholarly conclusions about the content of their religious faith because of the great comfort and sense of importance they gain by believing in their own god cannot risk anything, even reason, shaking that belief. Thus there may exist a healthy tension between the need to believe wholeheartedly and need to raise critical and penetrating questions, both of which are basic human needs.

The historical development of religion proceeds in stages which can be analyzed in terms of dialectical progress. Such is the case both with individual religions and with religion in general. Anthropologists, psychologists, and sociologists, especially those who study folklore and oral traditions, have done much good work in classifying such stages, all the way from the most primitive animism to the most sophisticated philosophical monotheism. But their classification is in general forms only. What they have largely failed to do is to discover and define precisely the reasons why a given stage passes over into another, according to Eric v d Luft (2004). They have failed to see the progressive development of religions as plan of God to lead us gradually toward the most adequate understanding of God. In other word, can we show that humanity has been led gradually to a more perfect idea of God, by God himself? This is a question which only a philosopher can try to answer. Hegel conceived and attempted such a project — to learn the ultimate, divinely sanctioned reasons why one religious stage passes over into another — but that movement died out in the mid-nineteenth century (Luft 2004).

2.7   EVOLUTION OF GOD

The historical evolution of our understanding of God must also be seen as the evolution of human beings on the absolute scale, or *sub specie aeternitatis* (from the view-point of eternity). If we compare our understanding of God, it is quite different from that of the early primitives. That of DeuteroIsaiah (540 B.C.E.) more nearly approached the true nature of God than did that of Moses (ca. 1300 B.C.E.). Similarly, that of Augustine (354-430), it is claimed, was more highly developed and thus more accurate than Isaiah's. This means, not that Isaiah was either more intelligent or more devout than Moses, or Augustine more than Isaiah, but that their respective theologies/philosophies are to a significant degree products of the total of learned culture in their respective times (Luft 2004). Thus that these theologies themselves reflect these several levels of cultural development and philosophical refinement.

In the beginnings of twenty-first century many scientific, epistemological, and even metaphysical reasons to abandon former beliefs in the supernatural (or God) have been proposed. At the same time contemporary philosophers (e.g: George Karuvelil) and theologians (e.g.: Sebastian Kappen) who believe in religion try to propose new understandings of God that is more conducive to the general world-view of the times. True, the time may have come for another rationally ordained supersession of an old God. Today the God of eternal punishment and cruelty needs to give rise to a God who is with the poor and with everyone and everything. At the same time some atheistic thinkers urge that God be replaced by "earthly peace," "cohesive

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social order," "social coherence," "ethical solidarity," "the order of ethical life," or "theonomy," (Paul Tillich) the law of God written in human hearts. But this social ideal of philosophical religion a goal toward which philosophy, religion, and politics must all cooperate.

One must acknowledge that in spite of the social solidarity that religions and non-religions foster, there is an essential difference between those who believe in God and those who do not. The difference between the many subjective worlds that involve God and those conceived without God drives immediately to the root of human existence. The various doctrines and traditions of established religions may not be adequate to answer the most serious and basic questions of human existence, life, and meaning. Contemporary theologies do a better job of answering them than doctrines or traditions do, but to address them in a fully satisfying way we need philosophy. Just like "war is too important to leave to the generals" religion is too important to leave to the priests. A more detached, objective, bird's eye-view is needed. There lies the philosophical importance of studying religion.

Philosophy is the science that sits in judgment of all matters of concern. "Science" is any rigorous discipline that uses impartial powers of reason and logic. In fact, reason weighs topics of inquiry on their own merits, according to their own logic, and in relation to other topics, then completes its analysis without prejudice on the basis of wherever reason leads, according to its own logic.

The goal of philosophical scrutiny is clarity, accuracy, and truth. Given this mission of philosophy, its highest duty is to sit in judgment of the most important matters (not with arrogance or hubris), with a view toward improving human life, ethical relations, and the world in general by injecting reason into our judgments and by identifying, describing, and communicating what makes sense and what does not. Philosophy thus promotes intelligence, clear understanding, and civilization but condemns stupidity, ignorance, and barbarity. "This is the normative or prescriptive aspect of philosophy, which is most effective when done implicitly. Philosophy aims to become the architecture of ethical, meaningful life, not by preaching or by being dogmatic, but just by discovering the facts and displaying them in clear light to intelligent minds who will then make their own decisions" (Luft 2004).

2.8   PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION AND METAPHYSICS

The philosophy of religion is not the same as theology. While theologians examine a particular religion from within and interpret it for its own community of believers, philosophers of religion analyze religion in general, from external or objective points of view, and evaluate it systematically. Theology is part of the data for philosophy of religion. Theology may inspire philosophy of religion and vice-versa. But they are distinct disciplines.

The same is the case with philosophy of religion and metaphysics. The philosophy of religion was originally subsumed under metaphysics, the philosophical science of first principles. Its central issue, the reality and nature of God, was considered a metaphysical question. But in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries philosophers began to consider questions about God separately from other metaphysical questions and to ask about ethics in religious contexts. As a result of these new lines of inquiry, especially in Britain and Germany, the philosophy of

religion had become an independent discipline within philosophy probably by the end of the eighteenth century onwards.

Herein lies the added importance of philosophy of religion, which has now become distinct from both theology and metaphysics, traditionally considered as the bases of religion and society. Philosophy of religion, like theology and metaphysics, deals with issues of fundamental significance to ourselves. It is in fact a development of metaphysics (and theology).

Check Your Progress III
Note: Use the space provided for your answers.
1. Who are the "masters of suspicion"? Why are they called so?
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2. Give the significance of the book edited by Graham Oppy and Nick Trakakis?
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2.9   LET US SUM UP

The philosophy of religion, like most philosophy and theology, is not a linear discipline. That is, its concepts cannot be learned sequentially, but must be gradually fitted together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. In whatever order they are presented, some concepts presented earlier will remain obscure until other concepts are presented later. This is unavoidable, because life is too complicated an affair to be regulated linearly (Luft 2004). So in this unit we have tried to show what philosophy of religion is and its importance as a theoretical discipline with practical applications.

2.10   KEYWORDS

Panentheism: The belief or doctrine that God is greater than the universe and includes and
  interpenetrates it
Numinous: It is a tern referring to a feeling of the mysterious, all-inspiring, holy or sacred,
  which is present without reason
Savoir / connaître and *wissen / kennen:* The difference between "kennen" and "wissen" is that
  "kennen" means "to know an object or person" and "wissen" is "to know a fact." In
  French *savoir means* 1) to know a fact 2) to know by heart or 3) to know how to do
  something. *Connaître* has two meanings: 1) to know a person or 2) to be familiar with a
  person or thing.
Zeitgeist: The defining spirit or mood of a particular period of history as shown by the ideas and
  beliefs of the time.

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UNIT 3   PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION AND OTHER DISCIPLINES

Contents

3.0   OBJECTIVES

- To help the students to see the relationship between philosophy of religion and other disciplines.

- To be able to appreciate the relationship between myth, religion and philosophy.

- To see how contemporary sciences contribute to philosophy of religion.

3.1   INTRODUCTION

"Philosophy" means "the love of wisdom." Wisdom is the knowledge of ultimate causes, explanations and principles. It includes knowledge of values, not just facts. It gives you a "big picture," a "world-view" and a "life-view." It explores such questions as these: What is the essence of a human being? What is the meaning (value, goal, purpose) of human life? What is a good life? What is a good society? Are there higher laws than man's laws? Are we here by chance or design? Are we fated or free? How do we know what is good or evil? How do we know anything? Is anything certain? Can reason prove (or disprove) the existence of God? Why do we suffer? Why do we die? Is there life after death?

Coming to the Greek tradition: Although it may be common to speak of a Greek "religion," in fact the Greeks themselves didn't use such a term. Further, they might not have recognized it, had someone else attempted to apply it to their practices. At the same time, it is difficult to accept the idea that the Greeks where completely secular and irreligious, however. This is why a better understanding of Greek religion helps illuminate the nature of religion generally as well as the nature of religions which continue to be followed today. This, in turn, is critical for anyone who wants to engage in a sustained appreciation and critique of religion and religious beliefs.

If we mean by "religion" a set of beliefs and behavior which are consciously chosen and ritually followed to the exclusion of all other alternatives, then the Greeks didn't really have a religion. If, however, we mean by religion more generally people's ritual behavior and beliefs about sacred items, places, and beings, then the Greeks most certainly did have a religion - or perhaps a

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set of religions, in recognition of the great variety of Greek beliefs (Cline 2011). Perhaps when discussing religions, we should look more closely at the beliefs about what is sacred and holy as was done by leaders of comparative study like Mircea Eliade.

So in this unit we first deal with the three sciences of Aristotle, that helps us to see religion as one of the foundational disciplines. Then we see its relationship to myth. This helps us to relate philosophy of religion to theology and then later to social sciences. Then we take up two more related disciplines from science and see how they can dialogue with philosophy of religion.

3.2. THREE SCIENCES ACCORDING TO ARISTOTLE

Probably the most commonsensical and influential philosopher of all time was Aristotle. Aristotle says that there are three "whys," three purposes, ends or reasons for anyone ever to study and learn anything, in school or out of it. Thus there are three kinds of "sciences," which he called "productive," "practical" and "theoretical." (Aristotle used "science" in a much broader way than we do, meaning any ordered body of knowledge through causes and reasons.)

The purpose of the "productive sciences" (which we today call technology) is to produce things, to make, improve or repair material things in the world, and thus to improve our world. Farming, surgery, shipbuilding, carpentry, writing and tailoring were examples in Aristotle's era as well as ours, while ours also includes many new ones like cybernetics, aviation and electrical engineering (Kreeft 2009).
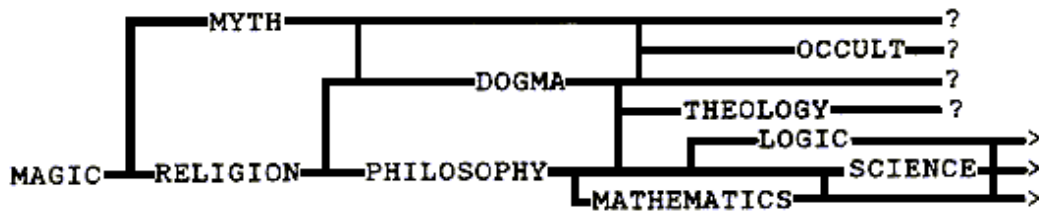
The purpose of the "practical sciences" (which meant learning how to do or practice anything, how to act) is to improve your own behavior in some area of your own life. The two most important of these areas, Aristotle said, were ethics and politics. (Aristotle saw politics not as a pragmatic, bureaucratic business of running a state's economy, but as social ethics, the science of the good life for a community.) Other examples of "practical sciences" include economics, athletics, rhetoric and military science.

The third kind of sciences is the "theoretical" or "speculative" (contemplative), i.e., those that seek the truth for its own sake, that seek to know just for the sake of knowing rather than for the sake of action or production (though, of course, they will have important practical application). These sciences include theology, philosophy, physics, astronomy, biology, psychology and math.

Theoretical sciences are more important than practical sciences for the very same reason practical sciences are more important than productive sciences: because their end and goal is more intimate to us. Productive sciences perfect some external thing in the material world that we use; practical sciences perfect our own action, our own lives; and theoretical sciences perfect our very selves, our souls, our minds. They make us nobler persons (Kreeft 2009).

And that is the reason for pursuing philosophy in general and philosophy of religion in particular: not to make money, or things, or even to live better, but to be better, to be more, to grow your mind as you grow your body.

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        ┌──MYTH────────────────────────────?
        │           ┌──────────OCCULT──?
        │   ┌───DOGMA─────────────────?
        │   │      ┌──THEOLOGY──────?
        │   │      │      ┌──LOGIC────────>
MAGIC──RELIGION──PHILOSOPHY──┤          SCIENCE────>
                          └──MATHEMATICS──┘      >
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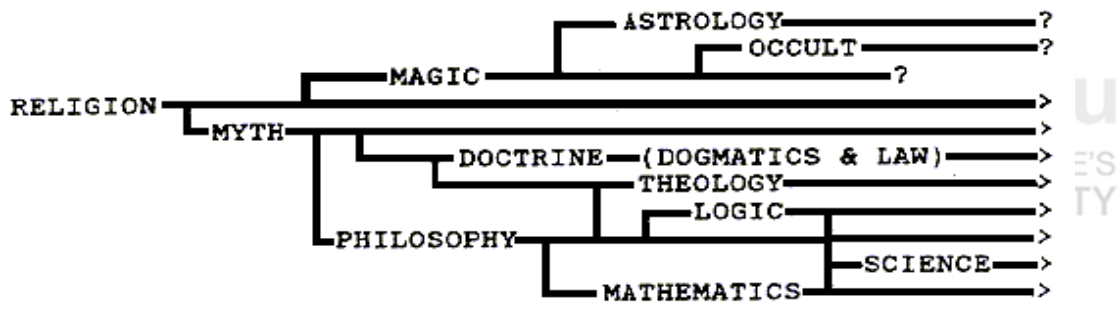
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occurs because of the historical accident that the religion of people like Socrates and Plato later ceased to exist. The old gods of the Greeks, Egyptian, Babylonians, Phoenicians, Romans, Celts, Germans, Slavs, etc. were later entirely replaced by one old religion, Judaism, and two new ones from the same tradition, Christianity and Islam. It is now possible to say "religion" and mean one of those and to say "philosophy" and simply mean "that Greek stuff" where the religious side of Greek thought just need not be taken seriously.

The historical circumstances that allow for that simple pattern of distinction does not occur in India or China. A book like the *Bhagavad Gita* is a profoundly important religious document for Hinduism, yet it is also one of the fundamental documents of Indian philosophy. Indeed, the *Gita* appears to have been frist *produced* by Indian philosophy, the Sankhya and Yoga Schools. Then it been *transformed* into a religious document, and finally *used* for both religious and philosophical purposes later on. This kind of intermingling makes distinctions between religion and philosophy very difficult in the Indian tradition. In fact most of the Indian scholars do not even approve of such a distinction.

Similar difficulties exist for Chinese thought but also for Mediaeval Western thought, where philosophers are easily classified as Christian, Jewish, or Moslem. If philosophy had nothing to do with religion, then presumably it would be superfluous to identify Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) as Jewish or Avicenna (Ibn Sina, 980-1037) as Moslem. It is not, and this was a question that many such philosophers had to face at the time. The way that one of the greatest Christian philosophers, St. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274), dealt with it was to identify different sources of *authority*: he distinguished "natural theology," which is based on reason alone, from "dogmatic theology," which is based on revelation. Jewish and Moslem philosophers had made similar distinctions, and some of them had even thought, which St. Thomas didn't, that reason could ultimately justify everything in religion (Ross 2002).

Definitions for religion and philosophy must involve similar distinctions, where the original context of all thought is mythic. Since myth does not argue, but philosophy does, a rule of thumb for religion is that it mixes in philosophic elements but always retains an *authoritative* link to a mythic context. The most important thing about that mythic context, however, is not always that it exerts a dogmatic authority, but that it is *historical,* as the American Philosopher, Kelley L Ross (2002), points out. Philosophy cannot conjure up historical particulars out of pure reason, but religion always relates its truth to historical particulars, the actual source of the religion or its received tradition. Furthermore, contrary to the earlier evolutionary schemes about human thought, it must be accepted that mythic thought, and so religion, *cannot be replaced* by philosophy, or by science. Thus a revised and evolutionary pattern, acceptable to most contemporary scholars, thus could look like this:

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                              ASTROLOGY————————————?
                           ┌——OCCULT————————————?
              ┌—MAGIC——————┘        ?
RELIGION —————┤                                    >
              └—MYTH                               >
                    ┌—DOCTRINE—(DOGMATICS & LAW)———>
                    │        THEOLOGY——————————————>
                    │        ┌—LOGIC————————————————>
              ┌—PHILOSOPHY———┤                      >
                    └—MATHEMATICS————SCIENCE——>
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The above discussion leads us to the relationship between theology and philosophy of religion. As such both of them deal with the same topics. The crucial difference is that theology presupposes faith while philosophy of religion does not. As such philosophers of religion are required to bracket off their faith, in their philosophical discussion. Since the field of research of both the topics are related, many themes and insights are also shared between the two disciplines.

3.5   PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Starting from 19th century, there have been quite much of debate among sociologists (Émile Durkheim1858 –1917, Karl Marx   (1818 –1883) and psychologists (Sigmund Freud 1856 – 1939; Carl Gustav Jung 1875 –1961), whose ideas has profoundly influenced philosophy of religion. As such philosophy of religion have borrowed many findings from sociology, psychology and even from (cultural) anthropology. Recently sociobiology (Edward O. Wison 1929- and Richard Dawkins 1941-) has also dialogued with philosophy of religion, on issues like the origin and evolution of altruism and evolutionary equilibrium. Further, we give two contemporary disciplines, which contribute our thinking about God. The first one studies our brain (Neurosciences or Neurotheology) and the second one the universe (Astronomy or Big Bang Theories). Both these sciences find traces of God, which may be used by philosophers of religion, to understand God and human beings better.

Check Your Progress II
Note: Use the space provided for your answers.
1. How will you see the differences and relationship between philosophy of religion and theology?
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……. ……….. ………………. ………….. ……. ………….. …………….. …………..

2. Are social sciences necessary to do philosophy of religion?
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3.6   NEUROTHEOLOGY

Neurotheology, also known as spiritual neuroscience, is the study of correlations of neural phenomena with subjective experiences of spirituality and hypotheses to explain these phenomena. Neurotheology has been defined as "science's attempt at explaining religion within the physical aspect of the brain using rational thought."
Proponents of neurotheology, like Jacob Abraham and Augustine Pamplany from India, hold that there is a neurological and evolutionary basis for subjective experiences traditionally categorized as spiritual or religious. The subject has formed the basis of several popular science books (See For Further Reading).

Indian born Vilayanur S. Ramachandran explored the neural basis of the hyperreligiosity seen in temporal lobe epilepsy (TLE) using the galvanic skin response, which correlates with emotional

arousal, to determine whether the hyperreligiosity seen in TLE was due to an overall heightened emotional state or was specific to religious stimuli. By presenting subjects with neutral, sexually arousing and religious words while measuring GSR, Ramachandran was able to show that patients with TLE showed enhanced emotional responses to the religious words, diminished responses to the sexually charged words, and normal responses to the neutral words. These results suggest that the medial temporal lobe is specifically involved in generating some of the emotional reactions associated with religious words, images and symbols.

Andrew B. Newberg and others describe neurological processes which are driven by the repetitive, rhythmic stimulation which is typical of human ritual, and which contribute to the delivery of transcendental feelings of connection to a universal unity. They posit, however, that physical stimulation alone is not sufficient to generate transcendental unitive experiences. For this to occur they say there must be a blending of the rhythmic stimulation with ideas. Once this occurs "…ritual turns a meaningful idea into a visceral experience. Moreover they say that humans are compelled to act out myths by the biological operations of the brain on account of what they call the "inbuilt tendency of the brain to turn thoughts into actions".

Based on current neuroscientific research, Eugen Drewermann, one of today's most prominent and controversial theologians in Europe, developed in two monumental volumes (Modern Neurology and the Question of God), published in 2006 and 2007, a radical critique of traditional conceptions of God and the soul and a sweeping reinterpretation of religion in light of neurology.[

3.7   THE ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE

It has recently been realised that if some of the fundamental physical constants of the universe were only slightly different then the existence of life in this universe would have been impossible (see Martin Rees's *Just Six Numbers*). There are many of these fortuitous coincidences which have led some to believe that the universe has been fine-tuned. Many explanations for this have been proposed: Is there some necessity for life to exist - sentient intelligent life which could observe and ponder the universe - or else the universe could not come into being? Can the conditions for life be set less rigidly? Is there a multiplicity of universes with the constants set differently in each universe? (Thomas 2011)

But perhaps the most famous (infamous?) interpretation of the Anthropic Principle is that we are we living in a "designer universe" (Pandikattu 2001). In other words, can Anthropic Principle point to a God, who has created this universe specifically for human beings?

Critics of the Anthropic Principle dismiss such thinking by saying that human life exists in its current form purely as a result of the nature of this particular universe. If the constants were set differently, then life might well not exist and we would not be around to ponder these questions. As Steven Weinberg says: "To conclude that the constants of nature have been fine-tuned by a benevolent designer would be like saying, 'Isn't it wonderful that God put us here on earth, where there's water and air and the surface gravity and temperature are so comfortable, rather than some horrid place, like Mercury or Pluto?' Where else in the solar system other than on earth could we have evolved?"

Other critics would also say that carbon-based life is not the only possible type of life: maybe an entirely different form of silicon-based life would exist, for example, if the physical constants were set differently. However, from the list of coincidences, it would appear that the majority of values which the constant could take would result in no life ever being possible, the universe either spreading too far too quickly, or else collapsing back on itself. According to the proposer of string theory Leonard Susskind: "The notorious cosmological constant is not quite zero, as it was thought to be. This is a cataclysm and the only way that we know how to make any sense of it is through the reviled and despised Anthropic Principle." (Thomas 2011)

Recent discussion of the Anthropic Principle has moved away from the "designer universe" type of interpretation towards a so-called "multiverse" interpretation. This rehabilitation has seen the Anthropic Principle come in from the cold from being perceived as a slightly cranky theory on the periphery of science towards playing a central role in the latest interpretations of string theory and cosmology (Pandikattu 2004).

The multiverse interpretation suggests that there are a vast number of different universes (infinitely many?), the collection of universes being commonly referred-to as the *multiverse*. The physical constants are set to different random values in each universe. This arrangement would require no fine-tuning: we just happen to be inhabitants of a universe in which the physical constants are suitable for life. (Thomas 2011)

Further, according to string theory in physics, elementary particles are not particles but small vibrating strings. For the equations of string theory to be mathematically consistent, a string has to vibrate in 10 dimensions, which implies that six extra dimensions exist but are curled-up too small to be detected. The laws of physics in this universe would depend on the geometry of those hidden dimensions.

But the solution to the equations is not unique as so many different geometries are possible in these extra dimensions. The bundle of curled-up extra dimensions can have many different shapes such as a sphere, a doughnut and so on. The vast collection of solutions differ in that each configuration has a potential energy associated with it called the *vacuum energy*, the energy of the space-time when the four large dimensions are completely devoid of matter and fields (Thomas 2011).

Each solution to the equations could be taken as representing a universe with different physical constants and laws of physics. We could represent each of the 10^{500} possible solutions as an abstract mathematical graph, plotting the vacuum energy against the geometrical parameters. The geometry of the small dimensions would try to adjust to minimise the vacuum energy, just as a ball placed on a slope will roll downhill to a lower position. As the physical constants and laws of physics in our universe do not appear to be changing with time, we must be sitting at a minimum in the bottom of a valley. In particular, we seem to sitting at a minimum with a slightly positive vacuum energy (Thomas 2011).

In such a scenario, can we speak of anthropic principle pointing to a Designer (God), who has helped the evolution of our particular universe, so that human beings could inhabit this planet? This is only a question posed, without a definitive answer.

3.9. LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we first saw that right from the beginning of Western culture philosophy is related to sciences. Then we saw how religion, philosophy and even sciences stem from the myths. Then we saw in an elementary manner some modern sciences are related to philosophy of religion.

3.10. KEYWORDS

Anthropic principle: The cosmological principle that theories of the universe are constrained by the necessity to allow human existence. This implies that the universe evolved (was directed by an intelligence agency?) in such a way that the universe would give rise to human beings.

Neurotheology: It is the application of the neurological studies to theory and God-concerns. For instance, it searches for the place(s) in the brain where religious beliefs originate and studies the brain connections for spirituality. It tries to see if God can be understood better (or explained away?) using the latest neurological research.

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UNIT 4   HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Contents

4.0. OBJECTIVES

- To take up some historically significant persons in the philosophy of religion.
- To give a general view of the vast history of this topic.
- To see how some philosophers of religion are critical and other sympathetic to religion.

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Philosophy of religion is philosophical reflection on religion. It is as old as philosophy itself and has been a standard part of Western philosophy in every period. In the last half of the twentieth century, there has been a great growth of interest in it, and the range of topics philosophers of religion have considered has also expanded considerably.

Philosophy of religion is sometimes divided into philosophy of religion proper and philosophical theology. This distinction reflects the unease of an earlier period in analytic philosophy, during which philosophers felt that reflection on religion was philosophically respectable only if it confined itself to mere theism and abstracted from all particular religions; anything else was taken to be theology, not philosophy. But most philosophers now feel free to examine philosophically any aspect of religion, including doctrines or practices peculiar to individual religions. Not only are these doctrines and practices generally philosophically interesting in their own right, but often they also raise questions that are helpful for issues in other areas of philosophy (Stump 1998).

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So in the first part of this unit we take up some significant themes as developed by some philosophers (sociologists) of religion and then give a general overview of the philosophers associated with this topic.

4.2. GOD AND/OR THE SACRED

Most textbooks on the Philosophy of God or Religion tend to start with a discussion of proofs for the existence of God and, having dealt with that issue, proceed to talk about the essence of God (i.e. what does the term mean, what qualities or attributes are to be ascribed to the divinity?) However, my approach is just the opposite. I prefer to begin with a critical reflection on our understanding of God and thence take up the debate on whether God's existence can be proved or not. The reason is that I, with many others, am quite convinced that the reason why one believes in God or no depends on the concept of God one has previously formed in life. If that concept is meaningful and seen to be, not just no barrier to human growth and development, but a positive inspiration and support for it, he/she will believe in God, and only then cast about for "proofs" to justify his/her stance. Conversely, if a person has, in the light of his or her experiences and upbringing, formed a negative concept of God (e.g. is convinced that belief in God necessarily degrades human dignity, responsibility and freedom), then such a person will become an atheist and as a result, will assemble arguments against God's existence (Desbruslais 2000).

God or the Sacred?
One naturally tends to think that the notion of God (though conceived differently) would be a kind of "least common denominator" in all religions. But this is not quite true. There are at least two great religions that have existed for thousands of years and are quite capable of an atheistic interpretation; indeed, many of their adherents are "devout atheists" (however paradoxical to some of us that may seem). I am referring to Buddhism and Jainism, the latter being the religion that Gandhi was born into (he, of course was a firm believer in God). But, if these systems are atheistic, why call them religions at all, one might, quite understandably ask? Well, for one thing, they in common with other theistic religions – offer some kind of redemption or salvation from the human condition of ignorance, sin and suffering. They suggest ways and means to overcome our passions and attaining a depth of self-mastery and inner tranquility. And isn't this part of the goals of all authentic religion (Desbruslais 2000). The most basic concept, common to all religions (including the atheistic variety) is the notion of the sacred. Some religious people interpret this is but a deeper, little-understood and lesser attained aspect of our own selves; others remain equally convinced that this is something totally new and unlike anything that we can experience in ourselves or the world around us, something that cannot be simply identified with any limited, finite thing of this worlds.

4.3   THE SACRED: DURKHEIM AND FRIENDS

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), a Frenchman who is considered the founding father of contemporary sociology, was a positivist, i.e. a philosopher of the nascent scientific age. Thus, he believed that only things that could be measured, weighed and counted, as in the field of the physical sciences, are real (posita, in Latin, would mean things that can be measured). He set himself the task of explaining religion and religious experiences in terms of posita. He 2umanizing2 the distinction between things sacred and things profane and sought to isolate the "elementary forms of religious life"; in other words, just as a scientist establishes particular elements, molecules and atoms as the "building blocks" of the material world, he was quite

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convinced that, with a little effort, we would be able to separate out basic material units as the real elements of the so-called sacred which would then be shown up for what they were: nothing but material things wrongly invested with supernatural qualities. Falling back on the study of Melanesian tribal religious practices pioneered by R. H. Codrington, an English anthropologist, he proposed "mana" as the archaic source of the sacred. With Codrington, he believed that the totemism practiced by the Melanesians was the most primitive expression of human religiosity and all our contemporary sophisticated religious practices and doctrines were no more than more complex elaborations of the same. In tribal worship, there emerged a strange, fearsome force (called mana) – especially in the frenzied ritual dancing around the totem pole – which accrued to the totem, symbol of the tribe or clan. It was believed by the natives that somehow their tribal identity, tribal lore and tribal skill and courage in hunting and fighting accrued to the totem through the dancers and, at the same time, the accumulated wisdom and insights or their ancestors was transferred from there, through them, to the whole tribe. Totemic cult boils down to the cult of the clan and "the gods were the people conceived symbolically." Thus religion, God, the sacred, are nothing but useful ways to teach primitives how to be loyal to, and integrate themselves fully into, tribal society. Thus, having discovered the empirical identity of mana, Durkheim was quite convinced that he had shown convincingly enough that religion had no extrawordly, supernatural grounds whatever (Desbruslais 2000).

Two contemporary scholars both French and both Freudians, offer views along the same lines: Laura Makarius and Rene Girard, both of whom published their research in 1947. The former links her conclusions to issues linked to sex and gender bias, the latter links his findings to the sublimation of our alleged instinct for violence.

Makarius traces the origin of the sacred to the sense of awe with which the primitive mind was accustomed to regard blood and the various taboos associated with it. The efficacy of mana (she uses the same word as Durkheim) stemmed from the ambivalence of blood: the fact that one who shed blood would experience its malefic effect which would render hit impure; at the same time, however, some of its mysterious, ineffable and efficacious power would be also transmitted to the violator of the taboo (Desbruslais 2000). Makraius was sure that her theory would put to rest, once and for all, centuries of "pseudo – theological speculation" and enable us to see truly wherein the secret of religious experience really lay.

Girard suggests that the sacred is nothing but a disguised sublimation of our violent instinct. He adverts to the unabashedly violent element that is present in all religious worship – a victim is slaughtered, its blood is spilt on the altar and sprinkled on the worshippers (though in an "unbloody" manner is some circle). The "scapegoat theory" (i.e. an innocent creature is cruelly slain to exile the sins of the community by taking them on itself) is rejected by him. Rather, it is a "surrogate victim", which thereby absorbs the violence that men (.), prey to their drive, would otherwise be driven to vent on each other. His thesis, he sees, is confirmed by his claim that "sacrifice languished in societies with *a* firmly established judicial system – ancient Greece and Rome, for example." Now that we have an efficient legal system and *a* well-trained police force to enforce it, we no longer require the sublimatory effects of religion to control our violent drives (Desbruslais 2000).

Check Your Progress I
Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

4.4 THE SACRED: SODERBLOM AND FRIENDS

Nathan Soderblam (1866 – 1931) was a Swede, one of the pioneers in the study of Comparative Religions, at his native University of Upsala, Sweden. He wrote a significant article, "Holiness" for the "Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics" which proved to be a landmark in the development of the Philosophy of Religion. "The sacred is the most important word in religion; it is even more than God", he tellingly remarked. He then went on to say why: "For a religion can really exist without any conception of the divinity, but there is no religion without the distinction between the sacred and the profane." Next, provides us with a kind of descriptive definition of the sacred: it is an "entity, mysterious, and bound up with certain things events or action. Finally, he sub-divided the sacred into two constitutive parts, one with a more positive connotation, "mana," a beneficial efficacious power and another with a more negative connotation, taboo, "implying the notion of danger, of interdict and prohibition." Soderblom was an orthodox Christian and rejected any interpretation of the sacred as an impersonal force, a deeper and most often untapped resource of the individual or society. For him an encounter the sacred stemmed from a genuine contact with God. He concluded that all would agree that "the psychological origin of the concept of the sacred seems to have been the reaction of the mind when confronted with something which is new, starting and terrifying." Since then, most scholars use the term *ganz andere* as a kind of synonym for the Sacred (Desbruslais 2000).

Rudolf Otto (1869 – 1937), the German savant and mystic was impressed with the work of Soderblom and set out on his studies with the last quoted phrase of the latter ringing in his ears. A profoundly religious man himself, he avowed he was a "Lutheran Benedictine" and made no secret of his love for the beauty And solemnity of the Roman Catholic liturgy, together with its scope for facilitating an encounter with the divine. But he devoted himself with equal zeal to the study of non-Christian religions as to Christian theology. A visit to India convinced him that the Sacred can be encountered more fully through intuition and symbol and far less adequately through reason. His Indian experience, coupled with his delving into the Upanishads, convinced Otto of the greatness and completeness of Indian mysticism. He was further gratified to discover a tremendous convergence in the mystics of Europe, India, Israel, Iran, China and Greece.

But behind the wealth of ideas and practices that he documented in religions across the globe, there seemed to loom one common and incontestable phenomenon, the sense of the Holy. In practice, however das Heilige was also used in Ethics and was applied to certain human beings. In search of a more precise and sumanizing term that could be exclusively used for the encounter with the divine in religion, he decided to leave the "holy" to Ethics and coin a new term for religious language: "(The Latin) omen has given us 'ominous' and there is no reason why from

numen (Latin for 'divinity') we should not coin, similarly, a word, 'numinous'." (Desbruslais 2000).

He then sifts through piles of writings of mystics of every race and age and creed to summarise these into four phenomenological steps in the human encounter with the numinous. First, there is elicited, from us a "creaurely feeling" (das. Kreaturgefuhl). Here is an expression of "the emotion of a creature, submerged and overwhelmed by its own nothingness in contrast to that which is supreme above all creatures." Then comes the stage of the tremendum, holy fear and mystic awe, which makes one tend to draw back in the face of the mystery of the All-Good and the All-Pure. This is practically simultaneous with a kind of contrary movement, which he uses two Greek words to describe, "eusebeia" or "eluabeia" overwhelming urge from deep within to express ones feelings through deep piety and cultic acts. Any authentic cultic rite, Otto unceasingly reminds us, must issue forth in a powerful confession of the Mystery, the Wholly Other, the Totally Transcendent. This, culminates in the final experience of the "fascinans", the fascinating – that which seduces, enraptures and draws human into bliss.

Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), the celebrated Rumanian scholar of religions, arrived in India in1928, studied at Calcutta and produced a brilliant doctoral thesis on Yoga. When his country turned Communist after World War II, he assumed voluntary exile, relinquishing his governmental post and settling down in France. From Paris he launched a series of books, articles and conferences On the History of Religions. Later, he shifted to the United States and was attached to the University of Chicago. He agrees that the Sacred is the basis of all religious experience and observes, "Man becomes aware of the sacred, because it manifests itself as something quite different from the profane." He coins the term hierophany to describe this manifestation of the Sacred. It is significant, he notes, that a hierophany always occurs through the medium of "myths or symbols,' but never completely in an immediate manner in its totality." In other words, the infinite humbly historicises Itself in and through some finite reality. "This is the great mystery, the mysterium tremendum", he avers, "the fact that the Sacred decided to limit Itself" – in a hierophans.

4.5   IN RESPONSE TO DURKHEIM AND OTHERS

Durkheim's reductionist approach would hardly stand up to contemporary views. Understandably was he so enamoured by the positive sciences as they were just coming into being. Postmodernism would make short shrift to erstwhile claims to found epistemological certainties on the findings of science. Even contemporary philosophers of science, from Capra to Einstein and Heisenberg are wary about any claims to absolutism and naive objectivity that are associated with nineteenth century positivism. Besides, as further anthropological and sociological studies have shown, it is far too simplistic a thesis to hold that all religion is nothing more than souped-up totem dancing.

As for Makarius and Girard, they have certainly made some insightful comments on the phenomenon of religious rites, but can we afford to receive them without serious critical thought? Again, it is sociologists, like Evans-Pritchard who caution us against any hasty tendency to study or explain away one discipline from the perspective of, or in terms of, another. It is not scientific to rule out a priori the reality of any discipline's subject matter and then proceed to study biology as if it were engineering or vice versa.

More to the point, the American thinker and psychologist, William James (1842-1910) had this to say about people who try to "show up" religion as perverted sexual or sublimated violence: "It

is true that in the vast collection of religious phenomena, some are undisguisedly amatory – e.g., sex deities and obscene rites in polytheism and ecstatic feelings of union with the Saviour in a few Christian mystics. But then, why not call religion an aberration of the digestive function and prove ones point by the worship of Bacchus and Ceres, or the ecstatic feelings of some saints about the Eucharist? Religious language clothes itself in such poor symbols as life affords, and the whole organism gives overtones of comment whenever the mind is strongly stirred to expression. Language drawn from eating and drinking is probably as common in religious literature as is language drawn from sexual life (James 2010).

The quote is from his classic, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Now, danger of all reductionisms is that they fasten themselves upon a point which may be true, but thence proceed to the simplistic assumption that all instances of anything linked with the fact are to be explained in the same way. This is the traditional fallacy of arguing, "That convicted murderer has red hair, therefore all red-haired people are prone to commit murder." Trying to maintain that gall religious activity can be explained away as sex and violence would force one to conclude, with equal (il)logic that "the religious life depends just as much upon the spleen, the pancreas and on the kidneys as on the sexual apparatus, and the whole theory has (by now) lost its point in evaporating into a vague general assertion of the dependence, somehow, of the mind upon the body" (James 2010). And no one would quarrel with that last remark – except to note that it is so vague and general as to practically say nothing worth paying attention to.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1. Who are the "masters of suspicion"? Why are they called so?

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2. How do you respond to Durkheim's view on God?

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4.6   THE "MASTERS OF SUSPICION"

It was Paul Ricoeur, the devout Christian French phenomenologist, who dubbed the atheist trio Nietzsche-Marx-Freud, "Masters of Suspicion", since they, in effect, have taught us to be suspicious of hastily assuming that we have had mystical experiences: often times, they point out, what we were really encountering was nothing divine or supernatural but some little understood and unhealthy aspect of ourselves. J. P. Stern, in his deceptively slim, masterful work, *Nietzsche*, summed up their perennial critique of religion:

"They saw their undertaking as the solving of a secret, and all opposition to it as a conspiracy; a conspiracy of men with vested social interest, thought Marx; of men with vested space moral and religious interest, thought Frued; of men who chose to be only half alive and resent the few who live generously and dangerously, thought Nietzsche."

Karl Marx (1818 – 18831): According to the father of all leftists, "Religion is the opium of the

6

people." This is one of the world's most famous quotations. What is not so well known, however, is that he held that it was the oppressed people who dose themselves with opium (a pain-killer in Marx's days) to deaden the pain of their sufferings. It was not the oppressors who gave it to them to make them keep quiet. Now, there's nothing wrong with making use of a pain-killer when there's no way of removing the source of ones pain (as in some cases of cancer, or in a post-operation situation). But if one has, say, a thorn in the foot, the proper remedy would be to remove the thorn, not leave it there and take pain-killers. Marx is quite right in attacking all those victims of social injustice who, instead of rising up to challenge their oppressor and demand their just rights, resign themselves to their lot for "pie in the sky when they die". And when such is the case, we cannot but endorse Marx's critique and do all we can to extirpate such pseudo-religiosity, conscientising the people to put forward concerted action for justice. However, not all religion functions as an opium, nor are all believers miserable and oppressed people. Authentic religion, far from being the opium of the people, can be a catalyst for revolutionary action for justice, as the activists of liberation theology (and philosophy.) show (Desbruslais 2000).

Friederich Nietzsche (1841- 1900): Granted, Nietzsche ended his days in an asylum for the insane; granted, many of his strident rantings against God and religion appear to warrant no more attention than we'd give to the babblings of any madman. But, behind and the apparent arrogance and decidedly schizophrenic utterances, there is a solid vein of critical truth that we would be foolish and irresponsible to ignore. His charge is that religion in general, and Christianity in particular, has proved for a good many people a pious subterfuge for cowardice and mediocrity, masquerading under the "virtues" of humility and resignation to God. For too long have religions frowned upon ambition, self-assertion and courageous initiative, over-stressing counterfeits for meekness and gentleness. Nietzsche does well to remind us that the former have a positive side and the latter hide a negative aspect. On the other hand a disproportionate emphasis on the "manly" virtues, without situating them in their proper humanizing context, can lead to the worst excesses of colonialism, oppression … and Hitlerism

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939): If Marx qualified religion as an opium, for Freud it was illusion. .By this he didn't mean that it was patently false - in which case he would have qualified it as delusion. What the Austrian father of psycho-analysis meant was that "wish-fulfillment", more than any - thing else was its basis. As an illustration of what he meant by this, he asked us to consider the case of a servant girl, who is badly treated by the family for which she works. She could protest and throw up her job, but instead she carries on her miserable drudgery, hoping all along that a handsome prince will one day came along, marry her and rescue her from her pitiful state, taking her to live happily ever after with him in a glorious castle. Now, handsome princes do exist and it is at least theoretically possible that one of them just might come her way, fall in lave with her and take her with him to his fairy palace. But it is highly unlikely and she is pinning her hopes on an idle dream. People in misery fashion for themselves an illusotry being called God, who, they hope will one day set them free from their suffering and take them off to heaven. Again, Freud compared religious believers to adults who are afraid to grow up and accept the responsibility for their own lives and futures. Realising that they cannot always be running to their earthly fathers for protection and for solutions to their problems (their earthly fathers die or are discovered by them, to their horror, not to be the strongest and most knowledgeable people on earth), they project their frustration into a "heavenly father" to whom they can run with all their problems and fears. Now, here too we must admit that there is a good

deal of truth in what Freud has said: for many people "god" is nothing but wish-fulfillment and & projection of the father Image-very specially for the psychologically disturbed people who came to him for counselling and healing. But Freud's mistake was his over-generalisation: not every one who believes in God or practices religious worship is psychotic. Henri Bergson (1859 - 1941), the French thinker and scholar on evolution, joining his research to that of William James (whom we have referred to above) has pointed out that in every culture and every age there have been- and continue to be – great mystic, people of age and sexes who claim to have encountered god.

Now it is possible to study their life and writings and dismiss many of them as cranks, social misfits, psychologically deranged people who had - consciously or no - fabricated such "mystical experiences" out of their own inadequacies, insecurities and fears, seeking thereby a kind of escapist solution to their worries and anxieties. But we can't write off with equal ease all the claims of all mystics everywhere and at all time. Some of them, when critically examined, emerge as personages of obvious and evident psychological maturity and balance, radical thinkers who challenged the existing social and religious structures of their times and were frequently persecuted and pilloried by the powers that were at the time, both sacred and secular. They evince the qualities of gifted administrators, inspiring leaders, launching revolutionary movements and gathering around themselves charismatic and radical personalities who have helped to keep alive, even to our times, some of the action groups that they built up. These are hardly qualities we'd associate with "crazies"; instead, they stand out as psychologically sound as the best of us, if not more so. Thus, not all mystics and their writings would wilt and pale before the ruthless assault of philosophical "suspicion" (Desbruslais 2000).

4.7   THE HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Two Australian philosophers have brought out a Five-volume set on the history of philosophy of religion. Graham Oppy is a Professor in the School of Philosophy & Bioethics at Monash University in Australia. Nick Trakakis teaches Philosophy and Religious Studies at Monash and Deakin Universities. Their *History of Western Philosophy of Religion* covers Ancient, Medieval, Early Modern, Nineteenth Century and Twentieth Century philosophy of religion. Written by an international range of leading scholars, the entries, each devoted to a major philosopher of religion, have been chosen to reflect the breadth and variety of perspectives in the history of Western philosophy of religion. In addition to entries on major philosophers and schools, thinkers whose work has greatly influenced the philosophy of religion--notably Darwin, Marx and Freud--are also included. Rightly it is claimed to be the "most comprehensive history of the philosophy   of   religion."

Designed to be accessible to a wide range of readers, the entries focus on the key themes in a clear and jargon-free fashion. Each volume works independently to provide an overview of a period, opening with an introduction to the period and concluding with a timeline of major events and full bibliography. With 100 essays sweeping across the history of Western philosophy of religion in five volumes, this set is an indispensable resource for anyone conducting research or teaching in one of the most exciting and vibrant fields in philosophy.

Check Your Progress III
Note: Use the space provided for your answers.
1. Who are the "masters of suspicion"? Why are they called so?
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2. Give the significance of the book edited by Graham Oppy and Nick Trakakis?
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4.8   LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have studied a historical over-view of the philosophy of religion. In fact, it must be mentioned, that right from the beginning of philosophy, themes related to God and religion has emerged directly and indirectly. We have studied some significant persons, chosen almost arbitrarily, who have contributed to the philosophy of religion and then given a very general list of the important persons involved.

4.9   KEYWORDS

Das Heilige: Rudolf Otto's most famous work is The Idea of the Holy, published first in 1917 as Das Heilige - Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen (The Holy - On the Irrational in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational). The book defines the concept of the holy as that which is numinous. Otto explained the numinous as a "non-rational, non-sensory experience or feeling whose primary and immediate object is outside the self". He coined this new term based on the Latin numen (deity). The numinous is a mystery (Latin: mysterium) that is both terrifying (tremendum) and fascinating (fascinans) at the same time. It also sets a paradigm for the study of religion that focuses on the need to realize the religious as a non-reducible, original category in its own right. This paradigm was under much attack between approximately 1950 and 1990 but has made a strong comeback since then, after its phenomenological aspects have become more apparent, and written about by Karl Rahner's presentation of man as a being of transcendence.

Hierophany: A visible manifestation of God to humankind.

Mana: Mana is an indigenous Pacific islander concept of an impersonal force or quality that resides in people, animals, and (debatably) inanimate objects. The word is a cognate in many Oceanic languages, including Melanesian, Polynesian, and Micronesian.

4.10   FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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MPYE – 010

Philosophy of Religion

Block 2

FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGION

UNIT 1
Religious Experience

UNIT 2
Religious Language

UNIT 3
Religious Structures and Institutions

UNIT 4
Religious Tolerance

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Religious Experience, as the core of a religion, has an important role in the life of a believer. Several factors that determine Religious Experience contribute to its uniqueness. Faith and Belief in the Divine, with a firm quest for the Divine is a basic necessity to prepare oneself for a Religious Experience, although the experience itself may dawn at the most unexpected moment. While some experiences are private, a few are public, but the quality of the Religious Experience is often known through the life one lives thereafter. Giving some samples of persons who have had Religious Experience, this unit has shown how Religious Experience also brings about a dynamic and charismatic effect in the surrounding. Religious language posed a problem for the thinkers as understanding the meaning of religious experience. While in the medieval period, the issue of understanding the religious language was confined to the discussions of univocal, equivocal and analogical ways, in the modern period, the discussion was with respect to the meaningfulness and cognitive nature of religious language. The project of Logical Positivists and the challenges of verification and falsification principle made the meaningfulness of religious language in jeopardy. Religious structures thus attempt to make an indelible impact in the various dimensions of life of the believer and the believing community.

Unit 1 presents religious experience from a philosophic perspective with a discussion on relevant concepts. Religious experiences are basic to religions and so should be studied carefully. Religious experiences are often understood better by believers, and it is most likely easy for them to appreciate them. Although non-believers may be able to get knowledge of such experiences, they are often not considered too important in their sight. Our aim in this unit is to get a few glimpses of religious experiences, neither as believers or non-believers, but as academicians who seek to understand philosophy of religion.

Unit 2 gives details of the need and importance of philosophical reflection with respect to the religious language. It also carries out the historical and philosophical significance of the introspection thinkers carried out with respect to religious language. As one or the other religion is prevalent in entire humanity as such at all times, we will be carrying out an overall study of the different thinkers' viewpoints with respect to religious language in both the Indian and Western tradition.

Unit 3 attempts to understand religious structures and their operational patterns from a philosophic perspective. Religious structures vary from religion to religion but some of the common features found in these structures can be identified. In this unit, some of these structures found in many religions have been presented and discussed.

Unit 4 surveys the historical events and moments highlighting the religious tolerance. It gives a background description from the historical point of view the existence of religious tolerance from both Western and Indian contexts. In a discourse on philosophy of religion, the historical factors that are presented in the present unit would not be out of track. It would be a useful tool

as a background and foundational data for making a speculative and idealistic discourse on religious tolerance. It gives the philosophers a concrete practice of a theory or discourse on religious tolerance.

UNIT 1   RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Contents

1.0   OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to understand religious experience from a philosophic perspective. Religious experiences are basic to religions and so should be studied carefully. Religious experiences are often understood better by believers, and it is most likely easy for them to appreciate them. Although non-believers may be able to get knowledge of such experiences, they are often not considered too important in their sight. Our aim in this unit is to get a few glimpses of religious experiences, neither as believers or non-believers, but as academicians who seek to understand philosophy of religion. Thus by the end of this unit, you should be able:
- To understand the relevant concepts of religious experiences
- To differentiate them from ordinary experiences
- To be able to know the various types and the factors involved in religious experiences

1.1   INTRODUCTION

We humans are primarily dependent beings, pushing us into relationships. Relationships with human beings create societies and communities, and relationships with God or the Divine create religions. Our experiences in human relationships are quite often paradoxical. We experience unity and estrangement, power and dependency, membership in the society and alienation from it. Such paradoxical experiences cause us also to look beyond human relationships. One such act of 'looking beyond' is religious experience. Religious Experiences are the core of any religion. They inspire and act as the model to be followed. Very often Religious Experiences give an impetus to the individual or the community (for instance, the Pentecostal experience to the Disciples of Jesus, or the Buddha experience) and take the community ahead. As the nucleus or the epicentre of a religion, Religious Experience is carefully guarded and held high within the religious tradition. It is an ideal to be looked up to.

Religious experience is defined in many different ways by various scholars, each emphasizing a particular aspect. Norman Habel understands Religious Experience as out of the ordinary type of

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experiences in which, within the setting of a particular religious tradition, a believer enters into a relationship with the sacred, or becomes aware of it. Such experiences could be either mediated (through rituals, special persons, religious groups, totemic objects, nature etc) or immediate (without any intervening agency)

In today's context of religions becoming rigid and institutionalized, growing fundamentalism and orthodoxy, it is essential to understand and relook at Religious Experiences of various traditions. Religious Experiences are also important as they justify religious beliefs (for instance, they are used to justify the existence of God). From a philosophical perspective, there is also a need to discover the importance, the factors and the wisdom embedded in Religious Experiences. This unit is a help and an introduction to such a process of discovery.

1.2   THE NEED FOR RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

Why do human beings enter into a relationship with sacred things? There are various theories answering this question. According to Emile Durkheim, humans seek religious experiences because humans are filled both with uncertainty and powerlessness, and dramatic and traumatic experiences teach them of their limited power (natural happenings). This view appears to be one-sided view. To say that the cosmic or natural objects or events serve only to symbolize social power is a bit far-fetched. According to Van der Leeuw, not only the unusual in nature, but also "a manifestation of immutably ordered regularity" can become a revelation of power- the power that lies behind ordinary things, "the power of the sacred world above".

According to N.D.Fustel de Coulanges, in his book The Ancient City, there are two sources of religion – internal and external. The internal sources refer to the psychological projections of humans and religion expresses the subjective elements of their experience. The external factors refer to the reactions to natural forces. These objective and subjective aspects of reality experienced by humans are concerned with power(s) and religion is concerned with this. It seeks a deeper ground of reality or existence.

According to Edward Sapir, an American Anthropologist, humans seek religion and religious experience because they continuously seek spiritual serenity beyond the humdrum, confusion and the dangers of everyday life. There is a deep realization that ultimately we are powerless in this world and so, in order to gain some mystical security, one associates oneself with what can never be known. This leads to religious experience and religion. When this response to the ultimate sacredness is institutionalized in thought, practice and organization, there is religion. According to Paul Tillich, humans encounter the holy, something beyond themselves. This 'something beyond' draws them closer to sacred things. In a religious experience, the centrality lies in this encounter with the Ultimacy.

1.3   TYPES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

Religious experiences can be classified into four types: mystical, paranormal, charismatic, and regenerative.

Mystical Experiences

Mystical experiences occur when the believer discovers that he or she is not distinct from the cosmos, the deity or the other reality, but one with it. Although very difficult to define mysticism, it could be said to be an experience of union with the divine. Herein, there is no "otherness" and the believer becomes one with the transcendent. The believer is able to identify oneself completely with the other reality. Underhill defines Mysticism as "the science of ultimates, the science of union with the Absolute, and nothing else, and that the mystic is the person who attains to this union, not the person who talks about it. Not to know about, but to Be, is the mark of the real initiate." William James describes four characteristics of mystical experiences – noetic, ineffability, transcience and passivity, in his The Varieties of Religious Experience

Noetic: This is the cognitive aspect. Cognition could be understood as the reasoning part of the mind, but here it is not to be understood as simple rationality, but is to be understood as wisdom. Wisdom is a power of discernment that is able to assess the facts properly (its position, value and function), ranks them and organizes them into meaningful entities. This is the "insight" giving stage – revelations, illuminations, significant and important.

Ineffability: Words cannot sufficiently express the experience. It has to be experienced first hand and it cannot be transferred to another. A musical ear can experience a symphony and it cannot describe the experience to another and ask him/her to get that same experience. Very often the mystic finds that his experiences are given incompetent treatment.

Transcience: Mystic experiences do not last long. Their occurrence is short-lived. (for example an apparition or a vision). Those who have an experience report the feeling of being in the present and have a distinct awareness of it.

Passivity: The seeker may take efforts to reach a stage where she/he can receive an experience, but when the experience occurs, the seeker is overtaken or overpowered by a superior force. For instance, one who is in trance has no more control over the self, a superior force has taken over. There could be then a secondary or alternative personality, such as prophetic speech, automatic writing, or the mediumistic trace. (take the e.g of *sami aadudal*)

All mystical experiences are not the same. There are unique characteristics of each type of mysticism. Zaeher identifies two distinctively different mystical experiences: natural and religious mystical experiences. Nature mystical Experiences (or panenhenic or nature mysticism) are those in which one may experience a deep oneness with nature. Such experiences are different from the typical religious mysticism, because they are independent of any particular tradition. They are however, deeply spiritual experiences that can have lasting effects on those who experience them.

Even in religious mystical experiences not all experiences are the same. One may experience an identity with an impersonal absolute (monistic mysticism) as found in Advaita Vedanta. The Christians, would experience mysticism as an union or intimate relationship with a transcendent, personal Creator God. Such experiences depend much on their understanding of God or the Divine. In many such religious experiences, an experience of travelling beyond the body is also felt and an ecstasy is deeply realised. The mystic feels that his/her soul/spirit has left the body

and is now experiencing transcendental realities. Such an experience is also a characteristic of the shaman.

Paranormal experiences
These are less intense experiences unlike mystical experiences. It is also possible that sometimes these experiences can go unnoticed as in the case of unconscious telepathy. They can be described just as other ordinary experiences. However, they are not ordinary experiences either as they occur without the usual involvement of the senses. For instance, telepathy and clairvoyance take place without the usual means of communication. Some other paranormal phenomena like psychokinesis, precognition, materialization and levitation occur without the usual framework of time, space, and matter.

However, these experiences are considered less religious than that of mystical experiences. The above could be considered as one type of paranormal experience. A second type which involves certain religious phenomena is normally called spiritualistic. Apparitions or ghosts, mediumistic communications, out-of-the-body experiences come under this category. Some would understand this phenomenon as evidence for the reality of a spirit-world and life-after-death. Such types of experiences are normally discouraged in organized religions. For instance, Buddhism recognizes that in the path to enlightenment, such experiences would occur but these are to be left behind considering them as distractions and hurdles. In these experiences, God is considered to be outside, other than or beyond the believer. The sacred power takes possession of the believer and uses it as a medium to communicate messages to the outside world.

Charismatic experiences
Charismata is used to mean gifts or blessings given to individuals by God. In theistic religions, this is considered to be upon the founders, prophets, leaders and heroes of religions or religious movements. For instance, miracles, prophesying the future, healing ecstatic praying, exorcism etc are considered to be gifts bestowed upon a few by God. The Christians term this as 'spiritual gifts'. A few examples of this type of religious experience are recorded in the New Testament of the Bible – tongues-speaking, prophecy, revelatory dreams, knowing others' thoughts, healing powers, miracles etc. Those bestowed with such gifts are holy men and women. They are found in almost all religious traditions – prophets and saints in Judeo-Christian tradition, walis in popular Islam, sheiks and pirs in Sufi Islamic traditions, gurus, sadhus, acharyas in Hinduism. In non-theistic religions like Buddhism, monks or holy persons also have charismatic experiences. These are blessings of the Dhamma and should not be used for personal gains but for compassionate purposes only for the well-being of humanity.

Max Weber, in his "The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation, defines Charisma as "... a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader".

According to him, Charisma has three characteristics:
Charisma was unusual – radically different from the routine and the ordinary and everyday

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Charisma was spontaneous- in contrast to stable, established forms and it is a source of new forms and new movements

Charisma was creative in a fundamental sociological sense.

Charismatic experiences do not focus only on powers of healing, visions, speaking-in-tongues, revivals, messiah cults and prophetic movements. These, although extraordinary spiritual gifts, are not the only gifts. Other less-spoken but still important gifts such as wisdom, courage, peace of mind are also important in charismatic religious experience and these are also found in charismatic people. William James, pondering on saintliness affirms these gifts too. The charismatic people have classic signs of sanctity – devotness, purity, tenderness and charity, asceticism and poverty etc. James also warns that these elements can sometimes be overdone by excesses, due to over zealous and obsessive or fanatic thinking. Being aware of such extreme excesses, Buddha warned his followers and asked them to take a moderate midway.

Regenerative Experiences

One other category of religious experience is the experience of being 'born again'. There are persons who experience being renewed, revived or 'filled with new life'. Such persons take a new U-turn in their lives, begin fresh, add hope and new meaning into their lives and their quality of life improves. Such experiences could be placed under the category of regenerative experiences. Such experiences may be sudden or gradual, but in themselves are less extraordinary than paranormal and charismatic experiences.

Regenerative experiences occur at the time when there is a two-fold consciousness that happens simultaneously - A creature-consciousness and a Creator-consciousness. When one becomes aware of one's own state of life in the beginning and in the present, guilt and remorse occur. The person realises his/her own status in the world - a creature, a created being. The person then also becomes aware of the Creator. This awareness is accompanied with feelings of fear and dread but also with feelings of attraction and fascination. This is Creator consciousness. The person is overpowered with a sense of worthlessness in the presence of the majestic Creator. When one experiences this, the need for conversion and regeneration grows and the response of the person is an arousing or an awakening within- the experience of beginning a new life. This type of experience is generally had by ordinary people who continually gain meaning through such experiences.

Some also 'turn over a new leaf' when they have some escape or deliverance from evil, or bad health, or a sudden or gradual escape from death or injury. Such events are considered as more-than-natural event, and the one who experiences (or the community that experiences) attribute this to God being in favour of them. Such regenerative experiences bring about a religious rebirth, not only in the spiritual and physical life, but more visibly in their moral lives.

Another variety of regenerative experience is the inner feeling of compulsion to follow a new way of life, or to take up a new course of action. This feeling is accompanied by a strong conviction that although the future course is unclear and the task ahead is risky, strength and guidance from the divine would follow. The faith in a never-abandoning God and the continued assurance of the grace of God makes this experience stronger. This is sometimes called as a 'call', or a 'vocation' or 'divine commissioning', 'God's will', etc. Another word that is also

5

used for such experiences is Spiritual Awakening. It is also used to denote any of the above four mentioned religious experiences.

1.4   FACTORS INVOLVED IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

There can be several factors involved in Religious Experience which can be of help in identifying such experiences. With the help of a few thinkers, such factors are identified in this section.

Richard Swinburne

In his book Faith and Reason, Richard Swinburne asserts that all Religious Experiences fall into five categories. The first category is a Religious Experience in which a believer 'sees the hand of God at work'. Such experiences are explicable and are public in nature. E.g.. looking at a beautiful sunset. The second category of Religious Experience is one which is still in the public domain but is an unusual event that is considered breaching the natural law. E.g. walking on water. The third category is a private Religious Experience which is describable in a normal language. E.g. Jacob's vision of a ladder in the Old Testament of the Bible. The fourth category is a private Religious Experience but one that is indescribable. E.g. a mystical experience. The fifth category is more general. It is non-specific and general in nature. This category is for such Religious Experiences where one feels the working of God in one's own life.

Martin Buber

We have two types of relationships: I-It and I-thou. As members of this world, we have a relationship with the world which is slightly more than a mere technical or mechanical relationship. An I-It type of relationship is a relationship in which I, the subject, view the other as an object. An I-thou type of relationship is a relationship in which I treat the other also as a subject. This second type of relationship is primary in human experiences, which also extends to

the non-human world, in which an integrated approach is found – emotive, imaginative, intuitive, rational etc. In an I-Thou relationship, there is a response to a Presence, which is beyond the visible objects or beyond appearances. Religious experiences are such responses to the Presence, that is beyond sense-perception and ordinary common-sense knowledge.

Georg Simmel

Our ordinary experiences involve attitudes and relationships. When such attitudes and relationships are deepened, refined or heightened, different experiences occur. Science occurs as a refinement and a completion of the various tools and methods used in ordinary life situations. An artistic experience occurs when the aesthetic elements get focused, isolated and heightened. A religious experience occurs when faith and relationships are isolated and heightened. Religion is based on relationship. In this isolated and heightened relationship, there is a peculiar mixture found. Selfless surrender and fervent desire, humility and glorification, concreteness of the senses and abstractness of the spiritual take place in religious experiences.

Joachim Wach

Wach, a sociologist, offers four universal criteria involved in identifying a religious experience: First: In religious experience, a single or finite phenomenon is not responded to, but what is realized is the foundation or the base upon which our world of experience is built upon. This is experienced as the ultimate reality. Second: In this experience, what is involved is not exclusively the mind or the will, but the total and integrated, holistic personality. Third: Religious experience is one that is intense of the highest order that humans are capable of. All expressions of religious experience may not be that intense but are pointers towards this factor. This intensity can be found in religious loyalty. Of all other loyalties, religious loyalty wins the best. Fourth: Religious experience is different from other experiences as it involves not mere admiration as in aesthetic experience, but an imperative, a commitment leading to action and morality.

Emile Durkheim

Religious experience is an experience of the sacred. Developing this idea of the sacred, Durkheim in his book The Elementary Forms of the Religious life, brings out the Characteristics of the sacred. Fundamentally, he argues that the sacred is different and opposed to the profane. Sacred is superior to the profane: Human experience can be divided into two: Sacred and the profane. The sacred is superior to the profane in dignity and it expresses a superior seriousness. Rites and rituals in religions are not performed primarily to achieve something, but to express an attitude. Religion is an attitude towards the sacred and it has no other hidden agenda.

The Sacred recognises the belief in a power or force. When sacredness is attached to a symbol, or an object, it is indeed to the power that it symbolises or that it holds. The Sacred is ambiguous. The Sacred contains both contrasting factors: physical and moral, human and cosmic or natural, positive and negative, propitious and unpropitious, attractive and repugnant, helpful and dangerous to humans. The Sacred is non-utilitarian. Work belongs to the realm of the profane. Utility and everyday affairs do not belong to the space of sacredness. The Sacred is non-empirical. Sacred quality is not intrinsic to objects but is conferred on them by religious thought and feeling. It is superimposed upon it. The Sacred does not involve knowledge. It is not a knowledge that is based on the experiences of the senses. The Sacred strengthens and sustains

the believers. Worshippers and believers draw strength from the sacred, because it exalts them and raises them above their own selves. The Sacred makes a demand on the believer and the worshipper. There are some obligations made on the believer, especially on the moral side. Certain do's and don'ts come up on the believer, as part of the understanding of the sacred.

Rudolf Otto

There are three types of feelings: the feeling of dependence that arises from the fact that we are mere creatures and we are submerged and overwhelmed by our own nothingness, the feeling of religious dread or awe, and the feeling of longing for the transcendent being that fascinates us. Religious Experience is an experience of these three feelings. In his book The Idea of the Holy, Otto analyzes the term holy. Holy or Numinous cannot be reduced to mere ethical norms; it is somethng beyond rational or ethical goodness. Holy is close to Hb qadǒsh, Gk ayios and Lt sanctus or sacer. This refers to the "innermost core" of all religion. The holy is a "pre-eminently living force". An experience of the holy is an experience that involves awe. There is awe because of a great sense of mystery surrounding life – this can only be experienced in feelings. There is admiration combined with fear of the "wholly other". There is fear and admiration, horror and fascination, terror and attraction. The holy is thus "the *mysterium tremendum et fascinoscum*".

Check Your Progress II

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

1) What are the opinions of Richard Swinburne and Emile Durkehiem on Religious Experience?

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2) How does Rudolf Otto understand the *NUMINOUS*?

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1.5   METHODIC CULTIVATION OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

Yoga

The Indian system of Yoga has been known for its rigorous practices. Yoga attempts to bring to the fore the higher nature of the person and in that stage, he/she can have a the highest religious experience, called Samadhi. Yoga proposes eight limbs to attain this stage. The body, in Yoga, aids in this process of attainment of enlightenment. Breathing, exercises, diet, postures etc. cause the right atmosphere to reach a higher level of concentration, and consciousness. The practices prescribed in yoga help the mind to understand that it has a higher state of existence, a superconscious state, a state beyond reason. This is a mystical state.

Buddhism

The Buddhists use Dhyana to denote higher states of contemplation. There are four stages in Dhyana. In the first stage, the mind concentrates on one point. It excludes desire, but not discernment or judgment. This is still intellectual. In the second stage, the intellectual functions are also excluded and there is a satisfaction of a sense of unity that remains. In the third stage, even this satisfaction is excluded and there is an indifference, along with memory and self-consciousness. In the last stage, the indifference, memory, and self-consciousness are perfected. Nirvana is then attained, where there exists absolutely nothing.

Sufism

The highest religious experience is cultivated by detachments. Detaching from the heart all that is not God, and meditation of God is the method of the sufis. A contemplative life that consists of humble prayers and on complete meditations on God is necessary for religious experience. Intuitions and revelations precede the highest – namely, a total absorption in God.

Christianity

"Orison" or meditation is the methodical elevation of the soul towards God. The first thing to be done is to detach the mind from outer sensations because they disturb the concentration of ideal things. The concentration on holy scenes, such as the spiritual exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola, would then fill the mind. This will lead eventually to move higher and even shed off these imageries. The consciousness is so enraptured that verbal description becomes impossible. This is 'union of love, as John of the Cross would term it, which is attained by 'dark contemplation'.

1.6   CASES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

A few representative examples of individual religious experiences from a few traditions and periods will show the intensity and the impact of the experiences on the individual and their communities

The Lutheran Experience

Martin Luther, an important figure of the 16th Century Protestant Reformation, was struck to ground by a bolt of lightening in a thunderstorm. He prayed to St Anne and vowed that he would become a monk if he was saved. He was saved and he joined the monastic life. As he grew, he was not satisfied with the medieval way to salvation that included confessions, charitable works, and sacraments. During 1513-19, while being at Wittenburg, he lectured elaborately more on the Psalms and letters to the Romans and Galatians. This helped him to realize and discover a new meaning of the Gospel of Christ. This was his religious experience. He now found an answer to his constant quest, namely, how can one stand in holiness before the demanding righteousness of a just God? He discovered that a life led by faith, which is itself a gift of God, is the answer. God justifies us by faith. This discovery made him feel like a new born person and he felt he entered paradise itself.

The Buddha Experience

Gautama Buddha, hailed from a noble family in India. As he grew up without knowing many realities of life, his first exposure to the harsh realities of life, pain and suffering, made him raise

several questions. Searching for the right and the most satisfying answers, he joined several others who were also in their spiritual sojourn. He gained extensive knowledge of the Vedas and the Upanishads, and practised extreme asceticism. However, even after six years, he could not find answers. Then, he sat in deep meditation with a determination to find answers for his search. During these meditations, he was enlightened. This unique religious experience that he had left on him and on the wider society a deep indelible mark. He had now moved to a state of pure consciousness. He understood and realized several realities, the chief of which being the Four Noble Truths. He shared this experience of enlightenment with others and this was the foundation of a new religious movement- Buddhism.

The Zen Experience

A Japanese version of Buddhism, this type of meditational practice is gaining more attention today. True reality is within oneself. When one experiences this, he/she would be able to understand the reality outside better. Such an experience is in Zen language – 'awakening'. This intuitive enlightenment comes only with a rigorous self-discipline under the care of a master. This self discipline has many forms – meditation, archery, judo, etc. This experience is unique and personal. A pure selfless being emerges at enlightenment, and one feels that all beings are primarily Buddhas.

The Pentecostal Experience

This religious experience is found in the Bible, Acts of the Apostles (2:4). The apostles and the disciples of Christ, filled with fear, locked themselves up in a room in Jerusalem. While being at intense prayer, they were suddenly filled with the Holy Spirit and they 'began to speak in other tongues'. They then opened the door, and now filled with courage and strength, spoke to the other Jews and many who heard them speak in their own language were astounded. In modern times the emphasis on such an experience is being found in many groups. Speaking in tongues, healing, ecstatic prayer, witnessing etc are expressions of such experiences.

Check Your Progress III

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

1) Can Religious Experience be attained through training?
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 2) Give a few cases of Religious Experiences.
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Religious Experience, as the core of a religion, has an important role in the life of a believer. Several factors that determine Religious Experience contribute to its uniqueness. Faith and Belief in the Divine, with a firm quest for the Divine is a basic necessity to prepare oneself for a Religious Experience, although the experience itself may dawn at the most unexpected moment. Although there are several types of Religious Experiences, all of these point to a term of relationship with the Divine. Such a relationship, when firm and strong, reaches a climax with a Religious Experience, and leaves a lasting impression in the mind of the one who receives it. It also leads to a different approach to life in the society. While some experiences are private, a few are public, but the quality of the Religious Experience is often known through the life one lives thereafter. This unit was an exposition of the various aspects of Religious Experiences – the need, the types, the factors involved, and its methodic cultivation. Giving some samples of persons who have had Religious Experience, this unit has shown how Religious Experience also brings about a dynamic and charismatic effect in the surrounding.

1.8 KEY WORDS

Religious Experience: an out-of-the-ordinary experience, within the setting of a religious tradition, in which the believer enters into a DEEP relationship with the Divine or God, either through some means or directly.

Numinous: holy

Mystical Experience: an experience in which the believer becomes "one" with the divine.

1.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 2　　RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

Contents

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this chapter is to have an understanding of the need and importance of philosophical reflection with respect to the religious language. This chapter carries out the historical and philosophical significance of the introspection thinkers carried out with respect to religious language. As one or the other religion is prevalent in entire humanity as such at all times, we will be carrying out an overall study of the different thinkers' viewpoints with respect to religious language in both the Indian and Western tradition. Thus, this chapter attempts to make the readers equip with the need and necessity of the philosophical reflection of religious language. At the end of this chapter, you may be in a position

- to have a basic understanding of the need of philosophical reflection of religious language
- to have acquainted with different philosophers' understanding on the issue of religious language
- to have a conceptual clarity of the different functions of religious language
- to have an overall grasp of the issue of religious language

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Why one is to study the nature of religious language? What is special about religious language? Or is religious language and ordinary language the same? Essentially, the discussion in religious language pertains to one basic issue as to what we can say about God. In the broadest sense, the religious language discussions are based on what is the nature and function of the language that is employed in religious literature. The discussion is carried out not only in western tradition, but also in Indian and in other traditions as well. I will try to focus on Indian and western traditions with respect to their concerns on the nature of religious language. In order to make this issue more concrete, let us try to take few examples and start the analysis. Find below some of the passages from Vedas and Bible

In the prayer to the cosmic Being, *'purusa'*, the prayer starts with the following description - "A thousand heads has the Universal man, Purusha; as also a thousand eyes and a thousand feet He

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has. He spreads over the earth on all sides and beyond it as far as ten fingers can count." (Purusa Sookta- Rigveda -10.90)

"The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. A righteous man may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all; he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken." (Psalm 34:15-20)

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'" (John 11:25-26)

What is the nature of these types of utterances? How do we make sense of these descriptions about the divinity? Or how are we to understand those religious utterances that talk about God. For example, how does God have thousand heads and thousand eyes and thousand feet? Similarly, what type of description it is, when we talk of God's eyes and ears? What does it mean to say that those who believe in God will live forever? Does it make sense? If so, how we should make sense of it?

In the context of religious language discussion, for those types of descriptions of God, which apparently do not have any such problem in understanding the meaning as well, there too we find it difficult to see how certain descriptions can be ascribed to God. Suppose, when we say that God is kind, good, merciful, loving, etc, do we mean it the same way as we use the terms for our ordinary human experiences like saying that person X is kind and loving or person Y is good. That means the attributes like kind, love, caring, good, etc carry the same meaning when we apply in the context of humans and divinity? If they carry the same meaning, then how do we differentiate Godly attributes with humans? If they are different, then how do we understand the meanings of kind and good with respect to God? The reason for such type of a problem is that God is considered to be one supreme reality without differences. If God is infinite and transcendent, then how that infinite, timeless and transcendent supreme power be predicated with qualities like kind, good, etc, which we ascribe to normal human beings?

More so, if they are attributes, are they essential or accidental attributes of God? If we apply the attribute of 'kind' to God, then does it mean the same like we say that 'X is kind'? Moreover, there is a possibility that 'X may not be kind as well, but can we think of God not being kind? This implies that the attributes we give to human beings may be an accidental one (without that attribute also, they can be), whereas the attributes we give to God cannot be accidental (without that attribute, it cannot be). It becomes an essential and inherent attribute of the God. These are some of the issues about which thinkers were concerned when they reflect upon the nature of religious language. In this context, when we use the language to describe God, when we predicate God, how are we to understand those utterances?

2.2 UNIVOCAL AND EQUIVOCAL ANALOGICAL

Thinkers, particularly religious philosophers differed on the way to understand the language used in religion in order to address the above mentioned issues. Traditionally, the answers to the process of understanding the religious language were done in three different modes.

Univocal language

This position states that one should have the same meaning in whichever context that word is employed. The words that are employed in the language carry the same meaning throughout irrespective of the context or situation in which it is used. For example, suppose I say, white board, white chalk, white sari, etc. in all these cases, the 'white' refers to the same thing, the color white. In the medieval thought, John Duns Scotus (1266-1308) proposed this particular view with respect to the religious language. In the context of religious language, this position argues that terms when they are used either with reference to God or with reference to human beings, must mean the same. If it doesn't be the same univocal meaning, it will be difficult to understand what it means in the context of God. This approach would argue that God is good in the same sense in which it is used in the human context. Suppose, the word 'kind' is used in a different sense as compared to it being used in a human context, then how could we ever understand what does it mean to say 'kind' in the context of God? But the basic problem of how the same predicate be attributed with the same meaning to God as well as human beings is a major problem for the univocalists to address.

Equivocal language

This position states that the words that are employed in the language carry different meanings depending upon the context and the situation in which it is being used. There can be two senses in which a word may mean differently in different context. One is called as *homonym*, where the same word actually refers to two or more things, which causes confusion in understanding its meaning. For example, the word 'Bat' is used to refer to cricket bat as well as to a flying mammal. Similarly, the word 'light' refers to objects not so heavy and at the same time; also refers to one physical property 'light'. While the equivocal nature with respect to such types of words can be sorted out by finding which meaning that word corresponds to, by understanding the context, the equivocal nature with respect to religious language takes the position that terms do mean differently with respect to God as against human contexts. As mentioned earlier, when we use the word 'kind' it cannot have the same meaning with respect to God and the human being. So, the meaning has to be different. If the meanings are different, then how can one make sense of the meaning when he makes a positive assertion about God that 'God is kind'? According to equivocalists, definitely it can't be the same sense as univocalists claim that there has to be only one sense of the word with respect to 'kind' in both the human and the divine context. The problem for equivocalits is that they cannot admit of single unique sense of the words employed in religious language, like the univocalists do, and at the same time, they have to tackle the problem of understanding the meaning of the word, if they have two different senses altogether with respect to divine and human context. And because there is a problem in making sense with respect to different senses of the word, one can think of the corollary of equivocal position that will lead to describe God in the negative way.

This position speaks of a negative way in understanding God. That is, we can be more certain of what God is not, rather than be certain of what God is. This element of thought was not quite prevalent in the West as in the case of Indian philosophy. In the Indian context, the Absolute is conceptualized as that which is beyond any definition. Sankaracharya (788 – 820) mentions in the commentaries of Brhadaranyaka Upanisad that words denote things through one or the other of the following: name, form action, distinction, genus and quality; but in Brahman (Absolute Reality) there is none of these differences and hence it cannot be described. Whatever

descriptions we have of the Supreme Being, it cannot be the true description. It is more prudent to describe in a negative way than the positive way. The path of describing Brahman in the negative as '*neti, neti*'(not this, not this) is a well established method of describing the Supreme Being in Indian tradition. Rabbi Moses Ben Maimon (Maimonides) (1135-1204) is one of the most famous proponents of this doctrine in the Western Medieval thought.

2.3   ANALOGICAL WAY

Analogical language:
This position tries to maintain a mid-way between the univocal and the negative approach of describing the Reality. In the medieval period, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was using this principle to explain our understandings with respect to predicates of God. Basically, analogy is used in language to show the similarity or the likeness between two entities or descriptions. Thomas Aquinas uses this principle to show the likeness between God and the humans. Aquinas subscribed to the view that God is not a being like any other being. Hence, the univocal function of language employed in religion, according to him, may not work. But, Aquinas at the same time does not want to take a purely negative way of understanding Godly attributes. He in a sense strikes a balance between the univocal and equivocal way of understanding the religious statements, which translates in to an analogical way.

In the Indian context too, an attempt was made to understand the religious language through a metaphorical or secondary meaning. While, the univocal meaning, which in Indian context is called as *vacyartha* (literal meaning), is not sufficient enough for the descriptions in relation to Divinity and the equivocal way resulting in the negative descriptions of Reality, some attempts were made to give a positive description without getting into the problem of univocal and equivocal way. The Indian grammarians came up with the concept of secondary meaning, which was adopted by some other Indian philosophical schools as well. These secondary meanings are called metaphorical meanings or *lakshyartha*. When the words in the sentences refer to their literal meaning, but such literal meaning does not appear to make sense and hence when one looks for the secondary meaning, then it is called as *lakshyartha*. Classic example is 'a hamlet in the river Ganges'. In this example, as there is no possibility of a hamlet being in the Ganges, we have to look for secondary meaning, which may suggest that the hamlet is very close to the bank of the river Ganges. Even in our daily utterances also, we use such types of expression. When we say, "Sachin Tendulkar is God of Cricket", what we mean is not a literal meaning of the words in the sentences, we may mean Suchin Tendulkar as being as close to perfect in playing Cricket.
This theory was quite important amongst all philosophical schools that try to describe the nature of ultimate reality which is in a sense beyond expression. "Metaphorical meanings which are based on the literal meanings are helpful in extending the range of expression without making the idea too vague for objective communication". Thus, there is a systematic and serious attempt to understand the religious language through the secondary meaning, thereby making the statements about God as meaningful.
Talking about Aquinas, he explains analogy in two different ways. One is the analogy of 'attribution' and the other is the analogy of 'proportionality'. Aquinas uses the analogy of 'attribution' to explain the attributes of God. Suppose we use the example, 'he is healthy' and another sentence 'medicine is healthy'. The way we use to say a person being healthy is not the same way we use to say medicine being healthy. While we use the word 'healthy' with respect to

4

person in a literal sense, we use the word 'healthy' with respect to the medicine in a causal sense. In the similar fashion, when we say that 'X is kind' and 'God is kind', we use them analogically. The analogical relation here means that as God is the cause of everything in the world, every predicate can be virtually attributed to Him. So, when we talk of attributes like kind, love, etc in human context, the same can be meaningfully applied in the context of Divine as well as He being the cause of all those predicates like love, kind, care, etc.

In the analogy of 'proportionality', it talks of a relative relationship between the God and its creatures. Suppose we say that a man and woman are faithful to each other and we also say that a dog is faithful. We for sure know that the way we mean that man and woman are faithful to each other is definitely not the same way in which we say that dog is faithful. But, at the same time, there is a similarity existing between those elements of faithfulness between the man and the woman and between the dog and the master that makes us to understand, analogically the idea of faithfulness that is exhibited in the dog as well. Just as the dog participates in the idea of faithfulness partially to its extent possible in proportion to human, similarly the humans participate proportionally in the divine attributes in proportion to God. John Hick (1922-) gives this example to illustrate the idea of proportionality.

2.4 LOGICAL POSITIVISTS AND WITTGENSTEIN

While the prominent discourse on religious language in the medieval period was with respect to the issue of how to understand the meaningfulness of religious utterances, there was not much debate to consider whether the religious utterances are 'really' meaningful. So, most of the time in the medieval period, there was not much issue with the question of cognitive content of religious language, the discussion was only to find out how to cognize the content of the religious language. The former issue, if religious language was meaningful at all, was taken more seriously in the 19th century, particularly taking the cue from David Hume's (1711 – 1776) fork. David Hume belonging to the empiricist tradition of philosophy, says regarding religion and divinity in his work *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* thus, "If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion."

This outright rejection of religious and metaphysical works by Hume as sophistry and illusion and which doesn't have any significant cognitive value, was carried further by the Logical Positivists. The Logical Positivists, also called as Vienna Circle, were a group of thinkers, philosophers who were primarily concerned with the truthfulness of any statement. They embarked on a project of coming out with a criteria of verification. They were bothered about finding the principle by which one can say that a statement X is meaningful or not. Their focus is on finding the principle which makes a statement to be meaningful and thereby sensical. And those statements which are not meaningful are deemed non-sensical and they are set aside as they will not have any cognitive value, that is, knowing those non-sensical statements will not have any improvement in our gaining of knowledge. The group was started by one philosopher

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by name Moritz Shlick (1882-1936) and some of the important thinkers of that group were Rudolph Karnap, Fredrich Wiseman, Otto Neurath, and others.

The significance of the logical positivists with respect to our discussion is that in their pursuit of showing the meaningful statements, they relegated any talk about God and Godly attributes as utterly meaningless. For them, the religious language is nonsensical in nature. While the equivocalists were rejecting the language of descriptions with respect to God in order to maintain *His* purity, the same cannot be said for Logical Positivists. They rejected the entire episode of religious utterances as nonsensical and meaningless, maybe without any serious commitment to the God's supreme and transcendent nature. The group influenced thinkers like A J Ayer who came out with a verifying principle to employ it in religious language to show that they are meaningless statements.

While we talk about Logical Positivists, we need to talk about a philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) who influenced the Logical Positivist School to a great extent, but, who by himself was not committed to their ideology. Wittgenstein's work *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (shortly *Tractatus)* mentioned clearly about the function and the limits of the language. According to him, the function of the language is to picture the reality and the sense of the language lies in its ability to mirror the world of experience. Any language which does not picture the reality is treated as non-sense and in this way; the religious language and even the metaphysical language were deemed non-sensical. Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus* says, "The *limits of my language* mean the limits of my world". In the same line, he says, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent". With this clear demonstration of the limits of language, Wittgenstein categorized the language of religion, morals, etc to the realm of non-sensical and meaningless. This phase of Wittgenstein can be marked as the *early* Wittgenstein.

While, the logical positivists thought that non-sensical statements do not have any significant purpose in our life and hence statements about God do not have any specific meaning and hence useless, but, Wittgenstein himself was maintaining that that which is meaningless and non-sensical is what matters most. This difference in position with respect to the significance of non-sense leads to the friction between Wittgenstein and Logical Positivists. We will come back to this enigmatic philosopher later when we are to discuss a position totally against the Logical Positivists' position. However, taking the cue from *early* Wittgenstein, Logical Positivists proceeded further. According to Logical Positivism, there are two types of sentences which have meaning. One is the Analytic propositions and the other is the synthetic propositions. Analytic propositions are those meaningful propositions which derive their meaning by the virtue of their definitions. Broadly, mathematical and logical statements do come under this category, e.g. 3+3 = 6. Synthetic propositions are those meaningful propositions which derive their meaning on the basis of our sense experience. They are meaningful because we can able to confirm the sentence's meaning on the basis of the possibility of our sense experiences. Example, this grass is green; There is a railway track by the side of my house, etc. Since religious statements do not fit in any of these two categories, they are relegated as meaningless.

2.5   VERIFICATION PRINCIPLE AND FALSIFICATION PRINCIPLE

Two principles made a strong case against the meaningful nature of religious language. One is the 'verification principle' of A J Ayer and the other is the 'falsification principle' of Anthony Flew.

A J Ayer (1910-1989), was a British philosopher who came out with the 'principle of verification'. For him, 'A statement which cannot be conclusively verified cannot be verified at all. It is simply devoid of any meaning.' If we adopt the two categories (analytic and synthetic propositions) alone to be meaningful, which was according to Ayer as well, the two possibilities of any sentence to be meaningful, then what can be the nature of the descriptions of God? Can statements about God are analytical or can it be synthetic? Ayer opines that since metaphysical and religious statements do not correspond to either analytical or synthetic, they are meaningless. They are non-sensical. And any utterances related to them do not carry any meaning and hence they are to be discarded. As A.J. Ayer says, "The term 'god' is a metaphysical term. And if 'god' is a metaphysical term, then it cannot even be probable that God exists. For to say that 'God exists' is to make a metaphysical utterance which cannot be either true or false. And by the same criterion, no sentence which purports to describe the nature of a transcendent god can possess any literal significance." Thus, Ayer does not only reject God's existence and any utterances related to God, but, rather he rejected any possibility of making religious utterances meaningful as those utterances do not come under the principles of verification. This has put the religious language as those set of meaningless sentences which are in the guise of language but do not have any feature necessary to be language.

Anthony Flew (1923-2010), another British philosopher, comes out with the idea of falsification. In his article, 'Theology and Falsification', Flew comes up with the idea that religious language are meaningless as they cannot be falsified. Falsifiability is the other side of the coin of the verifiability. Flew opined that religious statements can be cognitively meaningful, if we can able to think of some evidence that can falsify it. That is, if a statement has to be meaningful, then there should be a way to falsify that statement. If there is no way to falsify that statement, then that statement cannot be meaningful. Can religious statement be falsified? If falsified, then they are meaningful, if not, then according to Flew, they are meaningless.

Suppose we have a religious statement that "God loves all humans" and if we see so much of suffering happening in this world, (we do see!), then immediately we question that if God loves all humans, then why there should be so much suffering. If the answer is that the God loves all human beings is false, then Flew would accept that it is a meaningful language and therefore the religious language is meaningful. But, most of the times, the religious believers will not accept that God loves all humans as false, though there is lots of suffering. On the other hand, they may try to say that the way God loves us is different from the way we understand love. This in a sense either suggests that the words are equivocal, used in different meanings or more so, suggests that there is no way to falsify this statement, hence according to Flew meaningless.

The non-cognitive nature of religious language is because of the reason that it cannot substantiate its position with respect to verification and falsification criteria. Is there any other way, by which we can prove that religious statements are cognitive? Or is proving that religious language as cognitive is the only way to make them as meaningful?

2.6 RESPONSES TO VERIFICATION AND FALSIFICATION PRINCIPLE

Religious thinkers and philosophers tried to defend their position against verification and falsification principles. It is not that verification principle is an error proof principle. Though, I do not want to go to the intricacies of the argument, but it is suffice to say that Ayer's verification principle faced serious objections. One rudimentary refutation is that the statement of the principle of verification itself cannot be verified according to the principle of verification. Moreover, Ayer's position with respect to genuine factual proposition, that is, the principle of verification for a statement, which was articulated in both his first and more sophisticated version in the second edition of his book *Language, Truth and Logic* has been questioned and rejected.

With the rejection of the verification principle, how can one understand the religious language? The rejection of verification principle also suggests that one need not take religious utterances as purely meaningless. The meaninglessness of religious language is only on the basis of verification principle and if the verification principle itself is refuted, then it indirectly suggests at least the possibility of religious utterances being meaningful. So, how can the religious utterances be meaningful? There are different strands of thought in relation to the aspect of finding the meaningfulness of religious language as against the verification and falsification criteria.

Paul Tillich (1886-1965), understands the meaning of religious language with a difference he made between signs and symbols. Let us take the case of a bottle written on top that it contains 'sugar'. This is a sign for Tillich because it merely signifies what is contained in the bottle. The meaning of the sign is derived from what is contained in the bottle, whereas, a symbol, like 'Aum' or 'Cross' do not only signify the divinity, but also participates in it. Put it in this way, the symbol 'Aum' or 'Cross' is as much sacred as the divinity itself, like our national flag has as much prestige as the nation itself. Our national flag symbolizes the nation. It participates in the prestige of the nation. Paul Tillich through these and similar examples was trying to show that religious language does not operate like a sign, which merely signifies like other ordinary language. Religious language participates in symbolizing the divinity. This suggests that the meaningfulness of the religious language has to be looked not only from the perspective of its significations; rather it should also be looked from its symbolizing nature. This means, the religious language's meaningfulness should not be based upon its verifiability criteria alone, but, its meaningfulness depends upon the symbolizing nature of the language itself, that is, what it means to the believers' whey they use the religious language.

Remember Ludwig Wittgenstein, who made a significant contribution to Logical Positivists thought. The same philosopher, in his *later* phase had come up with another work *Philosophical Investigations*, which takes a different turn with respect to the nature of language and functions. While, Wittgenstein in his earlier stage maintained that language has sole function to perform that of picturing the reality and those language utterances which cannot perform such function is relegated as meaningless and non-sensical. Whereas, in the later stage, Wittgenstein denounced that role for language and came up with the notion that language have multiple functions to perform. To understand the meaning of an utterance in the language is to see, how it is being employed in the given context. He calls this aspect of language as language-game. The concept

of language-game has played a significant role in Wittgenstein's later philosophy. He arrived at this conception with the help of certain similarities between the various uses of language and the rules of various games. Just as there are varieties of games there are also varieties in linguistic usage. Any game for that matter is guided by a set of rules. Similarly, according to Wittgenstein, every linguistic-usage is guided by certain rules. For example, trebling a ball with hands is an allowed move in basketball, but the same is treated as a foul in football. A foul is nothing but trespassing of a rule which is established by way of a convention. What is more important in this game analogy is that a participant's view of the game is different from that of an observer. This twist in the position of the language broadens the discussion related to the understanding of religious language. The basic question now changes to why the meaningfulness of religious language should always be oriented towards whether it is verifiable or falsifiable? Rather the meaningfulness of the religious utterances and beliefs lies in the way it is being *used*. The crux of the argument is that language does not work on the basis of its meaning, whether it makes sense or not, rather it works on the basis of how it is used in our life.

What is the significance of language-game for our understanding of religious language? Wittgenstein maintains that the language employed in religious utterances need not be seen whether it corroborates with the facts or not. Let us take the examples with which we started. How does God have thousand heads and thousand eyes and thousand feet? Similarly, what type of description it is, when we talk of God's eyes and ears? What does it mean to say that those who believe in God will live forever? Does it make sense? If so, how we should make sense of it? For these types of religious statements, the sense do not depend upon if they are corroborating with the facts – that is, testing if a religious believer will ever die or not; or testing if God really has ears and eyes or not? These religious statements make sense by the way it regulates the person's (believer) life.

R.D. Braithwaite (1900-1990) believed that religious statements are moral in content and can therefore be verified as they can result in change of behaviour. While Wittgenstein gave the room for understanding religious utterances from a different standpoint away from the Logical Positivist traditions, by making the meaningfulness of the language on the basis of its use, Braithwaite extended this argument further by maintaining that the use of religious language lies in its moral content. In the similar vein to Wittgenstein, Braithwaite argued that religious assertions are based upon a commitment to live life in a particular way. Like Wittgenstein, he said that religious believers need not have to think whether the historical accounts of religious utterances are verifiable or not. For example, a Hindu need not really have to verify when Krishna was born and where He was born, similarly for Christianity as well. What really matters for him is that how Krishna wants us to live and what qualities and attitudes we have to inculcate in order to lead a religious form of life.

Similarly, for Flew's falsification principle as well, there are a good number of responses from the theological and philosophical community. One of the answers to the problem of Flew's falsification problem was given by R M Hare (1919 – 2002) an English moral philosopher. Hare suggested that instead of looking at religious statements to be capable of falsified or not, we have to see them as the point of reference from where the explanations, verifiability, falsifiability makes sense. That means, he is suggesting that religious language are in a sense beyond scientific cognition. Hare calls the religious statements are the outcome of our experience, which

he calls as *blik*. A *blik* according to him is an 'unverifiable and unfalsifiable interpretation of one's experience. Hare says, ". . . it is by our bilks that we decide what is and what is not an explanation." According to Hare, religious people have a religious *blik*. The religious people make their utterances from this religious blip standpoint. Hare explains his position through the parable of *Paranoid*. So, to get in the idea of falsifiability and verifiability of religious utterances do not make sense, because those criteria are offered from a different *blik* altogether, maybe a scientific *blik*. In a sense, Hare is agreeing to Flew's falsifiability position, but he may not agree to Flew's position of setting aside religious statements as meaningless and nonsense. What he agrees with is that it may be meaningless and nonsense from the scientific *bliks*, but, it may not be from the religious *blik*.

B G Mitchell (1917) was trying to respond to Flew's position from a slightly different angle. He comes up with the parable of *Stranger* and tries to show that religious utterances do have cognitive meaning, but the truthfulness or falsity will be known only at the end. John Hick (1922) also tries to make a similar position when he says that all the matters of faith will be verified at the end of time. His theory thus suggests that religious statements are verifiable, but not in the present situation, but at the end of time, those beliefs can be verified. His theory is called as Eschatological Verification. John Hick in his work *Faith and Knowledge* uses the allegory of the Quest for Celestial City. In this, he narrates that a theist and atheist are walking on the same road. While the theists believe that there is a destination, a Celestial City, the atheists believes that there is no final destination and it is an endless road. The point is, if there really is a destination, then the theists belief is proved right, but, if there is no destination on the endless road, the atheists position cannot be justified as the road is endless, it can never be verified.

Thus, one can see a growth of literature in the philosophical reflection of religious language as possible answers and solutions keep sprouting from very many sources regarding the meaningfulness nature of religious language. In the attempt to defend and support the meaningfulness of religious language against the strict scientific criteria of verifiability and falisifiability, thinkers come out with novel and fresh way of looking at the whole issue. The way Wittgenstein showed with respect to the use of religious language takes us beyond the narrow confinements of issues related merely to the cognitivity of religious utterances. It in fact, leads to further discussions above and beyond the cognitivity of religious assertions that include understanding the multiple uses of religious utterances. The discourse pertaining to religious language thus gets enriched by these different contributors and one can take the finer aspect of philosophical speculations and sophisticated arguments in their works that shall generate a great amount of interest for any student of philosophy.

2.7   LET US SUM UP

In this chapter, we tried to understand the nature of religious language. Religious language posed a problem for the thinkers as understanding the meaning of the religious language was taken to be a serious issue of discussion. While in the medieval period, the issue of understanding the religious language was confined to the discussions of univocal, equivocal and analogical ways, in the modern period, the discussion was with respect to the meaningfulness and cognitive nature of religious language. The project of Logical Positivists and the challenges of verification and falsification principle made the meaningfulness of religious language in jeopardy. However,

thinkers like Wittgenstein, Tillich, Hare, Hick, and all tried to resist this challenge by offering different possible solutions to the problem by having a diverse perspective with respect to meaningfulness of religious language. The discourse pertaining to religious language expanded its domain, and still continues to generate a very high and interesting amount of literature in this domain of study.

2.8 KEY WORDS

Vachyartha or abhidhaa - Primary meaning or literal meaning. For example – the word 'pot' referring to the actual entity pot.
Lakshyartha – Secondary meaning or metaphorical meaning.
Non-sensical – Those sentences which cannot be verified
Blik – Unverifiable and Unfalsifiable interpretation of one's life

2.9   FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 3 RELIGIOUS STRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONS

Contents

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit is to understand religious structures and their operational patterns from a philosophic perspective. Religious structures vary from religion to religion but some of the common features found in these structures can be identified. In this unit, some of these structures found in many religions have been presented and discussed. We except that by the end of this Unit the student should be able:

- To understand some of the religious structures present and operational in religions
- To identify key ideas and world views found in these structures
- To be able to critically analyse religious structures and institutions

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In a world of diverse and various religious forms and expressions, it is pertinent to observe, understand and appreciate the various philosophies underlying these. The undercurrents of many of these religions find an outward manifestation both formally and informally. Dealing with formal expressions, one would find quite often strict and rigid structures within which the believer is 'tamed' or 'trained'. Some of these expressions or structures undergo changes as they encounter changing times and cultures, but some become too difficult to change, for they become institutions of their own within the larger framework of the religion. A study of a few important structures commonly found in some religions would enable us to understand the role that religions play in the growth process of each believer and the believing community.

3.2 PRIESTHOOD

This is one of the religious structures found in many religions. A priest is a religious official or animator or leader who is authorised by the community to perform religious rites, rituals and ceremonies, administer sacraments, or/and lead people spiritually. He/she is generally an expert in rituals, has some special acquired knowledge of spiritual matters, and has the techniques to conduct worship for believers that include incantations, prayers, sacrificial acts, songs, and other appeasing rituals.

1

Etymology

Etymologically, the word priest has its root in two words in Greek: a) presbyteros (Latin presbyter) meaning elder, and b) hiereus (Latin sacerdos) referring to priests who offer sacrifice, such as the priesthood of the Jewish Temple, or the priests of pagan gods. Christ is considered as the High Priest in Christianity. The Sanskrit word Purohita meant placed foremost or in front, Charged, Commissioned, and appointed. This word is usually used by some groups in Hinduism.

There are several words used to denote priests. While some are common, others are special words. For instance, a Lama is a Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism, Magus is a member of the Zoroastrian priesthood of the ancient Persians, Shaman is one who acts as a medium between the visible and the spirit world and practices sorcery for healing or divination. There are some terms which denote seniority and hierarchy in certain religions, such as archpriest, high priest, bishop, etc. In Hinduism, the Purohit is a priest, generally of the Brahmin caste. Priests in many Christian denominations follow a strict hierarchy, the authority being passed on from traditions. Some religions like Islam and Sikhism do not strictly have priests, but are led by community leaders. The Muslims have local spiritual and community leaders such as the imam, the mullah, the mufti, the qadi, etc. Buddhism and Jainism do not have priests but the monks officiate various rites and rituals. The priests in Zoroastrianism are called as Naviote. Many sects in Judaism do not have priests, but there are hereditary priests through paternal descent from the tribe of Levites, descendants of Aaron. Such priests are called as Kohanim. The rabbis are teachers and they hold congregational leadership.

The office of the priest

Priesthood, not uniformly found in all religions, is prevalent in many religions. A few common roles of priesthood are discussed below:

Initiator of dialogue between people and gods:

A priest initiates a dialogue between people and Gods through verbal prayers or non-verbal rituals or both. He stands as a reminder of the spiritual realm of the society and is often called upon to initiate the process of this spiritual aspect. This dialogue is at times initiated in a formalistic way, as in pujas or Masses, and at times informally, as in the case of raising spontaneous prayers at the funeral of a person (although even for such occasions, there are formal ways). As a leader of the religious community, it is his/her bounden duty to initiate such dialogues through prayers, rituals, feasts, ceremonies etc.

Intermediary between people and God:

A religious leader or a priest also plays the function of an intermediary and becomes the representative of the community. As a sacred agent, the priest is the visible representative of the gods or the divine beings. In ancient times, they were believed to hold the power to control or manipulate natural processes and events. As the community depends on nature for their survival, sustenance and well-being, the priests were held in high reverence, as they engaged in a sacramental relationship between humans and the divine. They were not like postmen or messengers, but were considered agents of sacred power. In some religions, the use of a sacred language is often used after formal training by the priests (or the priestly class). The work of the priest is to take to the gods the requests, the appeasements, the petitions, etc of the community and to return blessings, graces, commands etc. of the gods to the community. The priest is

considered to enjoy a social cum secular bond with the believing community and the Divine beings.

Defender of social and religious principles:
The office of priesthood has been considered important as it seeks to balance the sacred and the profane aspects of human society. Religious priests and leaders are also responsible for defending the social security of the believing community. When in distress or in trouble, defending the community from the forefront from attacks and criticisms, is also a key aspect in priesthood. Thus, during the Reformation period, priests of the Catholic Church tried to protect their faith and their faithful through various means. The social framework of a religious community is preserved through tradition and moral-spiritual values. The role of a priest assumes significance in such a social context too. Constant reminders, interpreting values and explicating social-spiritual-moral values and imparting them to the younger generations is one of the chief roles of the priest. He/she keeps the flock together. He is also responsible for perpetuating the sacred traditions, practices, doctrines and dogmas, beliefs and world views of the religion.

Powerful embodiment of valour and supreme order:
By his/her lifestyle, the priest embodies virtues and holiness and is a model to the rest of the believing community. They are courageous people who will stand for their faith and will even be willing to sacrifice their lives for the faith and supreme values. This would not mean that they are super-human beings, but leaders worth following. As people set apart, they held central positions in the social structure. This prestigious position as spiritual and social leaders is acknowledged when people turn to them in times of events beyond human control and where the divine or the sacred realm begins. At critical junctures of individuals, such as birth, puberty, marriage, death etc, and of communities such as flood, drought, famine etc, the priests are often sought after.

Ministers of public worship:
The priests are also ministers of public worship and involve in sacrifices, rites, sacraments, blessings and preside over rituals that re-enact creative, redemptive, or salvation events, etc. While others can wish blessings to one another, the priest, being sanctified and anointed, gives blessings to the faithful. The priest is also concerned with the practical aspects of religion, apart from preaching and teaching. He is also a spiritual administrator of the community.

Religious Power and priesthood
Priesthood is also associated with power, domination, guidance and charisma. Religious power is often exercised through religious priests or through other religious leaders. Clashes often have arisen over the supremacy of secular power over religious power or vice versa. Often secular power has sought its legitimacy from religious power. Conflicts between military nobility and priesthood have been recorded in history. Often clashes with the nobility- e.g states of Mesopotamia in Egypt and Palestine or the complete takeover of priestly positions by the secular nobility in the Hellenic city state, particularly in Rome, are some examples. In some countries, religious law reigns supreme and some religions are state religions. The power of the religious leaders in such countries (e.g. Iran) is greater than the governments. The theocratic states (a form of government in which a god or deity or religion is accepted as the highest rule of the state) consider their leaders to be divinely guided. Such governments are different from those governments that are only inspired and influenced by moral concepts of some religions.

Priesthood and seclusion:
In religions that consider priesthood seriously, the priests are often considered as 'special' and are 'set apart', for they are considered to be sacred. In Ancient Egypt and India, priests formed a separate caste. The Levites were a priestly tribe, instituted by the laws of Moses. In Catholicism, priests and bishops are entirely male and celibate. However, anyone can become a priest and the rigidity of a familial lineage is not present. This seclusion is often marked by a special ceremony called ordination. The priests are different in the sense, that their lifestyle and patterns are suited to the community.

This seclusion came with certain personal requirements too: Celibacy as in Roman Catholicism and the Arcakas of the Digambara sect in Jainism, asceticism in various Buddhist and Jain groups, personal religious experiences in some Protestant sects, etc.

3.3 THE SACRED

The concept
All religious structures have a strong concept of the sacred, which is distinguished from the secular or the profane. What 'belongs' to the Gods or the realm of the gods is considered as sacred. (The word sacrum means what belongs to the gods or was in their power). Hence, the deities and the images of Gods, the temples and other places, Godly values, the language used by the gods, etc. are considered sacred. The realms of the sacred are set apart by a boundary (real or virtual).

The word profanum, meant in front of the temple precincts. It was distinct from the location of the sacred. The Latin word profanare meant "to bring out" the offering "before the temple precinct" (the fanum) in which a sacrifice was performed. Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist, considered the concept of the sacred and the profane to be of the greatest importance while considering the characteristics of religion. According to him, "religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden".

Temporal aspects
Mircea Eliade gives a few temporal aspects in the phenomenon of the sacred and the profane:

Unchangeableness:
The sacred is absolutely unchangeable when it has extra-historical reasons for treating it as a metaphysical, eternal, or is a trans-historical reality. Historically speaking, this quality of unchangeableness and constancy are found in all those that religions consider as sacred - persons and communities, actions and words (written and uttered), natural objects and created objects, time and periods, places and stations, numbers and formulas, events and situations, In all these, a repetition or a reappearance of the ancient type (event or motive) takes place and they persist over periods of time.

Metamorpheses:
Metamorpheses means to change into a wholly different form or appearance, in other words, transform. The profane or the secular begins to appear as sacred or transcendental after metamopheses takes place. This occurs in initiations, sacraments, and baptisms. It also appears in

the use of certain objects to symbolize the divine, such as stones to represent gods or shrines. Acts of blessing of an object, an act or a person also come into this category. Vice versa, a sacred becomes secular of profane, when it is used for a different purpose. When a religious myth is transformed from its religious context and meaning and is used as a piece of literature or as entertainment, when a religious act is used for imitation or dramatic enactment, then also metamopheses is in place.

Destruction:
Quite often, religion and the sacred are intertwined and so the destruction of one may cause the other also to be destructed. The realm of the sacred faces erosion when it is used too commonly in social intercourse. For instance, "God bless you" has become a social greeting than a religious blessing because of its excessive use in social realms. Such elements are found more in industrial societies and the sacred has been destroyed turning profane. However, when favourable conditions occur, the sacred always returns as its archetype always persists in the human spirit.

Restoration:
Every community that is intact and wishes to remain intact should need a notion of the sacred as a priori. In archaic societies - secret fraternities, magicians, shamans… In modern societies, public events like festivals, which generate social strength, or the establishment of monastic, elitist orders, or the creation of new centres of authority help the society to be intact and this restoration of the sacred is not only desirable but also advantageous to societies that are fragmented due to various social, economic and political reasons.

Sacred Space
A sacred place is a defined place, a space distinguished from other spaces. It is marked by rituals practised by people in that place or directed towards that place. Sacred space is like focusing lens- it focuses attention on the forms, objects and actions in it and reveals them as bearers of religious meaning.

There are different kinds of places:
Places that are constructed for religious purposes, such as temples.
Places that are religiously interpreted, such as mountains or rivers.
Spaces that can be entered.
Physically- as the outer geography of a holy land.
Imaginatively, as the inner geography of the body in Tantric yoga, or
Visually, as the space of a *mandala*.

Sacred space does not even exclude non-sacred space, for the same place may be both sacred and non-sacred in different respects or circumstances. (in Maori culture, latrine is both sacred and non-sacred: Sacred because it is the ritual place at which an unwanted spirit can be expelled or the help of the spirits obtained. And it is also a latrine). In short, a sacred place comes into being when it is interpreted as a sacred place. Places are sacred because they perform a religious function. Such religious functions create religious emotions of peace, joy, or satisfaction or a deep eagerness to do something for the divine. A sacred space is a symbol – a symbol of the relationship of humanity with divinity. At least three symbolisms arise:

Symbolism of the threshold

The threshold is the limit, the boundary, the frontier that distinguishes and opposes two worlds – the divine world and the sacred world. In the thresholds we have gods, spirits- as guardians that forbid entrance both to human enemies and to evil spirits. At this place, sacrifices are offered and judgments take place. These are also symbols of passage and vehicles of passage. Transcendence of the world of profanity takes place here. The sacred enclosure constitutes an opening in the upward direction and ensures communication with the world of the gods. Temples and other similar buildings add much importance to the doors or the main entry points, as this is a symbol of the threshold.

Symbolism of the centre

The concept of the centre is always important for the religious minded person. To such a person, life is the centre of existence and God is the centre of life. In the religious world, there are three cosmic levels of reality – the earth, the heavens, and the underworld. The centre is often symbolized by the imagery of a universal pillar. In the homogeneity of space, the sacred place constitutes a break. The break is symbolized by connecting the three worlds, so that passage between the three is made possible. Communication with heaven is often symbolized by a tower, pillar, ladder, mountain, tree, vine, etc. This *axia mundi* (the axis of the world) is located in the middle at the 'navel of the earth'. The holy sites and sanctuaries are believed to be situated at the centre of the world. Temples are replicas of the cosmic mountain and hence they constitute a link between earth and heaven. The fountains in the temples link the earth and the lower regions.

Symbolism of cosmos and chaos

What makes a place sacred is consecration. Any place, when consecrated, becomes anew and the 'dwelling place' of the divine. Such a place is a symbol of the cosmos which is derived out of chaos. Many creation myths of various traditions portray the origin of the cosmos from chaos. There is orderliness in the cosmos which is depicted in the sacred place after its consecration. This orderliness has many dimensions- proximity and distance, hierarchy, size and shape, colour, etc. Sacred places are very often not "chosen" by humans, but are "determined" by past religious or virtuous events.

Sacred Time

Humans have two types of time- sacred and profane. Sacred time is observed in religious feasts and festivals, rites and rituals, ceremonies and observances. Profane time is the time of the ordinary everyday life. The concept of sacred time is confined only to the religious minded persons. Sacred time is a time when sacred events of the past (found in myths) are re-actualised, or re-enacted, or remembered with special formalities and observances. When one participates in sacred time, he/she is stepping out of ordinary time. Sacred time occurs periodically as sacred time is not considered linear (as in ordinary time) but as circular (which is why we have religious celebrations each year).

Illud Tempus

Illud Tempus is a phrase coined by Mircea Eliade, to mean the time of origins, the sacred time of the origin of the world. This origin of the world is accessed by the believer whenever he/she ritually re-enacts the cosmogonic myth (myth of the beginning of the universe). This ritual enactment is needed for the believer because this gives him/her inner strength. It is also needed

because by going back to the origin of time, everything becomes anew again. A state of reinstatement of the original harmony takes place by such 'going back'. This is not escapism, but a holistic participation in the cosmos for the well being of those living now in the present.

Myth

Myths, though a separate structure in themselves, are also part of the sacred time as they reveal through symbols and images, how the cosmos, and all that contains in it came to be. It tries to explain the 'how' and the 'why' of the universe's existence. It encapsulates all the theories and explanations understood by primitive minds. Each character in the myth is a rich symbol and is directly or indirectly related and connected to the sacred reality. They offer paradigms for understanding the reality of the world. They also play a didactic role, offering role models through the various gods and heroes involved. The moral functions that the myths connote can be better understood by those who come from the traditions from which these myths arose. Almost all rituals performed today have at least a myth associated with. While various motifs are associated with these rituals, a common factor found is the desire of the continuation of the myths, at least in subtle forms, in the present.

The Eternal Return

That the golden era would return again is the main motif of many repetitive rituals, festivals and observances that follow the cyclical nature of time. This not only brought the community together but also raised their spirits of hope and optimism. The connection with the sacred brought relief and strength to their otherwise battered and harsh reality, arising from changes in nature and human relationships. This cyclical concept of time was however, not acceptable to all civilizations. Hence, in religions like Hinduism, the cyclical nature of time would be brought to an end by a periodic destruction of the cosmos and recreation of the same. On the other hand, in religions such as Judaism and Christianity, the cyclical concept of time was unacceptable and time was irreversible. God made the world sacred and so the entire history is sacred. The culmination of this time would be the Last Judgment, where the world and its time would come to an end.

Check Your Progress I

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

1) What is the role of a priest in religious activities?
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 2) How do sacred time and sacred space contribute to the understanding of religions?
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3.4 RITUALS

Terms and concepts

One of the religious forms or structures that expresses the extrinsic character of religions is sacraments or sacred ceremonies or rituals. A few minor distinctions would be of help at this juncture before proceeding further. Sacraments are church ceremonies or rituals, and is commonly used in Christianity. Such ceremonies are well-planned, officially approved and animated by trained and ordained ministers. The lesser rituals and practices (like blessing ourselves with holy water or praying the rosary) are called sacramentals. The Latin word *sacramentum* means "a sign of the sacred". Rituals are also sacred ceremonies which invoke and evoke energies to empower life. These are similar to sacraments, however, any sacred ceremony can be called a ritual and some rituals can even be performed by ordinary believers.

A rite is an established, ceremonious, usually religious act or process. Rites fall into three major categories: a) Rites of passage, which changes or acts as a transition of one's social status, such as baptism, marriage, death, etc. b) Rites of worship, that involves a community to gather together for worship, such as a Christian Mass, and c) Rites of personal devotion, which is purely an individual effort, such as prayer, pilgrimages, etc.

Two other words that need a clarification are Signs and symbols. Although there are close similarities between sign and symbol and are often used interchangeably, yet there are differences and dissimilarities. According to Susanne Langer a sign "is something to act upon, or a means to command action; the symbol is an instrument of thought." An ordinary sign-function contains subject, sign, and object, while a symbol contains an additional element, namely, conception. A sign points to something else, but a symbol denotes something. It also connotes something. A symbol leads to a conception which then leads to a certain level of abstraction. "A concept is all that a symbol really conveys." Signs are pointers, but symbols are "vehicles for the conception of objects." Paul Ricoeur brings out deeper differences explaining that there is a 'double intentionality' found in symbols (which is not found in signs). The primary intention is literal. The symbol acts like a sign. Every symbol is a sign. The second intention is that it points to a certain situation that is ennobling, something that is different from the usual. In other words, symbols are signs and yet they point to something beyond and stands for this something. In other words, "symbol is the movement of the primary meaning that makes us share in the latent meaning and thus assimilates us to the symbolized without our being able to intellectually dominate the similarity." Signs are indicative, while symbols are more revealing. Ricoeur further points out that signs are more transparent since they are literal and obvious. Symbols are however opaque since they conceal the meaning and is not divulged unless dealt deep into it.

Rituals involve the use of symbols and symbolic actions. Practical actions are those that are performed for specific practical purposes, like cooking, or drying clothes. Symbolic actions are performed to symbolize a deeper meaning, like a priest lighting a fire or washing his hands etc. Rituals sometimes combine symbolic actions with practical actions, thereby bringing greater significance and deeper meaning to the practical things that we do, for instance, saying prayers before a meal. The difference between a ritual and a routine is very similar to the difference between a sign and a symbol. While rituals have deeper and multi-level meanings, routines are

one-dimensional. For instance, brushing your teeth, eating etc are routines and not rituals. Sometimes rituals can come to be experienced as lifeless routines when repeated continually without any sense of their deeper significance. Rituals are often celebrative in nature. They enable us to break the monotony of daily routines. They enable us to pursue various deeper aspects of life that might otherwise be neglected.

Characteristics of Rituals

Some of the characteristics of rituals described here will enable us to understand how they operate and their impact on the believers. Rituals involve movements and gestures that convey meaning beyond what they express at the literal level. They are symbolic actions that are repeated regularly. Often they take on the tone of celebration - helping us to break out of life's routines. Rituals are usually connected to important events. They are often associated with the many new beginnings in people's lives. Rituals Words sometimes play a secondary role supportive and complementary to the actions. They link people with their past, contribute to the well being of the present, and gently lead them into the future. A good ritual is how we remember who we are and how we celebrated who we shall become. In rituals people come together to celebrate being a community with a common identity. Rituals become alive and meaningful not by simple observance, but by wholehearted participation.

Elements of Rituals

Many rituals contain or concern one or all of these seven elements.

Ceremony

An introductory ceremony, either grand or simple, and a concluding ceremony is part of the ritual performed. In some occasions, the actual ritual may be serious and simple, but the accompanying ceremony may be filled with paegentry and paraphernalia, depending on the circumstance.

Religious devotion

Humans as homo religiosus, find their expressions revealed through religious devotion. This entails verbal prayer, bodily expressions of praise, supplication, surrender etc. The expressions of faith is an individual effort, although often performed in a collective forum. The believer prays with his/her entire being with gestures, dances, songs, rhythms and all this is done to invoke, appease, seek, thank, etc. Religious devotion is also expressed non-verbally through a grand silence which contains reverence and awe in the presence of the holy.

Sacrifice

Sacrifices of food, animals, or goods is another element of rituals which act as a substitute to the one who offers. Some rituals have sacrifices as an extension of gratitude, while some others (especially tantric rituals) consider sacrifices as obligations in order to appease the divine.

Arts

Many rituals have either music or visual arts, or dance, or all the three as important components of the performance of the sacred ceremony. The use of arts could be seen primarily as keeping the attention of the believers intact and involving them, thus enriching the ritual performances. The use of arts in rituals aid the believers and the performers to enter into a state of

transcendental relationship. Music and dance de-stress and relieve the participants and help them to enter deeply and participate wholeheartedly into the ritual.

Life cycle

Rituals deal closely with human growth. Each ritual or sacrament seeks to confirm a new stage of growth such as birth, coming of age, marriage, etc. , or act as progressive factors in that growth. In rituals, the life cycle of the divine is also reflected and their help is sought to assist human growth.

Relationship

A significant aspect of rituals is relationships - between people, animals, the natural world, the divine, etc. It seeks to purify, strengthen, reintegrate, beautify and beatify all relationships. Especially, relationships with the divine is sought to be 'set right' in rituals. Divine intervention in human relationships, knowing and understanding the divine ways so that relationships on earth do not suffer are often the motifs found in many rituals.

Petition

The phenomenon of asking for graces and favours and blessings upon humanity is part of every ritual. As mentioned above, to help survive and flourish on this earth, with no discomforts is at the core of every ritual and this is expressed through petitions.

Check Your Progress II

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

1) What are the various elements in rituals?

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 2) What are some of the important terms and concepts used in the understanding of 'rituals'?

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Worship and Liturgy

Terms and Importance

Any system or set of rituals that is prescribed for public or corporate performance is liturgy. There are two aspects that need to be addressed in any liturgy: the corporate character of liturgy and the articulation of this corporate character as a set of ritual performances. Liturgical practices differ from religion to religion. In countries like India and China, household rituals are more common and even among the Muslims, the role of public liturgy is minimum, although they come together to pray every Friday.

The term liturgy has its origin in the Greek noun *leitourgia* that refers to an act or work (*ergon*) performed by or for the people (*laitos*). In Greek city states, this word was used in a technical and political sense. It referred to the social obligation that the rich and the wealthy citizens had towards the society. They had to undertake common tasks such as building a monument, outfitting a ship, helping to supply an army etc. It was also used to refer to any service rendered by one to another. Later this general meaning acquired a new technical meaning within the cultic sphere of a service performed for a deity, especially among the mystery cults of Eleusis, Isis, and so on. Christianity borrowed this term and referred it to the Eucharist. Then this term was not used much till the 19th century- when liturgical reform movements began springing up. The Catholics emphasized the importance of increasing lay participation in the ritual activity of the church, and the Protestants, through the reforms sought to amplify and diversify the ritual expression of congregational life. Within this context, liturgy suggests the articulation of a ritual structure or calendar.

Elements in worship and liturgy
There are various elements involved in worship and liturgy. A few of them are mentioned below:

Involvement and integration:
In any act of worship, the involvement of the body, mind, and the spirit is important. The merit of a liturgy lies in such an involvement, along with that of the corporate body. The performers of the ritual often become mediators and animators of the worship, bringing together the corporate body. Involved deeply into the liturgy, the participants hope to experience an integration of the sacred and the secular, the divine and the human, etc. Integration into the religious corporate body is one important task of liturgy.

Articulation and Expression:
Liturgy creates the space for articulation and expression of one's innate desires, visions and expectations through rituals. No liturgy is complete without articulation of the individual and the corporate body's needs and desires. When a space for articulation of one's own personal needs is blocked or unheeded to within the space of liturgy, such a liturgy would soon find itself redundant and archaic. For liturgy to be relevant, articulation and expressions are important.

Memory and Re-enactment:
Through diverse celebrations, feasts and festivals spread throughout the calendar, liturgical events re-enact the foundational experiences of the believing community and bring it live to the worshipping community. Tracing back the memory is also important to the believers as it sustains their faith and increases their hope. To go back into history and considering it as sacred history re-energises and brings a fresh meaning into the present moment.

Interpretations and Understanding:
One of the purposes of liturgy is also to impart understanding, knowledge and wisdom of the theological interpretations of God, humanity and the entire world. Sacred books, myths with their events and figures etc. are interpreted to the present contexts, in order to understand the way of the future.

11

Such an understanding is not done in isolation, but in relation to the cycle of time. Each event is understood better and related closely to the previous event. Thus, all liturgies are integrated into the other. The cyclic calendar of liturgies are also interpreted in such a way only.

Functions of liturgy

There can be at least four functions of liturgy. They are a) temporalization, b) socialization, c) coordination, d) liturigcal paradigms.

Temporalization:

Temporalization is to order or structure time. One of the chief functions of liturgy is to provide a periodization that is necessary for the experience of time. This led to astronomical observations and the development of calendars. Christianity has a three year cycle, Judaism has a fifty year cycle, Hinduism has seven ages etc. are examples of temporalization. This structured time is made available for a conscious experience and intellectual comprehension through liturgy.

Socialization:

Another chief function of liturgy is to instil a corporate identity. The need to belong is a human need and religious liturgy addresses this by inviting its members to participate. Liturgy focuses on a collective identity and presents it to the believing mind that it can be consciously appropriated.

Coordination:

Yet another function of liturgy is to coordinate various dimensions of experience that includes the emotive, social, domestic, political, natural, and the spiritual. An interplay of various kinds of languages- silent, verbal, non-verbal etc help in this process. The emotive aspects of experience include sexuality, relationships, etc, the social aspects are of that of identity, conformity, community, etc, the domestic aspects concern the day to day living, in contrast to the spiritual which is vision-based, celestial and eschatological, etc., the natural aspects are that of relationship with nature, agriculture, animals, seasons etc, and the political aspects include the public face of the community, its moral authority and its influential capacities. Liturgy coordinates all these factors from a traditionalistic and futuristic perspective and affects the internal fabric of each believer.

Liturgical paradigms:

Liturgy serves as a model or paradigm for life outside it. It aims to serve as a model for the secular life or the life within religion. It serves as common models of what appropriate or significant action is like. While being didactic also, the primary aim of liturgy would be inspire the believers to follow the paradigm it offers. Hence, it attracts the participants, not through fear, but through an appeal to the heart to carry forward the liturgy to secular life.

Check Your Progress III

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

1) Is Liturgy an important aspect of religious structure?

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2) What are the various functions of liturgy?
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3.5   LET US SUM UP

Religious structures thus attempt to make an indelible impact in the various dimensions of life of the believer and the believing community. Through its diverse organizational aspects, religions try to strengthen themselves, their followers and exercise influence to the very internal fabric of each follower. The quality of each religion is often revealed through the formation of its structures. When loose-ended and less-controlled, religions tend to grow, but with limited social influence. But when strictly structured and ordered, religions tend to become autocratic, orthodox and even suffocating. A healthy balance of both these aspects are necessary for any religion to keep growing. This unit was an exposition of a few forms of Religious structures. This, we hope, would enable critical minds to probe deeper into religions so that clarity and enlightened understanding of religions may arise.

3.6   KEY WORDS

Priesthood: a structure in religions which creates leaders or animators or officials to perform religious rites, rituals and ceremonies, administer sacraments or rituals, or/and lead people spiritually.

The Sacred: Opposite of secular of profane. The word sacrum means what belongs to the gods or was in their power Set apart by a boundary for gods, the divine etc.

Rituals: sacred ceremonies which invoke and evoke energies to empower life. These are similar to sacraments, however, any sacred ceremony can be called a ritual and some rituals can even be performed by ordinary believers, while sacraments are performed by religious officials.

Liturgy: Any system or set of rituals that is prescribed for public or corporate performance is liturgy

3.7   FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 4   RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

Contents

4.0   OBJECTIVES

The unit surveys the historical events and moments highlighting the religious tolerance. The unit gives details of both these accounts in both the West and in the Indian situations.

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In a discourse on philosophy of religion, the historical factors that are presented in the present unit would not be out of track. It would be a useful tool as a background and foundational data for making a speculative and idealistic discourse on religious tolerance. The unit gives a concrete instances and efforts taken by various personalities, traditions and governments where religious tolerance was necessitated and practiced in reality. It gives the philosophers a concrete practice of a theory or discourse on religious tolerance.

4.2   RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN WESTERN WORLD

The practice of deliberately allowing on permitting a thing of which one disapproves also been defined as "to bear on endure" or "to nourish, sustain or preserve". Toleration may signify "no more than by the adherent of a dominant religion for other religious to exist even through the latter are looked on with disapproval as inferiors, mistaken or harmful." (Perez Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration came to the West.* Princeton University Press 2003, pp. 5-6 quoting D.D. Raphool et al.) Historically, most incidents and writing pertain to toleration involve the conflict between a dominant or state religion and minority or dissenting viewpoints. In the 20th and present century analyses of the doctrine of toleration have been expanded to include political and ethnic grips and other minorities.

It is recorded in the Old Testament the Persian king Cyrus the great believed to have released the Jews from captivity in 539-530 B.C., and allowed their return to their land (Book of Ezra, King James Bible). The book of exodus levites and Deuteronomy in the Old Treatment, refer to toleration of strangers. The texts are frequently used in sermons to place for compassion and tolerance of those who are different from us and less powerful. In 331 BC Alexandria, the Hellenistic city witnessed peaceful co existence of a large *janish* community along with a large Greek and Egyptian population indicating practice of multi-culturalism. The Roman Empire

encouraged conquered communities to continue worshipping their gods. Roman Empire promoted the propagation of the gods of conquered territories to enjoy the benefits of worship within the empire. However, early Christians were persecuted as they rejected the Roman pantheism and refused to honour the emperor as a god. Roman emperor, Galerius issued on edict of toleration of Christianity in 331 AD and edicts of Licinius and Constantine (who converted to Christianity in 332 AD) later became a solace for Christians.

Late Medieval period and the Renaissance Age

Latin concept toleration was a highly developed politics and judicial concept in medieval ideology and common law, self-restraint in civil power in the face of outsiders like infidels, Muslims or Jews, also social groups like protestants and lepers. Under protestant reformation discussion came up to permit dissenting religious thought toleration as a Govt. sanctioned practice is not evident the 16th century. In 1348, it was publically pleaded with Catholics not to murder Jews, whom they blamed for the Black Death. He explained that Jews also died by plague like and Black Death flourished in areas where there were no Jews. Yet, these calls failed. Johann Reuchlin (1466-1522) a German humanist and a Scholar of Greek and Hebrew is known for his opposition against forklike conversion of Jews to the Catholic religion. Despite occasional episodes of killings and persecution, especially during the Black Death, Poland was relatively tolerant for the Jews in the medieval period. The stature of Kalisz guaranteed safety, personal liberties, freedom of religion, trade and travel were for Jews. Pomlus Vladimiri (C. 1370-1435) a Polish scholar and rector at the council of Constant in 1414 publicized a famous document. He argued that pagan and Christian nations could co exist in peace and criticized wages of Conquest. Julia Kristina elucidated a philosophy of political and religious toleration based on our mutual identities as strangers. Roger William, a Baptist Theodosius and founder of Rhode Island supported state-toleration of all the heretics in the world against civil persecution. Instead it was God's duty to judge in the end, not man's. Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536), was a Dutch Renaissance humanist and Catholic whose works laid a foundation for religious toleration. For example, in De libero arbitrio, opposing certain views of Martin Luther, Erasmus noted that religious disputants should be temperate in their language. Thomas More (1478–1535), Catholic Lord Chancellor of King Henry VIII and author, described a world of almost complete religious toleration in *Utopia* (1516), in which the Utopians can hold various religious beliefs without persecution from the authorities.

Sebastian Castellio (1515–1563) was a French Protestant theologian who in 1554 published under a pseudonym the pamphlet Whether heretics should be persecuted (*De haereticis, an sint persequendi*) criticizing John Calvin's execution of Michael Servetus: "When Servetus fought with reasons and writings, he should have been repulsed by reasons and writings." Castellio concluded: "We can live together peacefully only when we control our intolerance. Even though there will always be differences of opinion from time to time, we can at any rate come to general understandings, can love one another, and can enter the bonds of peace, pending the day when we shall attain unity of faith."

Jean Bodin (1530–1596) was a French Catholic jurist and political philosopher. His Latin work *Colloquium heptaplomeres de rerum sublimium arcanis abditis* ("The Colloqium of the Seven") portrays a conversation about the nature of truth between seven cultivated men from diverse religious or philosophical backgrounds: a natural philosopher, a Calvinist, a Muslim, a Roman Catholic, a Lutheran, a Jew, and a skeptic. All agree to live in mutual respect and tolerance. In 1571, Holy Roman Emperor Maximillian II granted religious toleration to the nobles of Lower Austria, their families and workers.

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The Warsaw Confederation

Poland has a long tradition of religious freedom. The right to worship freely was a basic right given to all inhabitants of the Commonwealth throughout the 15th and early 16th century, however, complete freedom of religion was officially recognized in Poland in 1573 during the Warsaw Confederation. Poland kept religious freedom laws during an era when religious persecution was an everyday occurrence in the rest of Europe. The Warsaw confederation was a private compact signed by representatives of all the major religions in Polish and Lithuanian society, in which they pledged each other mutual support and tolerance.

Edict of Nantes

The Edict of Nantes, issued on April 13, 1598, by Henry IV of Frances, granted the Protestants of France (also known as Huguenots) substantial rights in a nation still considered essentially Catholic. The main concern was civil unity; the Edict separated civil from religious unity, treated some Protestants for the first time as more than mere schismatics and heretics, and opened a path for secularism and tolerance. In offering general freedom of conscience to individuals, the edict offered many specific concessions to the Protestants, such as amnesty and the reinstatement of their civil rights, including the right to work in any field or for the State and to bring grievances directly to the king. It marked the end of the religious wars France during the second half of the 16th century.

The era of Enlightenment beginning in the 1600s, politicians and commentators began formulating theories of religious toleration and basing legal codes on the concept. A distinction began to develop between civil tolerance, concerned with "the policy of the state towards religious dissent" (John Coffey, Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558–1689. Longman Publishing Group 2000)., and ecclesiastical tolerance, concerned with the degree of diversity tolerated within a particular church. John Milton (1608–1674), English Protestant poet and essayist, argued for free according to conscience and above all liberties (applied however, only to the conflicting Protestant sects, and not to atheists, Jews, Moslems or even Catholics). In 1609, Rudolph II decreed religious toleration in Bohemia.

In the American colonies:

In 1636, Roger Williams and companions at the foundation of Rhode Island entered into a compact binding themselves "to be obedient to the majority only in civil things". Lucian Johnston writes, "Williams' intention was to grant an infinitely greater religious liberty than then existed anywhere in the world outside of the Colony of Maryland". In 1663, Charles II granted the colony a charter guaranteeing complete religious toleration (Johnston, Lucian, Religious Liberty in Maryland and Rhode Island (Brooklyn: International Catholic Truth Society, 1903), p. 30, 38). In 1649 Maryland passed the Maryland Toleration Act, also known as the Act Concerning Religion, a law mandating religious tolerance for Trinitarian Christians only (excluding Non-Trinitarian faiths). Passed on September 21, 1649 by the assembly of the Maryland colony, it was the first law requiring religious tolerance in the British North American colonies. The Calvert family sought enactment of the law to protect Catholic settlers and some of the other religions that did not conform to the dominant Anglicanism of Britain and her colonies. In 1657, New Amsterdam granted religious toleration to Jews (Hasia R. Diner, The Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000, 2004, University of California Press, pp. 13–15).

4.3 WESTERN PHILOSOPHERS ON RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

Spinoza

Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) was a Dutch Jewish philosopher. He published the Theological-Political Treatise anonymously in 1670, arguing (according to the Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy) that "the freedom to philosophize can not only be granted without injury to piety and the peace of the Commonwealth, but that the peace of the Commonwealth and Piety are endangered by the suppression of this freedom". English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) published A Letter Concerning Toleration in 1689. Locke's work appeared amidst a fear that Catholicism might be taking over England, and responds to the problem of religion and government by proposing religious toleration as the answer. Unlike Thomas Hobbes, who saw uniformity of religion as the key to a well-functioning civil society, Locke argued that more religious groups actually prevent civil unrest. In his opinion, civil unrest results from confrontations caused by any magistrate's attempt to prevent different religions from being practiced, rather than tolerating their proliferation. John Stuart Mill's arguments in "On Liberty" (1859) in support of the freedom of speech were phrased to include a defense of religious toleration.

Act of Toleration

The Act of Toleration, adopted by the British Parliament in 1689, allowed freedom of worship to Nonconformists who had pledged to the oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy and rejected transubstantiation The Nonconformists were Protestants who dissented from the Church of England such as Baptists and Congregationalists. They were allowed their own places of worship and their own teachers, if they accepted certain oaths of allegiance. François-Marie Arouet, the French writer, historian and philosopher known as Voltaire (1694–1778) published his "Treatise on Toleration" in 1763. In it he attacked religious superstition, but also said, "It does not require great art, or magnificently trained eloquence, to prove that Christians should tolerate each other.

Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen (1789), adopted by the National Constituent Assembly during the French Revolution, states in Article 10: "No-one shall be interfered with for his opinions, even religious ones, provided that their practice doesn't disturb public order as established by the law.

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution, ratified along with the rest of the Bill of Rights on December 15, 1791, included the following words: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." In 1802, Thomas Jefferson wrote a letter to the Danbury Baptists Association in which he said: "...I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church and State (Jefferson's Letter to the Danbury Baptists (June 1998) – Library of Congress Information Bulletin. Loc.gov. Retrieved on 2011-06-15). In the nineteenth century the process of legislating religious toleration went forward, while philosophers continued to discuss the underlying rationale.

Catholic Relief Act

The Catholic Relief Act adopted by the Parliament in 1829 repealed the last of the criminal laws aimed at Catholic citizens of Great Britain.

UN Declaration

In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or

in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." Even though not formally legally binding, the Declaration has been adopted in or influenced many national constitutions since 1948. It also serves as the foundation for a growing number of international treaties and national laws and international, regional, national and sub-national institutions protecting and promoting human rights including the freedom of religion.

In 1965, The Roman Catholic Church Vatican II Council issued the decree *Dignitatis Humane* (Religious Freedom) that states that all people must have the right to religious freedom("*Dignitatis Humane*", Decree on Religious Freedom, 1965, retrieved 1 June 2007) In 1986, the first World Day of Prayer for Peace was held in Assisi. Representatives of one hundred and twenty different religions came together for prayer to their God or gods ("Address of Johan Paulii to the representatives of the Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities and of the World Reglions" (1986) retrieved 1 June 2007). In 1988, in the spirit of Glasnost, Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev promised increased religious toleration.

4.4   RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN ISLAM

Other major world religions also have texts or practices supporting the idea of religious toleration. Circa 622, Muhammed established the Constitution of Medina, which incorporated religious freedom for Christians and Jews. Certain verses of the Qu'ran were interpreted to create a specially tolerated status for People of the Book, Jewish and Christian believers in the Old and New Testaments considered to have been a basis for Islamic religion: "Verily. Those who believe and those who are Jews and Christians, and Sabians, whoever believes in God and the Last Day and do righteous good deeds shall have their reward with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."

Under Islamic law, Jews and Christians were considered *dhimmis*, a legal status inferior to that of a Muslim but superior to that of other non-Muslims. Jewish communities in the Ottoman Empire held a protected status and continued to practice their own religion, as did Christians. Yitzhak Sarfati, born in Germany, became the Chief Rabbi of Edirneand wrote a letter inviting European Jews to settle in the Ottoman Empire. Michael Walzer observes that the established religion of the [Ottoman] empire was Islam, but three other religious communities—Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Jewish—were permitted to form autonomous organizations. These three were equal among themselves, without regard to their relative numerical strength. They were subject to the same restrictions vis -a-vis Muslims—with regard to dress, proselytizing, and intermarriage, for example—and were allowed the same legal control over their own members. The Supreme Court of India has ruled that Sharia or Muslim law, holds precedence for Muslims over Indian civil law*(The Hatreds of India; Hindu Memory Scarred by Centuries Of Sometimes Despotic Islamic Rule. New York Times, Published: December 11, 1992). (Jefferson's Letter to the Danbury Baptists (June 1998) – Library of Congress Information Bulletin. Loc.gov. Retrieved on 2011-06-15).*

4.5   RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN INDIA

Early Period

5

India has largely been a land of religious tolerance. It has tradition of non-violence and peaceful co-existence. The Aryans who came from central area, established their culture and superiority other northern India between 1500 B.C and 500 B.C. The Aryans imposed Vedic religion but also incorporated element of indigenous religions, of the post-Harappa society that survived the downfall of the Indus Valley civilization. If the cults of Agni, Varun, Mitra, Nasatya characterized the early Vedic religions, *Atharva* Veda, the fourth and final book in the series of four sacred Vedas reveals non-Vedic religious elements like amulets, charms and importantly, the cult of Rudra (late on the cult of Shiva) Amults, Charms and Cult of Rudra were borrowed from the Harappa civilization. The famous Pashupati seal depicting the lord of animals –a male yogi surrounded by four animals – deer, elephant, rhinoceros and tiger is representative of a male god popularly came to be know as Shiva or Rudra (the malefic from of Shiva) in the Indian civilization. Hence, the Indigenous religions expressed religious tolerance by magnanimously the Vedic Society. Although scholars interested in upholding Vedic religion try to say that it was Vedic society that expressed religious tolerance. Realistically speaking, it was the great gesture of indigenous religious community to accept with open mind and heart the invading Aryan religion and culture.

Rise of Heterodox socio-religious sects

Vedic society began to be hierarchical and becoming vividly discriminatory by Varna system. Challenge to social inequalities of Varna-based Vedic society and complexities of ritual-based Vedic religions came from the philosophers and thinkers of the 6th century B.C. The most world famous thinkers who rose to the occasion to preach newly reformed religions based on religious-tolerance were Mahatma Buddha, Mahavira and Maskasi Gosalaputra who introduced Buddhism, Jainism and the Ajivika-sects respectively. Buddha and Mahvir Jaina taught, preached and practiced religious-tolerance and non-violence significantly. In his philosophy of eight fold path, Buddha emphasized upon 'Middle path' to highlight peaceful co-existence among different sects. Mahavira Jaina practiced severe austerity but also believed in a philosophy of religious tolerance. Early Christianity in India also witnessed a similar Phenomenon when it centered around the popular and venerated saint, St. Thomas and his traditions .

Puranic Hindu Religion and Emergence of *Teerthas* (Pilgrimage centres)

Counter revolution by Brahmanical religion led to five sects of the Puranic Hindu religion the sect of Vaisnavism, Ganesha and Surya. The process of absorption to tribal rural and folk cults into the Puranic religion continued trenchant early and medieval centuries in the subcontinent of India. At the popular level, different communities participated in each others' religious festivities. It is important that many religions sects of medieval India came out of popular Hinduism and Islam

Islam in India and Sufism

Early Islam in India was characterized by the rise and popularity of its liberal school and Baba Farid, early sufi saints like Ganj Shakar in Punjab, Muinuddin Chisti in Ajmer, Nizamudden Aeeliya, and Nasiruddin Chirag-I Dilli Dreq. These popular saints set high standard of life-style by following simplicity and austerity. They preached the language of peace, harmony and love reducing the conflicts between the Hindus and Muslims. Sufi saints made visits to sacred shrines popular which attracted women into the folds of Sufi sects.

The close interactions between Hindus and Muslims in Rajasthan is clearly evident from the popularity of the title of Hamueira among the Rajput dynasties of medieval Rajasthan. Brahmanas patronized by the Sultans or Brahmanas families with contemporary sultans devised

a new Sanskrit term, *Suratrana*. *Suratranas* are praised in Sanskrit inscriptions composed by the Brahmanas in medieval Northern and Western India. This evidence is indicative of close client-patron relationship between indigenous agents of legitimacies of Brahmanas and emerging sultans.

Bhakti Movement

Bhakti movement coincided with Sufi movement in northern India. Bhakti movement appeared earlier in South India, than in the north. Bhakti movement is southern and northern India accomplished similar goals by removing dominance of priestly class, reducing religious and sectarian conflicts, introducing personal devotees (*Bhakti*) as means of direct communion between God and lay devotees medieval Bhakti saints like Mirabai, Ravidas, Kabir, Dadudyal, Jambhoji, Ekantha, Tukaram, Nrisimha Mehta, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu epitomized the message of love and religious tolerance.

Romila Thapar in her recent work quotes an inscription from the Somanath Temple of Gujarat where temple-priests gave away land to an influential Muslim Arab trader for the building of a mosque next to the temple. It shows that there was no religious animosity between the Hindus and Muslims at the popular level. Hindus and Muslims worshipped some of the popular socio-religious reforms alike popular Gurus like Kabir, Mirabai and Jambhoji in Northern India attracted both the Hindus and Muslims just like the medieval Sufi saints.

The Mughal emperor, Akbar contributed to religious tolerance largely. Just like Ashok, Akbar was aware of inter-sectarian tension and the need to address it in view of the recent establishment of the Mughal Empire which was of central Asian origin. Akbar made it on official policy to enter into matrimonial alliances with the Hindu Rajput dynasties of Rajasthan. Both Emperor Akbar and his son, Emperor Jahangir had Hindu Rajput wives who were accorded full religious freedom of worship and practice within the Mughal royal palace. Akbar also recruited a considerable number of Hindu Rajput courtiers, officials and military commanders in the Mughal-service. The most striking achievement to contain religious harmony was Akbar's policy of *Suleh-Kul* or universal peace and invited religious leaders and priests from Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Jainism among other at Ibadal-Khama, Fatehpur Sikri. Priests from all these classical religions discussed and debated meritorious points of their individual religious. However, this conference was inconclusive. But Akbar, dismayed at priestly points of difference.

Prince Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, known for his liberal and intellectual disposition, got translated the Sanskrit work Upanishad into Persian, setting an example of religious tolerance in India. Later India witnessed a new chapter with the 'Divide and Rule' policy of the British colonial regime. The British administration introduced communal regiments/contingents in the Indian Army on the basis or religious denomination: Hindu, Sikh, Muslim following the *sepoy* mutiny or the first war of independence of 1857. This development disturbed communal harmony and encouraged sectarian identities. Sectarian movements heightened tensions between the Hindu, Muslims and Sikhs. National Congress party in the twentieth century Indian freedom movement led by Gandhi in the early century fought against rising communal tensions fuelled by the British policy and encouragement to Muslim league and idea of the birth of Pakistan. Communal rites following the partition of the sub-continent of India into two nations are the worst memories of 1947. The constitution of independence India adopted the concept of 'secularism' in preamble to give constitutional legitimacy to religious tolerance in India.

4.6   LET US SUM UP

The unit gave a background description from the historical point of view the existence of religious tolerance from both Western and Indian contexts. However, the unit should have developed philosophical analysis and view point of religious tolerance. Still the historical background gives a foundation for such discussion and discourse. The students of philosophy taking the contextual facts as a basis for reflection of why and how of religious tolerance.

4.7   FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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Philosophy of Religion

Block 3

ATHEISM / A-THEISM

UNIT 1
Introduction to Atheism / A-theism

UNIT 2
Deism and Agnosticism

UNIT 3
Materialism and Marxism

UNIT 4
Problem of Evil

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

In common usage of the term "atheism" is a denial of all the different theistic beliefs including belief in the oneness of God. "A-theists" are those who accept religious realism but deny any of the other theistic beliefs such as the personal nature of the religious reality. There are three important features of modern atheism. First, unlike classical atheism that has a perennial quality about them, modern atheism is a peculiar development in the cultural history of the West. Second, unlike earlier times when "atheist" was a term of insult used for one's opponents, modern atheists loudly and proudly called themselves atheists. Thirdly, modern atheism is both theoretical (passionately giving reasons for their atheism, critiquing the arguments for existence of God, and questioning the very coherence the idea of God) and practical (showing a significant shift in their values system).

Etymologically, "atheism" is the denial of theism. The word "theism" comes from the Greek word "*theos*" meaning "god". Theism, then, is belief in the existence of god or gods and– and atheism is the view that deities are creations of the human mind, imaginary beings that really do not exist. Religious realism or the beliefs are common to all religious believers. All religious believers are agreed that there is indeed a religious reality, a reality that is experienced by numerous people. For practical purposes, therefore, we shall take "atheism" to mean the denial of religious realism. Along with other religious realists, theists too hold that (1) there exists and extra-mundane reality that is (2) utterly unlike the reality of ordinary experience, and that (3) the pursuit of this reality is the source of ultimate human good and happiness.

Atheism is as old as theism stretching from ancient Greeks and the Indian *lokayatas* to the present. It appears in various forms that vary from critiques of some prevalent ways of understanding the divine without denying religious realism (as with different forms of "a-theism"), to a complete denial of religious realism in favour of naturalism. However, due to various reasons, atheism that remained a term of abuse for centuries became very attractive to many intellectuals of the modern period and its fascination has not waned since.

Unit 1 provides some familiarity with the different religious and non-religious views regarding Religion; with special reference to atheism and how it comes to have the prominence in the contemporary world. The key to understanding a variety of views that goes under the name of atheism/a-theism is the relationship between religious experience and language. Profound religious experiences present us with a paradox. It is important, therefore, to understand atheism.

Unit 2 explores Deism and Agnosticism, two key concepts from the world of philosophy of Religion. Deism and Agnosticism fall into many of the theories which have tried to explain the relation of the Creator and His creation. Deism primarily maintains that though God has created the world but He does not interfere in the activities of the same. Agnosticism is concerned with the possibility of the knowledge of the Creator if any such exists at all. The unit reflects on the relevance of the concepts in the present context and their implications in the other domains of Philosophy of Religion.

Unit 3 discusses at length, Marxian Materialism partially its applications in the analysis of history, society and political economy. Materialism is one of the most fascinating enquires in the history of ideas. Materialism has been the anti-thesis to Idealism which holds the consciousness, not matter, as the ground of all the existence. Materialism shares affinities with science and

4

Atheism, like the Idealism does with theology and religion. However, they cannot be as the former primarily interested in the truism of independent existence of the world by providing scientific and philosophical explanations of the phenomena, the latter stands for the primacy of human world and nonexistence of god. All the atheists were materialists, but all the materialists were not atheists. Though there had been materialist thinkers who were against non-sensual knowledge and god, many others did not refute the god due to different reasons.

Unit 4 on 'problem of evil' which challenged the existence of God. The problem of evil traditionally has been understood as an apparent inconsistency in theistic beliefs. Philosophers have tried to define evil, to assess the utility of the moralistic language of evil, and to ask what the existence of evil says about human nature. Religious thinkers have asked how an all powerful and benevolent God can tolerate evil and undeserved suffering; whether evil is intelligible and serves some rational purpose or is utterly inexplicable; and whether evil is intractable or can be eradicated or overcome. A key goal of moral history of evil must be to understand the social, economic, cultural, and political conditions and ideologies that misshape societies and allow collective evil to develop, take root and flourish.

UNIT 1   INTRODUCTION TO ATHEISM/A-THEISM

Contents

1.0   OBJECTIVES

This unit aims to provide some familiarity with the different religious and non-religious views regarding Religion; with special reference to atheism and how it comes to have the prominence in the contemporary world. By the end of this unit, you will be familiar with the following:

- The idea of theism

- The distinction between atheism and other related concepts

- Non-theistic religious views (a-theism)

- Non-theistic, non-religious views (atheism)

- Different kinds of atheism

- Origins of modern atheism

- future of theism-atheism debate

1.1   INTRODUCTION

The key to understanding a variety of views that goes under the name of atheism/a-theism is the relationship between religious experience and language. Profound religious experiences present us with a paradox. On the one hand, it gives to the experiencer (or experient) an insight into the nature of reality, an insight that is so remarkable that the person feels impelled to talk about it; like the crow that has found a good source of food crows the loudest to call its friends, a person with a remarkable religious experience cannot but talk about it. On the other hand, the nature of the insight gained is such that the experient finds himself or herself dumbfounded, unable to find the right words to talk about it. The result is a whole lot of babbling that often indicates something right about the experienced reality but is never accurate; it may even be misleading, if not properly understood. This need to talk, together with not being able to find adequate

expression, can lead to contrary and even contradictory views regarding religious reality, leading to various theistic, atheistic, and agnostic views. While the theistic or at least some kind of religious view remains prominent in today's world, atheism is no less prominent with some atheistic books like Richard Dawkin's *The God Delusion*, even becoming a best seller. It is important, therefore, to understand atheism.

1.2   THEISM, ATHEISM AND A-THEISM

We shall try four different approaches to understand atheism: etymology, history, common usage, and a phenomenology of doctrines.

Let us begin by considering the meaning of the word "atheism". Etymologically, "atheism" is the denial of theism. The word "theism" comes from the Greek word "theos" meaning "god". Theism, then, is belief in the existence of god or gods and– and atheism is the view that deities are creations of the human mind, imaginary beings that really do not exist. An etymological route to understanding atheism, however, is only of limited help. Besides neglecting non-theistic religious views, it also neglects the fact that there are different kinds of theism such as monotheism and polytheism.

A historical route to the definition of "atheism" also does not take us far, as it always turns out to be the denial of a particular conception of the deity. Socrates in ancient Greece, for example, was accused of being an atheist by his countrymen; early Christians were accused of being atheists by the Romans. This was in spite of Socrates claiming that gods had spoken to him, and Christians engaging in regular religious worship and prayer. The reason why the accusers of Socrates and of the early Christians called them atheists was, then, not that they did not believe in *any* deity, but that they did not venerate the deity whom their accusers venerated.

If we go by the common usage, "atheism" refers primarily to the denial of the deity as understood in the monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. All these three traditions understand the deity to be One (hence *mono*theism with God spelt with a capital G), a benevolent personal Being who created the world and all that is in it, and continues to interact with this creation. Again, the use of "Being" with a capital B is significant because the divine reality is held to be unlike any other reality we are ordinarily familiar with. For this reason the ordinary reality is often qualified as mundane reality, contrasted with the sacred reality. If everything in the world –including human being— can be considered beings, then God is not a being at all. The difficulty in going by the common usage is that it neglects the complexity involved in the conception of the divine. Therefore, let us attempt an understanding of theism through the phenomenology of religious beliefs. This will help us to attempt some conceptual spring cleaning and distinguish between "theism" and "monotheism", "atheism" and "a-theism".

Let us begin by considering what may be called "religious realism", or the beliefs that are common to all religious believers. All religious believers are agreed that (1) there is indeed a religious reality, a reality that is experienced by numerous people. These people say that the nature of this reality is (2) completely unlike the objects experienced in our ordinary sense experience and (3) the good of human beings (indeed, of the whole creation) consists in the pursuit of this supra-mundane reality. The vast majority of people in all generations have been religious realists in this sense. And this majority includes not only the masses but also the most intelligent ones including scientists, philosophers and mystics. However, there have been many

2

in the modern period who denied religious realism and called themselves atheists. Feuerbach and his followers like Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx are the best examples of atheists. Best contemporary examples are Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett. All of them deny religious realism. For practical purposes, therefore, we shall take "atheism" to mean the denial of religious realism. However, there are difficulties in defining "atheism" in terms of religious anti-realism. An important consideration is that one can be religious realist and still not be a theist; there are various non-theistic ways of being a religious realist. Therefore, let us consider theistic beliefs in more detail. Theists, being religious realists, hold beliefs 1-3:

(1) there exists a supra-mundane reality that the theists call God

(2) This reality is said to be utterly different from all other (mundane) reality. Although the technical term for this belief is divine transcendence, there are difficulties in straight away calling it by that term because the term "transcendence" has taken a different connotation today (we shall see this in connection with modern atheism).

(3) That the ultimate good and happiness (*summum bonum*) of human beings (and the whole of creation) consists in the pursuit of this reality.

Apart from these three beliefs common to all religious realists, theists also hold the following:

(4) Though utterly different from the objects in this world, this reality is actively involved in this mundane world. This is called divine immanence.

(5) This mundane reality is God's creation.

(6) Theists also hold that this supra-mundane or divine is better spoken of in personal terms than impersonal terms.

(7) In addition to these beliefs commonly held by theists, monotheists hold that there is only one supra-mundane religious reality.

Since the common usage of the term "atheism" is a denial of monotheism, it would imply the denial of the doctrines 1-7. But strictly speaking the term should not apply to polytheists and therefore, should apply only to those who deny doctrines (1) to (6).

Now let us consider "a-theism". This is not standard terminology. But when we look at the reality of religious belief in the contemporary world we need some term like this because not all who deny the existence of a theistic deity can be considered atheists and put alongside Marx, Freud, Dawkins and others. Consider, for example, Buddhism and Taoism. Since they do not agree with theists in important respects (such as the personal nature of religious reality) they are sometimes characterized as atheistic religions. But it is not appropriate call them atheists because unlike atheists like Marx, they are not anti-realists regarding religious reality. They agree with the theists not only in the existence of a supra-mundane reality (Tao, Nirvana), but also in the other two beliefs regarding religious realism, i.e., its utter difference from the mundane reality and that the pursuit of this reality is the *summum bonum* (ultimate good or fulfilment) of human existence. But they reject other theistic beliefs. Therefore, rather than call this view "atheism" we shall call it "a-theism". They are indeed living religions, a-theistic religions.

Denial of the doctrines (2) or (4) leads to two other kinds of "a-theism" called pantheism and deism. Pantheists deny (2), i.e., that God is utterly different from the mundane reality and hold that everything is God. Deists deny the (4), i.e., the belief that God is currently involved in the world. Since the more technical term for the second and fourth beliefs are "transcendence" and "immanence", theists are those who believe in a deity that is both

3

transcendent and immanent whereas pantheists deny God's transcendence and deists deny God's immanence. Deism and pantheism too might be called "a-theism" but they would not qualify as "a-theistic religions" like Buddhism and Taoism. Deism and pantheism are best considered as philosophical views *about* religions than the views of any practicing religious believers.

To sum up our definitions, then, atheism is strictly speaking the denial of a religious reality as understood by the theists. It includes denial of the doctrines 1-6. A-theism does not deny 1-3 (religious realism), but might deny any of the other theistic beliefs. A-theism may be religious (as in the case of Buddhism or Taoism) or only a philosophical view regarding religions (like deism). Having seen the differences, we shall focus on the atheism as commonly understood, i.e., as denial of monotheistic beliefs 1-7 and its historical development. But before going into the details of atheism we need to spend some time to clarify some concepts that are closely linked with atheism.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is religious realism?
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....
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2) What are the basic religious convictions of monotheists?
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3) How is atheism differentiated from a-theism?
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1.3   ATHEISM AND ITS COUSINS

There are a number of concepts that are similar in some ways to atheism because of which they are often confused with it. The most used among such concepts are naturalism, materialism, agnosticism, and secularism. Let us consider these.

Naturalism is literally the view that only natural entities exist. A corollary of this view is the denial of the supernatural –either God or spirit— that is independent of the natural but impinges on it (through creation, preservation, provident care, etc.). Thus it is the denial of religious

realism. However, naturalism is a broader term than atheism and can refer to a whole philosophy of life. In the contemporary world with its high premium on science, naturalism has also come to mean the epistemological thesis that science is the only reliable means of knowing. This is epistemological naturalism. This would also imply that the world as explained by scientific laws is all that exists. Besides the metaphysical and epistemological naturalism, there is ethical naturalism which holds that moral life does not require God or such supernatural factors. Apart from such full-fledged naturalism found in the modern world, there have been various naturalistic views in the ancient world such as the *Carvakas* and the *Ajīvikas* of India and those like Democritus and Epicurus in the West.

Materialism is almost identical with the metaphysical component of naturalism (the view that only natural entities exist). It says that matter is the only reality and that everything in the world, including thought, will, and feeling, can be explained in terms of matter. Since it entails a denial of spiritual beings or processes, materialism is typically allied with atheism. Apart from this metaphysical view, materialism has also a derivative sense according to which comfort, pleasure, and wealth are the only or highest goals or values. The Indian *Carvakas* were not only naturalists but also materialists in this sense as they considered pleasure as the ultimate good. While atheism, naturalism and materialism involve definite metaphysical views, agnosticism is a suspension of belief in metaphysical issues. Unlike the atheists who deny the existence of God, agnostics neither affirm nor deny the existence of God; agnostics only say that they have no evidence either for believing or for denying the existence of such metaphysical entities as God, soul etc.

Secularism is another term that often crops up in the vicinity of atheism. This word has a variety of meanings. Coming from the Latin word *saeculum*, originally the word denoted (1) the present world of change. This was contrasted with the religious world that was taken to be eternal. This merely contrastive use of the word would eventually give way to the oppositional meaning where secularism meant (2) an antireligious, atheistic outlook. According to a third meaning "secularism" is not seen in anti-religious terms, but refers to an outlook that limits itself to the world of here and now without any considerations of God or the hereafter. It may be remarked that the word "*lokayata*" (another name used for *Carvakas*) clearly points to this meaning of secularism, as it comes from *lōka*, meaning this world. From this meaning of secularism arises a fourth meaning according to which secularism refers to the autonomy of the political realm from the religious sphere. In the contemporary usage, this fourth meaning is the most prominent, although the others are not absent. This idea of the exclusion of the religious from the political realm takes two different forms. In the west it was seen in terms of the separation of the Church and the state whereas in India with its diversity of living religions secularism is seen in terms of equality before law irrespective of one's religious belonging.

1.4   VARIETIES OF ATHEISM

Atheism can be classified in different ways depending on the basis of classification. One way to classify it is terms of its relation to life. From this perspective, atheism has been classified into practical and theoretical. When psalmist refers to the "fool" saying in his heart that there is no God (Ps. 53:1), it is worth noting that the "fool" does it only in his or her heart, and not to others. "Fool" in the biblical understanding is the one who puts his trust wealth and possessions and not in God. (Cf. Luke 12:20) This is practical atheism. It refers to a manner of life that is lived as if

God did not exist, but does not bother to talk about it or argue about it. Such practical atheism is contrasted with theoretical atheism that engages in reasoning in an attempt to show that God (or gods) does not exist. In that process, not only did they deny the existence of gods, but also put forward theories to explain the existence of gods. Jan Bremmer credits the ancient Greeks with the discovery of theoretical atheism, which can be considered a necessary corrective to inadequate ways of understanding the divine. For example, if God is conceived to be just like human beings (with all their frailties like lust and jealousy), except that these beings have greater power, then others with greater moral sensibility are bound criticise such deities. Similarly, if God is identified with natural powers like the sun any naturalistic attempt to understand the sun is bound to be considered atheistic. Such was the case in ancient Greece. Theoretical atheism of this kind has great value since it performs a therapeutic role by helping future generations to come to a better understanding of the nature of the divine. On the other hand, it has also been dangerous to its protagonists as it offends the sensibilities of the more common believers. It is worth recalling that one of the charges against Socrates, when he was sentenced to death, was that of being an atheist. Thus, "atheism" in the ancient world came to be used more for labelling one's opponents than any set of beliefs.

A more important distinction is the one between classical or perennial atheism on the one hand, and modern atheism on the other. There are three important distinctions that could be pointed out between them. First, this division, as the name indicates, is based on the chronological factor. Classical atheism –whether practical or theoretical—has a perennial quality about them. Thus, there have always been and there will always be people whose lives are not guided by religious values and considerations; and there will be intensely religious people in every age who criticize the inadequate ways of conceiving God. Modern atheism, on the other hand, is a peculiar development in the cultural history of the West, eventually spreading to other parts of the world. Second, unlike earlier times when "atheist" was a term of insult used for one's opponents, modern atheists loudly and proudly called themselves atheists. They took it as a badge of honour to be an atheist. This is perhaps the most important feature of modern atheism. Thirdly, modern atheism is both theoretical and practical. It is theoretical in as much as they were passionately involved in giving reasons for their atheism, critiquing the arguments for existence of God, and questioning the very coherence the idea of God. For this reason, modern atheism is best defined not only as a rejection of theism but as a conscious and reasoned rejection of theism. Modern atheism is also practical in as much as it marks a significant shift in the values that one holds dear. But it should not be thought that modern atheists are immoral persons. There are professed atheists who are as concerned, and perhaps even more concerned, with matters of justice and peace than many believers. What is being said is that the value system of modern culture (and not of individual atheists) is significantly different from that of the religious believers. If the biblical fool is one who relies not on God, but on power and wealth, these are the very foundations of modern culture. Unlike the earlier cultures that did not consider wealth as an end in itself and even considered it antithetical to religious values, modern culture (that is inseparable from the development of capitalism) came to consider the production of wealth as an end in itself. So too, with political power.

Another way of classifying atheism is in terms of procedure and motivation. Seen in these terms, atheism can be divided into critical or philosophical atheism and dogmatic atheism. The former are open-minded intellectuals who seek to promote intellectual honesty in thinking about God, whereas the latter consider theism as a plague to be eradicated and go about doing with little concern for intellectual engagement with theists. Antony Flew (1923-2010) is an excellent

example of the former whereas Richard Dawkins is an example of the latter. Whereas the former produced a philosophical classic like "Theology and Falsification" the latter's *God Delusion* is a bestseller that draws a caricature of God and then goes about demolishing it. Dogmatic atheism is an offshoot of modern atheism and is sometimes referred as "New Atheism".

Philosophical atheism is a form of theoretical atheism that disputes theistic claims. Their chief arguments can be found in David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. The most important argument is perhaps the argument from evil. The basic argument is that if God is both all powerful and all good, as theists claim, then the quality and quantity of evil and pain seen in this world is inexplicable. Therefore, the believers will be compelled, they say, to withdraw their claim about the existence of God or at least one of the two claims regarding God (being all powerful and being all good). What needs to be noted is that the experience of evil is part of the human condition and theists grapple with it as much as the atheists, and ardent theists have tried to grapple with it for centuries, even before there emerged any cogent argument from evil emerged.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What are the different meanings of the word "secularism"?

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2) Theoretical atheism in the ancient world had a therapeutic value. Explain.

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3) What are the characteristic features of modern atheism that makes it distinct from classical atheism?

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1.5   THE PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS OF MODERN ATHEISM

As in the case of any historical event, it would be too simplistic to trace the origins of modern atheism to any single factor. There are philosophical, social, religious, political and economic factors that come together in the emergence of the modern world and modern atheism was one of its offshoots. Our primary focus in this section will be on the philosophical roots of this phenomenon and point out some of the other factors in the next section. Even in looking at the philosophical roots of modern atheism, we shall limit our considerations to the changes in the understanding of transcendence and immanence that lie at the heart of theism.

Since modern atheism is a conscious and reasoned rejection of theism, we must begin with the manner in which moderns understood theism. What we saw in the introduction about our inability to put into human language the experienced reality is at the root of the various ways in which theistic beliefs (1-7) come to be understood. As long as the person who has the experience is involved in the discussions, he or she can steer the conversation in the proper direction. But when the focus shifts from the experience to its doctrinal articulations and the analysis of those articulations by others there is all the likelihood of matters going haywire. Such is the story that we find at the origins of modern atheism.

Consider the belief in transcendence and immanence of God. We have seen it in terms of the utter unlikeness of God with the mundane reality and yet being involved in it. In the theistic understanding, therefore, transcendence and immanence always go together and they are never opposed to each other. But it is not unusual (even standard practice) to define it in terms of outside/inside distinction. The Wikipedia article on transcendence is a good example. It tells us that the first meaning of transcendence is that "God is completely outside of and beyond the world, as contrasted with the notion that God is manifested in the world." The definition of authors like Peter Berger is hardly different. When the distinction is seen in terms of outside/inside distinction it becomes a logical contradiction to say that God is both immanent and transcendent, as theists do. Apart from the logical problem, there is also the difficulty that God's involvement in the world seems to go against the autonomy of natural laws. As a matter of fact, David Hume's definition of divine miracle is in terms of the suspension of natural laws. Deism was the solution found by some of the early modern thinkers to overcome these difficulties. They held that God created the world but does not intervene in it, but lets it run on its own laws, like a wound clock. This solution was surely unacceptable to the theistic believers.

The important question is how the moderns came to understand transcendence and immanence of God in this manner. In order to answer this question we must begin with the realization that western Christian theism (whose womb bore the baby of modern atheism) is a unique combination of Jewish religious insights (filtered through the eyes of Jesus Christ and his early followers) and Greek philosophy. The religious insight of the Jews was that of a religious reality that is utterly unlike the mundane reality. It was so utterly unlike the reality of ordinary human experience that this reality could neither be named nor uttered. Yet, this reality was so closely involved in the lives of the people, especially attentive to the cries of the oppressed. If the former (unlikeness) indicated the transcendence of the divine, the latter (involvement) indicated divine immanence. On the other hand, this immanence, by the very fact of its special inclination towards scum of the earth, is also a manifestation of the utter unlikeness of the values of the divine reality as the Jews understood it. In other words, the Jewish God was both ontologically and morally transcendent to the mundane world, but very much present in it.

Enter Greek philosophy. Neo-Platonism with its utterly transcendent One (that is also the Good), which at the same time gives reality to the things in this world through "participation" fitted the

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Jewish (and Christian) understanding of God like hands and gloves. But there was a rub. The Greek One was so other-worldly that it was difficult to see how this One could be considered a Christian God who considered this world so valuable as to send his only son to save it. There comes Aristotle to the rescue. This disciple of Plato had blended the Platonic Ideas with an excellent appreciation of this world in his philosophy. This was adapted by the Christians in the work of St. Thomas Aquinas. Everything seemed to go well.

But there was a difficulty. The hinge that connected Aristotle's philosophy of this world with Plato's transcendent world was the arguments that sought to prove the necessity of a First Cause, a Prime Mover, etc., to account for observed change in this world. This hinge proved to be too fragile to hold the weight of the Platonic (and the religious) understanding of transcendence. This will be understood only when we realize that although Aristotle assimilated the Platonic ideas into his own theory of categories, there is a world of difference between the two. Plato's forms and the ultimate Form (One) are utterly different from this world (hence, ontologically transcendent). But the Aristotelian categories are categories of this world. These are organized logically, the ultimate Form being the all-inclusive Form of all forms. In other words, the First Cause to which Aristotle's arguments lead is a logical requirement of his philosophical account of *this world,* a kind of scientific explanation of the time. Thus is lost the Platonic as well as the Jewish notion of transcendence, with no heartburns at all. Unlike Plato's and the Judeo-Christian understanding of this world (as dependent) on a transcendent religious reality for its existence (participation in Plato, creation in Judaism), Aristotle's world is a self-contained system. This comes to be re-enforced during the modern period with the development of Newtonian physics.

In adopting the Aristotelian system, Aquinas was sensitive to the religious notion of transcendence. Therefore, even while adopting Aristotle's argument for existence of God he knew very well that the Christian God could not be a logical requirement of the system, as in Aristotle. This prompted him to smuggle in the Platonic notion of participation such that the utter transcendence of God is maintained. But with the idea of modern science that the world is a gigantic clock that functions on its own, the notion of participation becomes superfluous. To affirm the transcendence of God in a self-regulating world is to think of some entity outside the system; immanence, then, becomes the arbitrary intervention of this external power into the functioning of a mechanical cosmos. When the moderns rejected this notion of God, the Aristotelian-Thomistic type of natural theology had become so well-entrenched that the energies of the modern defenders of theism was expended not in correcting the skewed notion of transcendence and immanence to bring it in line with the religious understanding, but in constructing newer versions of natural theology using the latest findings of science. Michael Buckley's authoritative study, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* gives us a detailed account of these futile attempts. What is typical of these modern arguments is that God is conceived along the lines of a scientific hypothesis. They proceed from some observed features of the world to God as the explanation of those features. Religious thinkers are only beginning to come around to the view that the real force of the arguments for God's existence consists not in their logical force, but in pointing to certain "natural signs" that can function as invitations to religious insights. This is the basic thrust of a recent book by Stephen Evans.

1.6   THE SOCIO-CULTURAL ROOTS OF MODERN ATHEISM

No account of the emergence of modern atheism would make sense apart from its indebtedness to Christendom. "Christendom" is the term used to designate the Christianity that emerged as a

successor to the Roman Empire. Christendom was at once many things. It was a magnificent human achievement that combined within it a delicate balance of temporal power and spiritual dynamism. The architecture of St. Peters in the Vatican, with its outstretched arms embracing the world is a good symbol of the magnificence of Christendom. It was a unifying power in a fragmented Europe, a multinational spiritual empire of prayer and learning done in its monasteries, and a civilising force among the barbarian chieftains. But it had also a soft underbelly, in as much as it was also the centre of political intrigue and moral degradation.

It was the degradation that became the focus of the Protestant Reformation led by Martin Luther. Its impact was even more traumatic to the Western world than that of the scientific revolution. Whereas the scientific revolution took apart the magnificent intellectual synthesis built by Aquinas on the foundations of Aristotle and Plato, the Protestant Reformation broke up the unity of Christendom as a socio-cultural force. The nationalist urges that were kept under check by the unifying power of Christendom reasserted itself with the Protestants on the side of the nationalists and Catholics on the side of Rome. The European soil was soaked in the blood of martyrs who fought protracted religious wars, creating an anti-religious atmosphere were atheism could sprout among the thinking sections of the population.

The weakening of Roman power enabled the new merchant class to assert its autonomy, with private property and mercantile interests replacing common land and common good. (Earlier such interests were held in check with avarice being condemned as a grievous sin). It was from this bloody mix of religious fervour, nationalist political ambitions and a developing capitalist economy that a group of intelligentsia emerged that proudly proclaimed itself atheistic. Modern atheism was seen as an escape route from religious intolerance and the entry point for building a new world on the foundations of the newly developing physics and economics, aided by the failure of philosophical thinking we saw in 1.5.

1.7   THE FUTURE OF THEISM-ATHEISM DEBATE

Atheistic arguments, we have seen, is always directed against some specific understanding of theism, as we have seen. That understanding is hardly ever in keeping with what believers themselves say. If ancients like Socrates and the early Christians never owned up the accusation of being atheists, the moderns took pride in being atheists. But modern atheism, as we have seen, is the repudiation of a particular historical-cultural development in the understanding of theism that misrepresented the basic theistic conviction regarding immanence and transcendence of God. Thus, theists and atheists seem to be speaking past one another than speaking to each other. Given this situation, does this debate have a future? On the one hand, if we learn from Wittgenstein's idea about the autonomy of language games, it would seem that this debate would have no future unless the legitimate autonomy of religious language game is respected. Vincent Br□mmer is among those who consider this debate to be doomed as long as theism is treated as a scientific hypothesis. On the other hand, even if it was a historical mistake to think of God as an explanatory hypothesis along the lines of a scientific hypothesis, in as much as this manner of arguing for God's existence has a long history, the critics are not likely to easily acknowledge this autonomy. Therefore, it is hard to see the debate making any headway.

Check Your Progress III

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Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) How does the modern understanding of immanence and transcendence differ from the theistic understanding?

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2) What is the significant difference between the neo-Platonic One and the Aristotelian First Cause?

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3) What were some of the social factors that contributed to the emergence of modern atheism?

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1.8   LET US SUM UP

Atheism is as old as theism stretching from ancient Greeks and the Indian *lokayatas* to the present. It appears in various forms that vary from critiques of some prevalent ways of understanding the divine without denying religious realism (as with different forms of "a-theism"), to a complete denial of religious realism in favour of naturalism. But due to various reasons, atheism that remained a term of abuse for centuries became very attractive to many intellectuals of the modern period and its fascination has not waned since. But religious convictions continue to remain strong and it is not likely that the theism-atheism debate is likely to make any headway in the near future, until they learn to listen to one another.

1.9   KEY WORDS

Atheism = a word with many meanings, but for practical purposes, atheism is understood as the denial of religious realism.

11

Religious realism = the view that (1) there exists a religious or supra-mundane or supra-natural reality that is (2) utterly unlike the objects experienced in our ordinary sense experience. It also holds that (3) the ultimate good of human beings consists in the pursuit of this supra-mundane reality.

Transcendence = the view that divine reality is utterly unlike beyond the ordinary reality of sense-experience. But during the modern period this comes to be understood in spatial terms, i.e., the view that divine reality is outside the cosmos.

Immanence = refers to the presence and activity of the divine reality in this world of ordinary experience.

A-theism = is used for a variety of views like that of Buddhism, that are religious but not theistic.

Deism = a philosophical view that accepts the existence of a creator God, but denies that God intervenes in the affairs of the world after its creation. Seeing divine "transcendence" and "immanence" as a matter of being outside/inside the created world, they deny divine immanence.

Pantheism = is the counterpart of deism. They too understand transcendence and immanence in spatial terms and go on to deny God's transcendence while affirming divine immanence.

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UNIT 2   DEISM AND AGNOSTICISM

Contents

2.0   OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit is to introduce, Deism and Agnosticism, two key concepts from the world of philosophy of Religion. Since it is not possible to give a complete and exhaustive account of these two concepts within such a limited space, the chapter aims at laying a foundation of the concepts which can be built up later by further reading. The chapter looks not only at the Historical aspect of the two concepts but also examines their meaning and significance in the realm of Religion and further dives deep into the Philosophical implications of the same.   Apart from looking into the two concepts separately there will be an attempt to see them in the light of each other. Deism and Agnosticism fall into many of the theories which have tried to explain the relation of the Creator and His creation. Agnosticism is concerned with the possibility of the knowledge of the Creator if any such exists at all. Therefore an examination of these concepts in the light of the other theories, in the larger philosophical canvas, is another objective of the study. The chapter ends with a reflection on the relevance of the concepts in the present context and their implications in the other domains of Philosophy of Religion.

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

- to have basic understandings of Deism;
- to differentiate Deism from other forms of theism;
- to relate it with the development of modern science ;
- to understand the basic idea of Agnosticism and its varieties;
- to differentiate and relate Agnosticism and Atheism .

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Deism is one of those theories which tries to explain the relation of God as a creator with His creation. For this purpose they resort to the observation of nature and natural phenomena in stead

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of taking refuge in any canonical literature of any Religion. This is a view which maintains that though God has created this Universe, He does not exercise incessant control over it. As a matter of fact, He does not intervene in any affair of this world. He configured some laws into nature while constructing this multiple world of objects and has left this world in the supervision of those natural laws. Pierre Viret, a French thinker, probably used the term *deist* for the first time in 1564. Deism flourished primarily in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth century due to advent of modern science. Science challenged the theories of religion and new interpretations of religious facts were in demand. The ideas of supernatural revelations were rejected as science started identifying certain laws of nature. Later it spread to France, Ireland, North America etc. and as a whole exercised deep influence in shaping modern world. Agnosticism, on the other hand, has its genesis in scepticism. Sceptics maintain that apart from mathematical propositions and certain tautologies all other knowledge claims are loaded with doubt. They are certain only up to a degree. Nothing is absolutely certain. Extending this logic to the matters of religion and faith, Agnostics maintain that nothing in that realm can be said with certainty. They do not claim to be theists as they think that they can't prove the existence of God and also desist from claiming themselves to be atheists since they opine that they can't disprove it either. Though this line of thought can be traced both in ancient Indian and Western traditions, the term Agnosticism was coined by Thomas Henry Huxley in the year 1869.

2.2 DEISM – ITS ORIGIN AND DEFINITION

Deism has its etymological origin in the word 'Deus', a word, which stands for God in Latin. In the realm of Philosophy of Religion, Deism is mainly concerned with the relationship between the Creator and his Creation. Chronologically this stream of thought can be traced to have its genesis in the Seventeenth century's Europe. Being a part of the scientific revolution, it seems to have left its mark even in the eighteenth century's enlightenment period. And therefore we can read definite contribution of this theory in shaping the thoughts of modern times. Deism is neither atheism nor any kind of scepticism. It attempted to find a way between religious dogmatism and extreme scepticism. But Deism is not found as a uniform philosophy throughout seventeenth and eighteenth century as it included a range of people from anti-Christian to un-Christian theists.

Deism primarily maintains that though God has created the world but He does not interfere in the activities of the same. The world functions according to certain laws which of course He structured when He brought all these into being. God is thus wholly transcendent and not at all immanent. Deists advocate observation of natural phenomena and their rational analysis as a means to know God. There is no scope of revelation or mysticism in Deism. Due to the absence of controlling powers in God, though the aboriginal allotment of powers is assigned to Him, Deism comes very close to Naturalism. Because in Naturalistic Philosophy, it is the Nature which practically bears the supreme power and governs everything. But Deism is neither synonymous with Atheism in the sense that they do not deny in the presence of a Supreme power nor is it synonymous with theism as they don't accept the participation of that power, as theists do, in controlling the activities of this Universe. God endowed the world at creation with self-sustaining and self-acting powers and then abandoned it to the operation of these powers acting as second causes.

Pierre Viret, a French thinker, probably used the term *deist* for the first time in 1564, in *Instruction Chrétienne en la doctrine de la foi et de l'Évangile (Christian teaching on the doctrine of faith and the Gospel)*. He opines that Deism denotes a line of thought which does accept the existence God even as a creator of heaven and earth, but they reject all that is described in the Theology and Mythology of Christianity as tales and parables.

In England, the term *deist* first appeared in the year 1621 in Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Lord Herbert of Cherbury, generally considered the 'father of English Deism', enumerated the first articulated form of Deism in his book *De Veritate* in 1624. It proposes a theory of knowledge based upon the recognition of the innate universal characteristics of the perceived objects and completely rejects any epistemology pertaining to anything supernatural in its origin and determinable in only by strife and conflict. Matthew Tindal, an eminent English Deist, wrote *Christianity as Old as the Creation* or *the gospel a republication of the Religion of Nature* in 1730, which is the first standard text – book of the Deism, later came to be known as 'The Bible' of the school. It became popular because almost every argument, quotations and issues raised for decades can be found here. Later Deism spread to France, notably through the work of Voltaire, to Germany, and to America.

2.3   DEISM – VARIOUS FACETS

The roots of Deism can be traced to the Heraclitan conception of Logos. Logos is the supreme principle for him and he was "both willing and unwilling to call it Zeus (God)". Demiurge, the terminology used by Plato for God, comes very close to Deist's depiction of the Supreme as a Craftsman. However, the word 'deism', as it is understood today, is generally used to refer to the movement toward Natural Theology or freethinking that occurred in Seventeenth – century Europe, and specifically in England. One needs to study this shift to Natural Theology in order to understand the foundations of Deism.

There was a radical change in the outlook of seventeenth common minds in whole western world due to the advent of Science. The whole geo – centric biblical theory was challenged with the Copernicun revolution. The works of Kepler and Galileo added to the paradigm shift. This reduced Bible to a text on faith and morality and took its authority away from the world of nature and Natural Laws. Issac Newton explained natural movements with the help of his laws motions and the principle of gravitation. The idea of certain natural laws governing the universe dominated the knowledge domain. This, in turn suggested a theory in Theology that though God created the world, He left it in the hand of nature which governs its movements with its own set of laws. The explanations of various natural phenomena challenged the idea of miracle which was highly glorified by religion. In addition, the study of classical literature led to the conclusion that some of the documents didn't have the required veracity to be relied for even the issues of faith. These gave birth to a series of biblical criticisms by rational thinkers.

Thus the whole of Deism can be put as an acceptance of God but rejection of His incessant control over his own creation. Now though there are general agreements among the Deists regarding the basics of Deist Philosophy, there are differences as well. For example a class of Deists resort to the classical Christian view that God will punish or reward us for our activities after our death whereas some maintain that we face the consequence of our actions in this life

during our existence in this world only. All deists did not come out of the ambit of Christianity though they were all critical of it. Classical Deists like Matthew Tindal continued regard Jesus as a great moral teacher though he was opposed to the ascription of Divinity to him. They regarded themselves as the representatives of the classical and pure form of Christianity which had existed before getting corrupt in the hands of certain dogmatists by the addition of mysterious concepts.

All Deists had both critical but constructive approaches in their Philosophies. All wanted to build a solid philosophical base for the guidance of human activities through elimination of irrational elements of religious dogmatism. Some targeted the priestly class in their writings, some focussed on re – reading of the religious scriptures and some subscribed to the study of nature. This is the reason why Deism, like atheism and freethinking, was one of the unpalatable terms for a large section of the English society. Deism was equated with Atheism, though most of the Deists agreed, in many basic propositions, with the orthodox school. Thus Deism was a judicious mixture of both critical and constructive thinking. They allowed the wind of freethinking to blow openly, but resisted it from blowing strong enough to extinguish their faith in a Creator and His primordial power to create this Universe.

Now for the Deists, reason was the most pivotal instrument in understanding the laws of nature and their subsequent implications. Rational faculty refers to the ability of inferring, judging and apprehending. Reasoning is about agreement or disagreement of ideas. Affirmation or denial of agreement gives rise to the propositions. Knowledge occurs through this adventure of ideas. But Deists, apart from accepting reason and rationality also do entertain certain truths to be self evident. Though it does not indicate any sorts of divine revelation, it is accommodated by some terminologies like intuitive knowledge.

Deists accept something called the 'the light of nature' to support the self-evident nature of their positive religious claims. Deists derive the sets of their duties and practices by comparing the perfect nature of Divine and imperfect nature of themselves. The acceptance of the existence of a Divine being is based on what they call 'the light of nature'. God is a Being who is Absolute perfection and Absolute bliss in himself. He is the genesis of this multiple objects of the universe.

But this concept of 'Light of Nature' did not stop them from critically engaging with the ideas in the realm of religion. No nonsense was entertained in the garb of intuition. Orthodox Christianity tried to depict itself as a product of a series of miracles. People were told to accept religious ideas with faith which they could not apprehend. Mysteries were treated as something beyond reason and not necessarily contradictory to it. But most of the Deists opposed this idea and relied on reason for certitude. The idea of 'Self evident Truth' did not support the concept of Revelation. They wanted to get the religion rid of the mysteries.

The reason and rationality must be incessantly at work and question things as far as possible. In case of conflict between reason and faith, it is reason that has to exercise to the farthest extent. Though it is taught that one needs to accept that which is not intellectually comprehensible with faith, Deists maintain that we can't make ourselves a subject of any cock and bull story for the sake of this so called faith. They are not ready to accept evident contradictions like yellow and blue colours of the same object at the same time without questioning it. The veracity of any

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religious dictum is always subject of revision and appraisal. So the older understanding that children dying before baptism do not go to heaven but are headed for some other world has no significance in Deist thinking. Deists opine that a lot of thing, which are asserted to be essential for salvation, can't be entertained by a rational mind. They are just absurd or appear to be simply laughing stocks. These apparent contradictions of holiness on one side and absurdity on the other lead a rational thinking mind to a zone of utter confusion. Apart from that, even understanding these expositions as symbolism is not easy in the sense that there has been a variety of interpretations to these stories. What do they really signify remains still shrewd in mystery.

Deists, due to their proximity to Naturalism, move towards cosmological argument. According to this argument, everything in nature is designed in such a way that it can survive in the world. Certain animals are full of feathers for the protection from heat and cold. Birds have been gifted with wings so as to fly high. Carnivorous animals have been equipped with sharp nails and specific design of teeth so as to be able to prey and get food. Innumerable such examples can be sighted from the observation of nature. The presence of design in every part of it indicates the presence of designer as well. This designer is none but God. There is substantial ground to infer the presence of a super creative power from the flawless natural system that makes life possible on this earth.

Deism was not untouched by the age old problem of freedom and determinism. Does the emphasis on design argument and conception of natural laws lead us necessarily to some kind of determinism was a pivotal question of the time. The influence of modern science and specially that of Newtonian mechanics, describing the whole cosmos more or less like a machine led to the tendencies of determinism.

Deists had different opinion on soul and life after death. Some like Lord Herbert of Cherbury and William Wollaston opined that soul exists after death and, as per Classical Christianity is rewarded or punished by God. Some like Benjamin Franklin believed in the theory of rebirth and some like Thomas Paine were agnostic in this regard. Yet people like Anthony Collins, Thomas Chubb and Peter Annet were perfect materialists and denied any such possibility of afterlife.

Deists treated the prevailing form of the religion as a perverted form of a simple and rational religion. They ascribed the whole deformation to something called 'priestcraft' or manipulation of the religion by the priests. Common man was misled by the story of heaven and hell and the religion was mystified with unnecessary elements. This deviation required some kind of reformation and Deism was a product of the necessity.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) How do Deists relate God and His Creation in their Philosophy?

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2) Did modern science make any impact in the development of Deism?
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3) What do you mean by 'Light of Nature' in Deism?
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2.4   AGNOSTICISM – ITS ORIGIN AND DEFINITION

Agnosticism comes from agnostic which has its roots in Greek a (ἀ) meaning without and gnōsis (γνῶσις) meaning knowledge. This term was first used by Thomas Henry Huxley. Initially it was used for the rejection of any kind of transcendental knowledge but later it acquired a broader shape and came to be treated as a method of philosophizing and examining the veracity of knowledge claims. Though agnosticism has been often identified with atheism, it actually is not so. There are people who claim themselves both as theists and agnostic whereas there is another group who call themselves both atheist and agnostic. Therefore Thomas Henry Huxley defines it as rejection of conclusions that are not 'demonstrated and demonstrable'.

Sceptic Philosophers believed that apart from some mathematical propositions like 'The sum of all the three angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles' and certain propositions like 'All bachelors are unmarried', which are necessarily true by their definitions themselves, all other propositions regarding the world is associated, as far as it's truth – value is concerned, with a degree of probability. They have raised serious doubts about the necessity of Universal propositions like 'All men are mortal'. Therefore there is no basis for a perfect knowledge claim. All knowledge that we claim to have is actually not knowledge but belief. Everything is attached to uncertainty and therefore, while making knowledge claims, we should be very careful. Thus Agnosticism is scepticism but it is special in the sense that it talks mainly about those propositions which are concerned with the existence and nature of God or Absolute reality. Though this is how Agnosticism is defined in the broadest terms, there are various kinds of Agnosticisms which we will see in the due course of the chapter.

2.5.   AGNOSTICISM – VARIOUS DIMENSIONS

Though Thomas Henry Huxley used the term agnosticism for the first time, he is not the first and foremost to think in this line. In various cultures and philosophies we find traces of agnosticism in various forms and ways. In Indian tradition, for example, its presence can be traced to the hymns of the Ṛg Vedas, which is supposed to be the oldest canonical work available in any religion in this world. The Nasadīya Sūkta reads that there was neither 'being nor not being' in the beginning of this creation. And further goes to ask who the creator, is then, of this creation? It reads as –

At first there was neither being nor non – being

There was not air nor yet sky beyond

What was its wrapping? Where? In whose protection?

Was water there unfathomable and deep?

This indicates a kind of unknowability of the Ultimate principle and an antifoundationalistic approach at least in the realm of reason. The same kind of indications can be found in the writings of [Pyrrho](#) in ancient Greek Philosophy. Protagoras also took the sceptical position by declaring 'Man is the measure of all things'.

In modern times, Kant becomes a champion of the limitations of human reason. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant maintains that the world of objects is given to us in a specific space – time background. All that we know about objects is only one face of it. Kant calls it phenomena and the whole of the object or 'the thing – in – itself' is called noumena. This noumena is called unknown and unknowable by Kant. He opines that when reason tries get into the domain of noumena it gets bogged up in its internal contradictions what Kant terms as 'antinomies'. This sceptical approach indicated by the phrase 'unknown and unknowable' perhaps puts Kant also in the zone of agnostics. Apart from that, Kant criticized all the classical arguments for the existence of God, suggesting that intellectual adventures do not work in the region of God. Kant leaves room for faith in the matters of God. This is perfect intellectual agnosticism. Again while reading modern existentialists like Soren Kirkegard, we can listen to the echoes of agnosticism. He maintains that God, if by very definition is unknown, leads us to lot of confusion. If He does not exist, it is impossible to prove His existence and if He does, it is folly to attempt it.

Coming to some classical agnostics, Thomas Henry Huxley, who coined the term agnosticism, very simply puts it as he can neither affirm nor deny the immortality of man. He sees no reason for believing it but on the other hand has no means of disproving it. Like an open thinker, he opines that he has no *a priori* objection to the belief in the after – life but he is not ready to accept them unless they are evidentially proved. In the same tune, Bertrand Russell goes to express his agnosticism. He says that, in the strict philosophical language, he would like to call himself an agnostic rather than an atheist because as he can't prove the existence of God, he can't disprove it either.

Agnosticism, though seen as something uniform, actually has got many varieties. One of them is agnostic atheism. This group of people do not believe in the existence of a God but at the same time do not claim to have evidences to demonstrate God's non – existence. The second group is called agnostic theists. This group believes in the existence of God but does not claim to know it. The third group believes in pragmatic agnosticism, according to which, there is no proof of either existence or non – existence of God. The question is only formal in the sense that the so called God seems to be totally indifferent to the activities of the world. There is another group called Ignostics, who question the definition of God itself before entering into the debate of His existence and non – existence. They opine that the whole debate is meaningless because the very existence of a deity is not empirically verifiable.

Then there is another division of agnosticism, pertaining to unknowability of God. One group thinks that it is absolutely impossible to know the existence of God another maintains that though it is unknowable today one day humanity might come to know about it through certain evidences. The first group is called strong agnostics and the second group is called weak agnostics.

Though Agnosticism seems to be appealing at times, this line of thought has been subject of a variety of criticisms. Many religious scholars are of the opinion that there is a spiritual aspect in human intelligence which makes it capable of conceiving the supra – sensuous reality. They are of the opinion that mere inability to grasp something does not prove its non – existence. The truth might not be revealed to larger section of humanity. But we can't decide the truth value of a proposition based on the number of people who are aware of it.

Agnostics are not ready to affirm the existence of God since there is no sufficient scientific evidence or empirical data to prove it. But religious scholars object that to make or even to expect God to come down and become a subject of laboratory experiment is not sensible. If the possibility of God's existence is not rejected by agnostics, they should also accept the fact that if any such Divine being exists, he can't be like a mixture of certain chemicals in the Chemistry laboratory. Thus the matter of God has to be treated in a different perspective altogether. By definition God transcends the limits of human reason and the world of sense – objects.

Again, Kant's position that the ultimate truth is 'unknown and unknowable' applies only to the realm of reason and rationality. Kant himself maintains that he has kept room for faith in order to deal with God. Therefore, it is a mistake to mix the truths of the sense – data world to mix with the truths of religion.

Another group of theistic scholars argue that it is practically not possible for any human being to go through his life without either being a theist or an atheist. One can't leave this pivotal question like this. A common man's values are dependent on his orientation towards the Ultimate reality, which religion identifies as God. To leave the matter undecided would again amount, they argue, more or less to atheism.

It is better to call oneself an atheist, atheists remark, rather than an agnostic if, like strong agnostics, one maintains that God, even if He exists, is unknown and unknowable. These two positions are practically synonymous. So, strong agnosticism boils down to atheism.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Differentiate between weak and strong agnosticism.

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2) Is agnosticism synonymous with atheism? Give at least a reason for your answer.

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3) Give one criticism of agnosticism as a philosophy.

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2.6   LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to give an outline view of both Deism and Agnosticism. The concepts have been seen from both historical and Philosophical standpoints. Keeping in mind, the varieties which these two concepts encompass, we have tried to throw light on as many of them as possible. To be precise Deism is an evolute of the impact of science upon human mind. Though this theory also can't explain the phenomenal universe and its relation to its creator perfectly, it attempts to come out of the tendency to accept every religious dictum without questioning. That's probably the reason why they are not ready to accept revelation as an epistemological category and appeals to the court of reason and peeps into nature for certainty of knowledge. Similarly agnostic maintain a distinct position with respect to the religious matters like soul and God and very clearly accepts their limitations in knowing those things. Here we have also highlighted its difference with atheism.

2.7   KEY WORDS

Theism and Atheism: Two views, of which, the former affirms belief in God and the later denies it.

Determinism and Indeterminism: The former view holds that all the events are predetermined whereas the later contends that nothing is predestined

A priori: Existing in the mind, prior to and independent of experience

2.8   FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 3 MATERIALISM AND MARXISM

Contents

3.0. OBJECTIVES

Materialism is one of the most fascinating enquires in the history of ideas. Objective of this Unit is to provide a thorough historical and philosophical introduction to different materialist schools and their culmination in Marxian Materialism, which is known as Dialectical Materialism. The materialist world view had reached its zenith in the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. In this Unit, the continuum of materialist philosophy from antiquity to Marx is presented. (Whenever the words *Marx* or *Marxian* are used, they also imply the contributions of Engels, who had played an indiscernible role in development of Dialectical Materialism. However, Engels urged that their philosophy should be named after Marx, hence the name has been Marxian.)

As the title of the Unit suggests, Marxian Materialism is discussed at length, partially its applications in the analysis of history, society and political economy. It is impossible to furnish all the details pertinent Dialectical Materialism in this Unit. Hence adequate directions and list of primary and secondary writings, in References and Further Readings section, are provided for assisting students for further studies on this topic.

By the time of completion of this Unit, you should have a fair idea of -
- Materialism and idealism, basic differences,
- Materialism in ancient civilizations,
- Materialism in modern philosophy, especially in Marxian philosophy.

3.1. INTRODUCTION TO MATERIALISM

Materialism is a school of thought which holds the matter being the only existing substance and all worldly phenomena including those of thought and consciousness are results of interactions of different forms of the mater. The word 'materialism' first used by the mystical philosopher English Henry More in 1668. And a little later German philosopher Leibniz used it in one of his

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French works to name the thought of those who accept the existence of matter alone. Materialism has been the anti-thesis to Idealism which holds the consciousness, not matter, as the ground of all the existence.

The major postulations of Idealism are:

1. Material world is dependent on the spiritual world,
2. Spirit, mind or idea can and does exist independent of matter,
3. An unknowable realm exists beyond the human perception, experience and science.

The origin of Materialism was a challenge to Idealism and the basic postulations of Materialism are as following:

1. World is its by very nature material; everything which exists come into being on the basis of material causes, arises and develops in accordance with the laws of motion of matter,
2. Mater is an objective reality existing outside and independent of the mind and every idea is a product of psychological process about the material phenomena,
3. World and its laws are fully knowable. Much may not be known as of now; however, there is nothing, which cannot be known due to its defined nature. In such cases the 'unknown' cannot be known to those who declared its existence.

Materialism shares affinities with science and Atheism, like the Idealism does with theology and religion. However, they cannot be as the former primarily interested in the truism of independent existence of the world by providing scientific and philosophical explanations of the phenomena, the latter stands for the primacy of human world and nonexistence of god. Another major difference, a historical one, is - all the atheists were materialists, but all the materialists were not atheists. Though there had been materialist thinkers who were against non-sensual knowledge and god, many others did not refute the god due to different reasons.

3.2   MATERIALISM IN ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

Idealist theories of the world origination were challenged as early as in 8th century BC. German philosopher Karl Jaspers observes that during the period between 800 BC. and 200 BC., which he called 'the Axial Age', similar revolutionary thinking appeared across the major world civilisations in the Middle East, India, China and the Occident, which had laid foundations for future religion, science and philosophy.[4] All the ancient materialists - Carvakas and Vaisesikas in ancient India, Xun Zi and Wang Chung in ancient China and pre-Socratic philosophers in ancient Greece, who belonged this Age had built sound arguments in favour of Materialism. The subject matters dealt by them were including - the origin or the universe and human beings, relationship between human beings and the god and *vice versa*, human beings and social relationships and different sciences of the natural phenomena. In this section, the Materialism of ancient India and Greece, which had direct influence on modern Materialism are discussed.

Materialism in Ancient India and Greece

In ancient India, Carvaka and Vaiseshika schools of thought had produced significant materialist explanations of the natural phenomena. Carvaka or Lokayata school declares that the nature is made up of four elements earth, water, fire and air and these elements alone, when transformed into the body, intelligence is produced, just as the inebriating power is developed from the blend of certain ingredients; and when these are destroyed, intelligence at once perishes also. The Vaisesika is said to be the one of the first schools of thought that pronounced atomic theory in the history of ideas, in and around 2nd century B.C. Its founder Kashyapa, who was also called Kanada, propagated the atomic theory which held that the world is made up of *Paramanus* (atoms), which were indestructible particles of matter. While the Carvakas forecasted the major themes of modern science and rational agency of human being, Vaisesikas proposed the scientific theories which were later known as the law of conservation of matter and energy and Newton's law of universal gravitation.

The pre-Socratic Greek thought was a wonderful anthology on natural philosophy, which Aristotle called 'the physical school of thought'. The pre-Socratic thinkers believed that ultimate principle (*archê*) of the Being was one and made up of matter (*hulê*). They sought to determine the origin and nature of everything by identifying the most basic material element, that from which all things emerge and return. Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Anaxagoras, Heraclitus, Epicurus and Democritus were the major thinkers of Greek Materialism, who made extensive work on natural philosophy. While Thales, Anaximenes, Heraclitus held water, air and fire to be the archê; Anaximander and Anaxagoras held *Apeiron* (Infinite) and *Nous* (Mind) to be the ultimate principle, respectively. Heraclitus explained the phenomena of the world through his theory of flux. Leucippus, Democritus and Epicurus developed atomic theories, which had similar structures with that of modern physics, to explain the ultimate principle. These philosophers made important contributions to growth of ancient science by providing materialist explanations for quite a few of the natural phenomena. Greek Materialism enjoyed enormous influence over the Western thought. French and English Materialism were always closely related to *Democritus* and *Epicurus*. Francis Bacon, who rivals with René Descartes for the status of the Father of modern philosophy, held the Greek thinkers with high regard and Marx had acquired his foundational knowledge in Materialism from the ideas of Epicurus and Democritus, thus Greek Materialism bears an indelible mark on the development of modern Materialism.

3.3   MATERIALISM IN MODERN PHILOSOPHY

The pre-Marxian Materialism consists of three major schools - the English, French and German. While English school was developed majestic thinkers Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, French schools was developed by physicists Le Roy, Pierre Jean George Cabanis and La Mettrie, who based their arguments on the physics, not metaphysics, of Descartes. The ideas of German philosophers George Wilhelm Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach prepared the foreground for Marxian Materialism. A survey of these schools would present a coherent idea about development of modern Materialism. It also narrates the history of the growth of Dialectical Materialism, since Marx and Engels had studied the works of their predecessors, in order to accept or refute their cases for materialism.

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The English School

Karl Marx holds Great Britain to be the original home of all modern Materialism and Materialism as her born son. Bacon was the foremost thinker in the British Materialism, whom Marx described as the 'real progenitor of English Materialism'. For Bacon, natural philosophy is the only true philosophy and physics, which is based on sense experience, is its chief component. Sense perception is the 'Rational Method' of investigation and 1) Induction, 2) Analysis, 3) Comparison, 4) Observation and 5) Experiment are it's the principal forms. However, Bacon's use of theology in developing his case for Materialism had given raise to a few inconsistencies, which were later addressed by Hobbes who systematized Bacon's ideas.

Hobbes shattered the theological prejudices of Baconian Materialism and brought out extensive arguments in favour of Bacon's Rational Method. He argues that, "It is impossible to separate thought from matter that thinks. This matter is the substratum of all changes going on in the world." However, he could not supply the proof for the fundamental postulation of the Method i.e. all the human knowledge originates from the world of sensation.

It was Locke who substantiated this postulation in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Locke refuted Descartes' theory of innate ideas which holds the reason as the prime cause of the human knowledge. He described mind as a *tabula rasa* – a white paper, upon which the Nature writes. He classified all the ideas into 'ideas of sense' and 'ideas of reflection'; and the latter are the mind's reflection upon its own activity. Locke's distinction of the ideas suggests how the sense experience supplies primary data for the knowledge, upon which the reason can work. Thus he substantiated Bacon's postulation of rational method.

The major limitation of English Materialism was it dealt only with the problems of epistemology. Engels described this limitation as an inevitable one imposed by the time, which was its strength and weakness at the same time. It was a strength since it had represented the scientific progress of the time and it was the weakness on the other hand as it lead to growth of mechanistic Materialism, an incomplete version of modern materialsm.

The French School

French Materialism, according to Marx, added societal dimension to English Materialism. The French school was a revolt against 17th century philosophy, which was full of theological and metaphysical speculations. The school was influenced by three strands of thought – physics of Descartes, English Materialism, particularly Locke's epistemology, and the opposition of Pierre Bayle's Materialism to 17th century metaphysics of Descartes, Spinoza, Malebranche and Leibniz. This school could be further classified into a) mechanistic and b) socialistic variants.

While the former was inspired by Descartes' physics, the latter had grown out of Locke's epistemology. Their growth was organic and cannot be easily separated. The mechanistic school began with physician Le Roy who was inspired by Descartes' physics, which had endowed matter with self-creative power and conceived mechanical motion as its manifestation. He declared that soul was modus of the body and ideas were mechanical motions. This development

was followed by another physician La Mettrie and reached its zenith in Cabanis, who perfected Cartesian Materialism in his treatise *Rapport du physique et du moral de 1'homme*. This school gradually merged in the development of French natural science.

The socialistic school was developed by Claude Adrien Helvétius, a French philosopher. However, this socialism must not be identified with much advanced and polemical Marxian and non-Marxian variants of socialism of 19th and 20th century. Socialism in its initial forms was a theory about how the societal processes including governance shall be conducted by considering all the human beings equally. Helvétius, who had his philosophical roots in Locke's Materialism, extended the latter's epistemological arguments to social life. He argued that, "Man is not wicked, but he is subordinate to his interests. One must not therefore complain of the wickedness of man but of the ignorance of the legislators, who have always placed the particular interest in opposition to the general interest." He presupposed the equality of the human agency based on the Natural equality of human intelligence. This socialistic trend was further developed by Charles Fourier and other forerunners of socialism, whom Marx called utopian socialists. French Materialism developed English materialist theory of epistemology into a social theory and Marx and Engels had considered it above the English one.

The German School

Interestingly in Germany the precursors of Marxian Materialism were not materialists. It was the major idealist philosopher Hegel who developed foundations for Marxian Materialism, unintentionally though. He had created a metaphysical kingdom, which inherited all the previous developments of metaphysics. With this new system, he explained every major social phenomenon of his time. Engels noted that Hegelian system had covered "an incomparably greater domain than any earlier system…logic, natural philosophy, philosophy of mind…philosophy of history, of right, of religion, history of philosophy, aesthetics, etc. — in all these different historical fields Hegel labored to discover and demonstrate the pervading thread of development." Despite their opposition to idealism, Engels equated development of Hegel's system, as part of the growth of German idealism, with political revolution in France in 18th century, which was openly combating against all official science, the church and the state.

According to Hegel's metaphysics, the *Spirit* or *Geist* exists ever since the eternity and it has been the actual living soul of all existence. Through different preliminary stages, it develops its own self. It alienates itself by turning itself into nature, where, *unconscious* of itself, disguised as a *natural necessity*. It goes through further process and reappears as man's consciousness, the subjective spirit. The subjective spirit further alienates itself in order to become objective spirit of the human societies and finally. It arrives at its fullest realization as Absolute Spirit in Hegel's system. According to him, the Geist underwent all such changes due to the dialectic laws of eternal process of Being and Becoming and further negation, to which all objective world and phenomena are subjected to.

Hegelian system has two major aspects to it: a) the *system*, which was world view of speculative metaphysics, and b) the *dialectical method*, which does not allow the existence of any *status quo*. Those who were politically and religiously conservative, including Hegel himself, emphasised much on the *system* and those who regarded the *dialectical method* as important formed the

extreme opposition, the left Hegelian group. Thus, the supposed to be most conservative metaphysical system, which was the official philosophy of Prussian state indeed had a revolutionary element in it. With his dialectical method, Hegel made every thing in existence, including his own philosophy, a subject of Becoming and further negation. This trait was first discovered by the German poet Henrich Heine.

Bruno Bauer, Max Stirner, David Strauss and Ludwig Feuerbach, who represented the left wing of the Hegelian philosophy, had produced radical critiques of Christianity and arguments for materialism. Feuerbach's contribution, which influenced Marx and Engels in significant manner, was particularly outstanding. Feuerbach appreciated Hegel's explanations of societal phenomena such as religion, nation state, but refuted his abstract reasoning such as origin of Absolute Spirit. He declared that it was the nature which is basis for human relationships, not any 'abstract Idea' declared by Hegel. He criticised the existing philosophy becoming mouthpiece for theology. He elaborated his system thought in the form of anthropological Materialism, which was based on the relationship between humans and nature. Marx saw the successes of Feuerbach's in the following arguments:

a) He had shown that philosophy was nothing more than religion brought into thought and developed in thought, and that it is equally to be condemned as another form and mode of existence of the estrangement of man's nature.

b) He had founded *true Materialism* and *real science* by making the social relation of "man to man" the basic principle of this theory.

c) He had opposed to the third step negation of the negation of Hegelian dialectic, which claims to be the absolute positive, the positive which is based upon itself and positively grounded in itself, which can be proved. Marx and Engels were initially inspired by the left Hegelians, particularly by Feuerbachian attack. Feuerbach was a vital link between Hegel and Marx. However, later they realised that the latter had fallen short of providing accurate arguments to counter the prevailing idealist philosophy. Hence they had retained the progressive parts and severely critiqued the overall arguments of the left Hegelians. Feuerbach was their major point of departure. Following are the three major limitations of Feuerbach's materialism, according to Marx and Engels.

a) Approach of Feuerbachian materialism was ahistorical. He attacked Hegel's idealist system stating that nothing could possibly exist outside the nature and man, however, he had not recognised the importance of human history, which was completely absent in his works. Hence, he could not refute the Hegel's idealist scheme of history i.e. the history of the Geist.

b) The second major limitation was his philosophy of religion, which holds that religion is the relation between human beings based on the affections, particularly between the two sexes and…in the love between "I" and "Thou"." This forced association of human relations with the religion necessitates human relations to be conceived of as the new, true, religion.

c) The third limitation was Feuerbach had continued to cling to abstract thought in some form or other in his writings and could not base on concrete social and historical categories.

Marxian materialist system, which developed upon the well-built aspects of hitherto Materialism and inference of the modern science, included a philosophy of nature, a theory of history and a theory of society, all three derived from a common set of first principles and logically supporting each other.

Check Your Progress I

> **Note:** Use the space provided for your answers.
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> 1) What was Bacon's Rational Method and how Locke substantiated it?
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> …………………………………………………………………………………………
> 2)   What was the major difference between the English Materialism and the French Materialism?
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3.4   MATERIALISM AND MARXIAN PHILOSOPHY

Marxian arguments marked the fullest materialist shift in Hegelian philosophy and also developed disarming materialist arguments. Until the Marxian intervention, Materialism was not an argument with force against religion, which continued to resurface in materialist thought in some form or the other. Engels said, "The materialist outlook was taken really seriously for the first time and carried through consistently", only in Marxism. It denied the Idealism the status of philosophy and equated it with theology. Marx acknowledged the successes of Feuerbach in establishing the hitherto philosophy being the encroachment of religion in thought expressed this idea. (Here philosophy must be understood for metaphysical part of it.) According to Marx, Idealism was not just an abstract theory of world view in philosophy, but a method of interpretation of every question of human existence, thus it was much direct confrontation.

Incorporation of Dialectical Method into materialist analysis made it a much cogent theory. Dialectical method is an approach to understand the phenomena of nature, which holds that all the things, processes and phenomena are in motion and undergo a constant change. Initially it was developed by Hegel in his Idealist system (Refer to 'revolutionary element' discovered by Henrich Heine in previous section) and given materialist form by Marx. The method essentially maintains that 'Being' of any idea, object or phenomena in its process of 'Becoming' creates its 'own other' and get 'negated' by it. Again this 'negation will be negated' to pave way to new Being. For example, the inhumane capitalism (Being) during the time of industrial revolution (in its Becoming) created its own other 'the revolutionary proletariat' and got 'negated' by it

(Negation). However, it could survive by several gradual conversions; most of them forced and some were natural. The new forms of capitalism such as capitalism + welfare negated the need for revolutionary attitude among the proletariat (Negation of the Negation). Thus, the new Being of Capitalism was possible. This method is applicable to all materialist phenomena and processes, according to Marx.

The words 'Dialectical Materialism' and 'Historical Materialism' were not used by Marx and Engels, but later created by later Marxian thinkers. Stalin said, "Our philosophy is called Dialectical Materialism because its approach to the phenomena of nature, its method of apprehending them, is dialectical, while its interpretation of the phenomena of nature, its conception of these phenomena, its theory, is Materialism". Historical Materialism is the application of Dialectical Materialism to the study of society, economics and history.

At personal level, Marx's started taking serious interest in materialist analysis of society after closely following deliberations of the Rhine Province Assembly during his editorship of the German newspaper *Rheinische Zeitung* between 1842 and 1843. By then, he was also inspired by the discovery of the cell, transformation of energy and Darwin's theory of evolution. He developed an elaborated theory of Materialism during his visits to Manchester between 1841 and 1844. His grounding into materialist philosophy and mastery over Hegel's philosophy and his grand intellectual visualization helped him to develop an overarching materialist theory, which revolutionized the outlook of the world. Engel's philosophical collaboration with Marx helped in systematizing the body of knowledge of Marxian Materialism, which was significant in many ways. All the later philosophers including Lenin had garnered their knowledge of Marxian Materialism much from the writings of Engels.

The Critical Development

Marx and Engels had studied the all the previous – the Greek, the English, the French and the post-Hegelian German – versions of Materialism meticulously either to accept or refute the previous arguments. This critical development initially liberated Materialism from its mechanistic tendencies, which had roots in English and French Materialism. According to mechanism, all the natural phenomena could be explained by the rules of mechanistic motion. For example, world consists of nothing but interactions of the particles of the matter. This trend gained the reputation during 18th century during the advent of mechanical sciences.

This version was refuted by Marx and Engels due to its three weaknesses *viz.* a) it requires the conception of Supreme Being or Force, which started the world up, b) it seeks to reduce all processes to the same cycle of mechanistic interactions, hence cannot account for the development for the emergence of new qualities and new types of processes in nature, and c) it cannot account for the social development; it can provide no account of human social activity and leads to an abstract conception of human nature.

The major development of Marxian Materialism lies in turning the Hegel's idealist dialectics into materialistic one. Engels explained this process fascinatingly in his *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*. One of the important statements of Hegel - All that is real is rational; and all that is rational is real – seems to be an approval to the status quo. Indeed it has

been understood as endorsement to despotism, police government and censorship of the then Prussian King Frederick William III. However, Engels explains that Hegel never held everything that exists being the real without further qualification. For Hegel, any thing that should be real must also possesses necessary value. Prussian state was real and hence rational as long as it holds its necessity in history. In 1789, French monarchy had become unreal as it lost its necessity to exist and became so irrational; hence it had to be destroyed by the Great Revolution, of which Hegel always speaks with the greatest enthusiasm." Hence, "In the course of development, all that was previously real becomes unreal, loses its necessity, its right of existence, its rationality. And in the place of moribund reality comes a new, viable reality – peacefully if the old has enough intelligence to go to its death without a struggle; forcibly if it resists this necessity." Engels lucidly explains this development, "All that is real in the sphere of human history, becomes irrational in the process of time, is therefore irrational by its very destination… and everything which is rational in the minds of men is destined to become real, however much it may contradict existing apparent reality." Thus Hegel was not simply refuted in Marxian philosophy, but a new start was made from his revolutionary side i.e. Dialectical Method.

Materialist Basis

The major contribution of Dialectical Materialism was it explained all the worldly phenomena from stand point of philosophy and provided materialist basis for every thing. Marx and Engels had not only attacked the encroachment of religion in philosophy, but also represented the development of science in philosophy and provided a materialist basis that has radicalized our perception of important aspects of human life including religion, philosophy, science and history.

The Marxian philosophical method was also materialistic. Rather than using the prevailing speculative style, which they hated, Marx and Engels had employed the arguments from the sciences, both physical and social, to make their cases. Hegel's philosophy, political economy and Darwinian biology had supplied the data and insights for their subject matter. By avoiding speculative metaphysics, they avoided the abstract thought. By using the concrete categories of history, they produced the arguments which are axiomatic.

George Novack expounds the idea of material substance in Dialectical Materialism; "It conceives the universe in all its manifestations to consist of matter in motion. Matter should not be pictured as inert, characterless, and leaden, as it is often misrepresented by opponents of Materialism." He further explains the material substance is dynamic with all possible forms which could be, "found to be electrically energetic, infinitely plastic, and, in organic beings, can even become sensitive, alive and intelligent." This definition of matter is not a closed one, but open to the new forms of matter. Engels emphasised on the need to change of forms of Materialism according to the advancement in science. Going beyond the questions pertaining to physical matter, Marx and Engels had provided comprehensive theories of knowledge, society and history.

Theory of Knowledge

Marxian Materialism did not ask the long-standing epistemological questions in the way they had been asked i.e. how the knowledge possible etc. Rather it explored the materialist factors that govern the production of knowledge. Mind functioning is a thoroughly natural organic process.

9

"If, as Materialism holds, everything in the universe consists of matter in motion, then the human mind must likewise be a material phenomenon…If the collective intelligence of mankind was developed out of nature and society, the mind of the individual does not and cannot exist except as a function of his brain and his body. The gradual growth of intelligence, the effects of hunger, narcotics, or the disappearance of intelligence at death testify to the dependence of mind upon its material bases" explains Novack.

From this standpoint, it is not difficult to answer the long pending questions of epistemology such as "How can we know the world around us?". From its very organic nature, human mind can contemplates about its surrounding phenomena and form different mental images such as concepts and ideas by labouring upon its possessed information. Upon the epistemological question of veracity of knowledge acquired by the human beings, Novack replies, "The test of man's ability to know the external world truly is to be found in practice. Despite setbacks and stagnation, man's intellectual comprehension of the world has steadily increased together with his practical mastery over nature."

Theory of Society

In his *A Contribution to Critique of Political Economy*, Marx outlined his theory of society through the famous 'Base and Super Structure' metaphor. According to him, human beings enter into particular relations of productions and the totality of these relations forms the economic structure of a society. The economic structure is the base on which everything else such as art, religion, philosophy, education and politics would be based upon. It is not surprising that the super structural components most often echo with the opinions of the existing mode productions be it as feudalism or capitalism or socialism. Any change in the base would cause corresponding shift in super structure too. Marx applied this theory through out his philosophical, historical and economic analyses and demonstrated the primacy of economic factors in the changes of the society.

Theory of History

The word 'History' as used by Marx and Engels does not mean the past recorded by the historian. It means the social world in which men involved in making history live and by which they are determined; the action and interaction of man in society and totality of such actions. Marx refuted Hegel's idealist scheme of history i.e. of the Sprit and proposed four fundamental premises for the human history. They are:

1. Existence of human individuals is the first premise of all human history, without whom 'making' of human history would be impossible.

2. The urge to satisfy the first needs such as quenching the thirst and hunger, need for clothing and shelter, from which the new needs emerge and this production of new needs is the first historical act.

3. Third premise is the men who labour to make their life begin to make other men, the human reproduction, to propagate their kind. This effort forms the relationships of man and woman, parents and children and the family.

4. The procreation has two dimensions, natural and social. After establishment of societies, human beings through their labour establish economic life by cooperating among themselves on a large scale; and the multitude of productive forces accessible to men determines the nature of society. All the economic and political institutions are built upon this premise.

Marxian philosophy of history – Historical Materialism – has been an astounding success and was adopted by historians across the world. It gave birth to T 'history from below approach', which is still an accepted method in historiography.

Criticism and Legacy

Dialectical Materialism was criticised and critiqued by thinkers such as Max Weber, Karl Renner and Karl Popper. Weber objected such rigorous economic interpretation from the view point of cultural primacy over economy. (To understand Weber's point, think how caste oppression, a cultural phenomenon, works.) Karl Renner, former president of Austria, demonstrated how the legal institutions would influence the course of economics in modern democracies. Marxian argument of economic primacy emerged during the time when legal institutions of the state had not taken their roots sufficiently. The modern states can very much keep the economic forces under check. Karl Popper, one of the most vocal critics of Marx in 20th century, criticised the latter's historicism for its claim to predict the course of history, which simply is impossible. He accused Marx for producing such pseudo-scientific theory of history.

Despite the massive criticism, Dialectical Materialism still enjoys tremendous influence. Due to its influence, millions of people across the world have converted themselves into nontheists (sic). Karl Marx has become one of the three principle architects of modern social science along with Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. Isaiah Berlin, a prominent Liberal thinker held that Marx may be regarded as the 'true father' of modern sociology, "in so far as anyone can claim the title." Popper stated Marx opened and sharpened our eyes in many ways and a return to pre- Marxian social science is inconceivable, stated Karl Popper. This Unit could be closed with an observation of success of materialist component in Marxism; though millions had lost faith in Marxian communism after fall of the USSR, a good number of them remain cling to their nontheist world outlook.

Check Your Progress II
Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What was the 'revolutionary element' in Hegelian philosophy?

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2) How the philosophical progress happened from Feuerbach to Marx and Engels?
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3.5   LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we tried to provide the philosophical history of Materialism from ancient Greek period to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. We have seen how Materialism had developed in ancient and modern periods and its social and historical dimensions were also duly explained. In Marxian Materialism, development of the fundamental ideas was explained in detailed. We have also seen how the philosophical revolution of Marx and Engels had changed the outlook of millions of people across the world, which caused paradigm shift in our perception of science, religion, history, political economy and philosophy.

3.6   KEY WORDS

Materialism: See the given definition in section 3.1.
Idealism: See the given definition in section 3.1.
Metaphysics: A branch of philosophy which enquires into the fundamental reality of the world, which Aristotle described as 'Study of the Prime Mover' and the 'Study of Being as Being'. His definition indicates the two trends of this branch. Metaphysics asks similar questions to those of physical sciences such as - what is fundamental block of this world. The answer may be 'the atom' or 'divine substance', based on the world view of those who reply.
Didactical Method: See the given definition in section 3.3
Mechanistic Materialism: See the given definition in section 3.3.
Didactical Materialism: See the given definition in section 3.3.
Historical Materialism: See the given definition in section 3.3.

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UNIT 4 PROBLEM OF EVIL

Contents

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The problem of evil challenged the existence of God. As Stumf observed, the problem of evil traditionally has been understood as an apparent inconsistency in theistic beliefs. The gruesome facts of suffering provide unmistakable, objective evidence that an all- powerful and perfectly loving god does not exist. For more than two millennia, dramatists, theologians, philosophers and their modern counterparts have pondered the problem of evil. The unit attempts to capture the problem of evil as dealt in philosophy in both Western and Indian traditions.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Philosopher's task is to see whether the facts of suffering, which induce a range of powerful religious reactions involving belief, emotion, and motivation, also provide the basis for a cogent argument from evil to the non existence of God-an argument that should persuade the reasonable person who considers it carefully. Philosophy, like literature preoccupied with the problem of evil: its origin, nature, and effects. Philosophers have tried to define evil, to assess the utility of the moralistic language of evil, and to ask what the existence of evil says about human nature. Religious thinkers have asked how an all powerful and benevolent God can tolerate evil and undeserved suffering; whether evil is intelligible and serves some rational purpose or is utterly inexplicable; and whether evil is intractable or can be eradicated or overcome. In the twentieth century secular explanations of evil, attributing evil to environmental or psychological defects, tended to replace religious and philosophic ones, at least among intellectuals. Psychologists and sociologists blamed evil on such factors as mental disease, past abuse, psychological desensitization, and dysfunctional patterns of development; social demographic, economic, and political stresses frustrations, inequalities, dislocations, flawed ideologies and misplaced idealism. Contingency is a hallmark of many historical accounts of evil. A key goal of moral history of evil must be to understand the social, economic, cultural, and political conditions and ideologies that misshape societies and allow collective evil to develop, take root and flourish. Historical evils are resulted from forces as diverse as racial and religious intolerance, difficult economic circumstances, the untrammeled workings of the free market, and utopian and messianic ideas.

1

4.2   TYPES OF EVILS

Philosophers and theologians are discussed the problem of evil for centuries. They tried to classify evil into two broad categories, namely, moral and natural.

Moral evil - This covers the willful acts of human beings (such wars, crimes, self destructive vices and damages they cause in human life as murder, rape, etc.)

Natural evil - This refers to natural disasters (such as famines, floods, and destructive effects of earth quakes and so on.)

There are two classes of evil:

1. Physical evil - This means bodily pain or mental anguish (fear, illness, grief, war, etc.)

2. Metaphysical evil - This refers to such things as imperfection and chance (criminals going unpunished, deformities, etc.)

There is another way to distinguish evil as moral and non-moral. Evil s what harms human beings. The moral evil is harm done by human beings to other human beings. The non-moral evil is viewed as a harm done to human beings by non human agents and events.

4.3   LOGICAL ARGUMENT FROM EVIL

The classical form of argument from evil demonstrates the impossibility of God's creating a world containing any evil whatsoever. This basic idea was put forwarded by Epicurus , Greek philosopher was forcefully restated by David Hume, eighteenth century Scottish philosopher and fierce critic of Christianity in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* : 'Is He willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then He is impotent. Is He able, but not willing? Then He is malevolent. Is He both able and willing? Whence then is evil?'
This may put it in this logical sequence:
1. If God exists and is perfectly good, then He will prevent as much evil as He can.
2. If God exists and is omnipotent (and omniscient), then He can prevent any evil from occurring.
3. There is evil
Conclusion: God does not exist, or He is not omnipotent and omniscient, or He is not perfectly good.

4.4   TYPOLOGY OF EVIL

In her book, *The Many Faces of Evil*, Amelie Oksenberg Rorty provides a complex and six fold typology of metaphysical –theological treatment of evil. First, there is only divine goodness while evil as an illusion. (what is often called theodicy), secondly that there is some evil, but the latter is only a lesser degree or a 'privation' of goodness (a view prominently associated with St. Augustine); thirdly, that good and evil are both real and permanently conflicting forces (what is called Manichaeism); fourthly, that human reason postulates a perfectly rational universe but acknowledges evil as a dilemma (a view ascribed to Kant); fifthly that evil is real and the world is a mess (Schopenhauer); and sixthly, that good and evil are nothing in themselves but only

social constructs (Hobbes and possibly Nietzsche). By contrast Susan Neiman in her book *Evil in Modern Thought* makes to do only two major types, namely arguments relying on free from heaven' and arguments bent on 'condemning the architect'. Whereas the former advanced by philosophers celebrating divine or rational 'order' despite real-life experience to the contrary, the second are favored by an assortment of realists, pessimists and cynics. Fred Dallmayr approached the problem in different way. He finds three categories that are traditionally dominated discussion of evil. They are: radical monism, radical dualism and third category involving a spectrum ranging from modified monism to modified dualism. Radical monism holds that ultimate reality-being a reflection of divine or a benevolent creator- is wholly good and perfect where as perceived imperfections are illusions or the result of ignorance .this theory s mostly associated with Leibniz , but it can also found in versions of Christian and neo –platonic 'gnosis'. The proto type of radical dualism is Manichaeism , but it can also found in 'gnosticism' and extreme puritan theories of pre-destination. The middle ground between monism and dualism is occupied by neo –platonic and Christian thinkers ready to acknowledge evil but giving primacy to divine goodness. Thus in treating evil as mere 'privation' of goodness , Augustine approximates the monist view ; however by insisting on 'fallenness' of human nature and the distinction between the heavenly and earthly cities , his theory slides towards Manichaean dualism.

4.5 THEORIES OF EVIL:WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

McCloskey had an attempt to map the prominent theories and explanation of problem of evil. The theists offered different explanations for the problem of evil. Some of the people consider evil as real and some viewed as an unreal or as privation. Some consider it from moral view point and some discussed it as a matter of faith. These are some of the prominent explanation to problem of evil:

1. Evil as unreal. This view is usually explained by reference to an analogy with the arts. Discord in one part of a symphony produces greater harmony and beauty in the whole. Few theists would seriously wish to contend that moral evil is unreal-that it is illusion rather than reality. However, some theists have argued that pain is not really evil. Our thinking that it is evil is said to result from viewing it out of its context. If we had "a God's eye view" we should see that such alleged evil is a valuable part of the whole which heightens the beauty of the majestic, divine melody. In brief, the attempt to solve the problem of evil by asserting that evil is unreal rests on an argument which, if valid, would simply suggest that evil might be justified. It is an argument that most theists will feel impelled to reject because of its shocking moral implications. And it is invalid because it rests on a false analogy between aesthetic appraisal and moral judgment.

2. Evil as privation. The view that evil is a privation of proper good, or of right order. It is an attempt to steer a middle course between saying that it is merely illusion and saying that it is fully real. It is hoped thereby to circumvent the difficulty of having to attribute to God the creation of evil as a positive nature. Evil, it is claimed, is such that its nature lies in the absence or privation of good rather than in the presence of something positive or intrinsic.

Evil is real. It has a real nature of its own. It is not simply privation of being or of right order. And even if it were, the problem of explaining it would remain, for sin and pain do not become justified and do not cease to be a problem merely by being described as a privation rather than as an intrinsic nature.

3. Evil as real but justified. With moral evil, the free will explanation dominates the field. Moral evil is explained as a consequence of God's gift to man of free will. Where the physical evil

3

involved, there are explanations of evil as real but justified. Evil as means to good. Evil as unavoidable, or as undeserved and unavoidable but compensated for in an after life. C.A. Campbell suggests that while some do suffer undeservedly in this life, God could not avoid such suffering. But God makes amends for such suffering by granting compensate joy in the next life.

It is pointed out that physical evil is not to be explained as deserved punishment; nor as unaviodable suffering, which is or is not compensated for in an after life; nor it is justified asa meansto greater goods.

4. *Moral Evil*. Moral evil is usually accepted as something real and then explained in terms of free will. The theist argues that God created man with the gift of freedom but man chose to sin. God could not prevent the latter possibility without denying free will. Hence, God is not the author of sin. The value of free will (and/or the goodness of the moral goods it makes possible) justifies the evils that come into being as a result of the misuse by man of his free will.

5. *Faith and Evil*

Does faith provides way out of the problems of moral evil and suffering? It is often argued that it is presumptuous and arrogant for us to try to judge God on the basis of our limited human reason. If faith is understood as something some thing that improves our moral life, it simply makes the problem of moral evil more acute. It is argued that faith can no more used to explain or justify the moral evil, than it can be used as a basis for overcoming the problem of suffering. Faith is not an aid to the theist in his attempt to solve the problem of evil. The problem of evil is in fact aggravated by the claim that faith improves moral performance.

St. Augustine's Theodicy

Defenses of God's goodness and omnipotence in view of this problem - called *Theodicies* - also stretch back to the beginnings of Christianity. The thing to note about theodicy is that none of the main aspects of the problem change: God is still all-good, omniscient and omnipotent; evil still seems to exist. The difference is, however, that some reason is given to explain how all of these things can be true at the same time. St Augustine (354-430) put the problem most concisely: " Either God cannot abolish evil, or he will not; if he cannot then he is not all-powerful; if he will not then he is not all good." St. Augustine theodicy is a prominent theory of evil considered by many theologians and philosophers. St. Augustine and Reinhold Niebuhr stressed evil's inward character, its roots in human pride, arrogance, sensuality, selfishness, and alienation form the divine. Drawing upon the notion of original sin, this perspective sees the capacity for sinfulness as omnipresent, lying ultimately in the human capacity for self-deception and the tendency to confuse self-interest with righteousness. Other theologians have adopted a Manichean perspective, regarding evil as an entity outside the self.

The Free-Will Argument

A modern advocate of Augustine's view can be found in Alvin Plantinga (*God, Freedom and Evil*, 1974) who claimed that for God to have created a being who could only have performed good actions would have been logically impossible. Plantinga's view of the free will defense is a landmark in contemporary discussions of the problem of evil. As he expounds it, the free will defense rests on the two philosophical claims, which it adds to the theological assumptions that God is omnipotent, omniscient and perfectly good. And Human beings have free will, and possession of free will and use of it to do more good than evil is a. Perhaps the most common

theodicy is the so-called free-will argument - very similar to Augustine's argument - which goes something like this:

1. Evil is the result of human error

2. Human error results from free-will (the ability to do wrong)

3. If we didn't have free-will we would be robots

4. God prefers a world of free agents to a world of robots

5. Evil is therefore an unfortunate - although not unavoidable outcome - of free-will

6. For God to intervene would be to go take away our free-will

7. Therefore, God is neither responsible for evil nor guilty of neglect for not intervening

This view was later criticised by Anthony Flew and J.L. Mackie, who both argue that God *could* have chosen to create "good robots" who still possessed free-will.

John Hick's Theodicy

The philosopher John Hick (b.1922) has developed the view 'Irenaean theodicy' further. St Irenaeus (130-202 AD), a Father of the early Christian Church, who thought that humanity was not created perfect, but that they required growth in order to approach spiritual perfection. However, God does not necessarily intend evil to provide a means for this growth. According this, for a person could grow to spiritual perfection simply by obeying God's laws. Also, from Irenaeus's point of view, God does not intervene in human affairs to prevent evil because that would be to interfere with free will. Hick agrees with Irenaeus that God created us with the potential for spiritual growth. However, Hick then sees the process of 'soul making' (as he calls it) to be a response to the evil in the world. So, if cancer did not exist, or the evil actions of others, then we would not have the means whereby we could develop spiritually. Also, Hick argues, there exists what he terms an 'epistemic distance' between human beings and God, so that we are not born knowing of his existence, and it is not something which it is easy to gain certain knowledge of. Therefore, the process of soul making also involves a battle to attain religious faith.

Two further consequences of Hick's theodicy should be borne in mind here: firstly, because some individuals do not seem to have opportunity to develop spiritually (e.g. in the case of infant death), Hick argues that we must bring the possibility of an afterlife into the equation (so that such soul's receive a heavenly reward); secondly, because there is such a great amount of evil in the world, and not all suffering seems fair or understandable, we must finally admit that we cannot fully understand God's reasons or His plan.

The Process Theodicy

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Process philosophy is the idea that reality is in a state of change and development. From this point of view, no opinion of how the world is can always be true. Process theology argues that the reality of God is not fixed and that God himself is still developing. From this point of view, God is "dipolar" - that is, has two "poles", one mental and one physical. The physical pole is the material world itself, which acts almost as God's "body".

Because of this relationship, God is partly distinct and partly immersed in the world - just as we are in our bodies. As a result, any suffering in creation is also undergone by God, and creation itself is seen as a cooperation between God and all other beings. Whether this cooperation actually takes place is thus up to humanity - in other words, God cannot force humans to do His will, but can only influence them.

4.6   PROBLEM OF EVIL: INDIAN UNDERSTANDING

The western theories of evil are mostly explained from Christianity. Indian perspectives on problem of evil are different from the west. The dominant conception of India is derived from Hinduism. The scholars try to explain it differently from the Semitic religious traditions. Does evil belong to the divine or is it purely human or psychological phenomenon? It is argued that evil is a major theological problem in the Semitic religious traditions as the existence of God and evil are not compatible and reconcilable. It is also argued that understanding of the problem of evil is depends upon ones world view. The theistic world view of evil would be significantly different from that of that world view is non-theistic. As Ramamurty argues in his book *Indian Philosophy of Religion: In Hinduism the explanation of evil is more metaphysical than theological as there is no doctrine of creation in Hinduism. Since God is not the creator of the world He is in no way connected with the explanation of evil. The problem of evil is delinked with the existence of God. Evil is viewed and explained basically in terms of man and his spiritual growth.* It is more or less a value or a meaning which man attaches to certain things and experiences. The objective world or the world of facts in itself is neither good nor bad. It acquires the value of good or bad from the point of view of man who judges things in terms of their value and significance to himself. What is good or what is evil depends ultimately upon the culture and religion to which man belongs. Further it is viewed that Indian philosophers of religion are basically pragmatic in their attitude and approach to religion, and its problems. Their analysis and understanding of the problem of evil is also basically pragmatic as their object in understanding the problem of evil is to help man in overcoming it. A purely theoretical understanding of the problem of evil may not be possible as it is not amenable to rational understanding of man. And at a same time the problem is highly significant to man and his religious life of attaining perfection.

A major explanation of evil which characterizes Indian understanding of the problem of evil, and is common to several thinkers and schools of thought is that though man is supreme or best form of manifestation of the divine, he is somehow unaware of his divine origin and nature. Instead, he thinks of himself as having an independent existence, and therefore lives for himself, and conducts himself as if he is his own master and explanation.

It is often claimed that the doctrine of karma and rebirth provides Indian religion with a satisfying account of evil and suffering than do typical Western solutions to the problem of evil. Arthur Herman, in his work *The Problem of Evil and Indian Thought*, similarly asserts the superiority of karma to all Western theodicies : "Unlike the Western theories, ... the doctrine of rebirth is capable of meeting the major objections against which those Western attempts all

6

failed" (Herman 1976, p. 287). The doctrine of karma and rebirth represents perhaps the most striking difference between Western (Judeo-Christian) religious thought and the Indian religious traditions (especially Hindu). To be sure, Western theology also makes use of a retributive explanation of evil in which an individual's suffering is accounted for by his previous wrongdoing. But given the obviously imperfect correlation between sin and suffering in an individual's lifetime, Western religions have resorted to other explanations of suffering (including, notoriously, that of Original Sin). However, Indian thought boldly combines this retributionism with the idea of multiple human incarnations, so that all suffering in this life can be explained by each individual's prior wrongdoing, whether in this or in a prior life, and all wrong- doing in the present life will be punished in either this or a future life. In this way, Indian thought is able to endorse a complete and consistent retributive explanation of evil: all suffering can be explained by the wrongdoing of the sufferer himself. However, the theory of karma and rebirth is seriously attacked by many scholars that it justifies the inequalities in a society and keeps the system status quo by not allowing the questioning the dominant hegemony. Critics argue that theory of karma and rebirth has its own limitations in providing satisfactory explanation for the problem of evil. What kind of explanation is offered for the unfairness, injustice, and innocent suffering in the world? It is argued that the doctrine, in whatever form it is proposed, suffers from serious limitations that render it unlikely to provide a satisfactory solution to the problem of evil.

4.7   LET US SUM UP

Evil as understood as antithesis of good. It becomes a moral question. Kant conceives of evil in human nature as the will or disposition or propensity to act on maxims contrary to the moral law. If good is value realization, and evil is value destruction. Evil is serious unjustified harm inflicted on sentient beings. Theologians confuse the fact with origin of the evil; theodicies tend to confuse the fact with the locus of the evil. The one reduces evil to the status of a sin or a derivative from it; the other reduces evil to the status of imperfection according to one, there would be no evils were there no wickedness; according to the other, there would be no evils were there nothing finite. The first is right in maintaining that evil can be the outcome of the good activity of good beings, just as the second is right in remarking that the occurrence of evil is not depend on spiritual failures.

Many theologians and philosophers over the centuries have asked this question and look at some answers. The question often asked how a good God could create a world with evil in it, why such a deity does not do something to help combat such evil. We have various explanations from religious people and philosophers. The problem itself arises because of certain qualities which religious believers grant to God, and the consequences of these given certain observations about the world. Understanding evil is crucial to our conception of morality. The philosophical approach to the problem of evil is different from the theological approaches. It has potential to understand the problem in fair and objective manner. It will broaden our understanding.

4.7   KEY WORDS

Theories of evil, theistic, moral evil, theodicy, sin, morality, karma, theologians, free will, God

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Philosophy of Religion

Block 4

THEISM

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Introduction to Theism

UNIT 2
Arguments for the Existence of God

UNIT 3
Prominent Theistic Philosophers of India

UNIT 4
Prominent Theistic Philosophers of the West

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Theism as understood commonly is a philosophically reasoned understanding of reality that affirms that the source and continuing ground of all things is in God; that the meaning and fulfillment of all things lie in their relation to God; and that God intends to realize the meaning and fulfillment. Theism is, literally, belief in the existence of God. In the theistic understanding, transcendence stands for the utter unlikeness of God to the ordinary mundane reality and immanence stands for the active presence and involvement of God in this mundane reality. The two always go together in the theistic understanding. But in Deism and Pantheism, they see transcendence and immanence in terms of "outside-inside" distinction. Understood in this sense God can either transcend the world or be immanent in the world, but not both. The need to resolve this contradiction leads to such doctrines as deism and pantheism.

Unit 1 introduces the movement in philosophy of religion, 'Theism,' as it is a religious ideology practised by many well-known religions. It propagates belief in the existence of God or gods. A theist is a person with the belief that at least one deity (God) exists. This God can be addressed as The Absolute, The Being, Ground of Being, The Ultimate, The World-Soul, the Supreme Good, The Truth, The First Cause, The Supreme Value, The Thing in Itself, The Mystery etc. Theism acknowledges that this god is a living being having personality, will and emotions. Theists believe in a personal God who is the creator and sustainer of life.

Unit 2 presents some arguments about the Existence of God. Believers might not need proofs for the existence of God, even so we feel the need to speak of arguments in favour of the existence of God. The responsibility then seems to be on the believers to give some arguments to prove the existence of God. While we agree that there can never be a universal proof for the existence of God, even so we can definitely speak of arguments in favour of the existence of God. We shall examine different types of arguments and we shall also look at some individual philosophers who had significant arguments to prove the existence of God.

Unit 3 makes the students acquainted with the philosophical significance of Indian theism by highlighting a few prominent Indian theistic philosophers. It further discusses the basic philosophies of the theistic philosophers of India from ancient period to contemporary period following one or the other above schools of philosophical tradition. Ramanuja states that the world and Brahman are united, like a soul and body. Ramakrishna looked upon the world as *Maya*. Devotion according to Nimbarka, consists in *prapatti* or self-surrender. For Aurobindo, Truth of existence is an omnipresent Reality that both transcends the manifested universe and is inherent in it.

Unit 4 gives the details of prominent philosophers' view. In the West, many philosophers have seriously debated on the existence and nature of God. Speaking of God is an experience of 'something', which is inescapable. For, paradoxically every absolute negation presupposes an absolute affirmation upon which the negation rests. The symbol 'God,' points to something beyond itself, to the absolute reality to which it points, while participating in the power of the absolute reality itself. The finite beings have no existence apart from this ultimate depth. There is no finite without the infinite. Human, 'a being-in-the-world', is essentially and fundamentally a being-in-God too. Hence, human should no longer strive to 'prove' the existence of God, but to realize the meaningfulness of one's own existence, along with other non-human beings, in the

all-encompassing power of the being of God, who is the absolute ground and goal of one's own existence.

UNIT 1   INTRODUCTION TO THEISM

Contents

1.0   OBJECTIVES

Is there a God? God is one or many? Do celestial beings (gods, angels, spirits, and demons) exist? Is there life after death? Is religion a need for modern human? If there is a God then why evil exists? Can man comprehend God? Can the human communicate with God? Does God answer prayers? There are many existential questions raised by humans in the realm of religion, spirituality and metaphysics. Theism is a philosophical ideology which answers the questions arose above in its affirmative. In simple words theism is an ideology that propagates belief in the existence of God or gods. The term 'theism' is synonymous to "having belief in God". In the broadest sense, a theist is a person with the belief that at least one deity (God) exists. This God can be addressed as The Absolute, The Being, Ground of Being, The Ultimate, The World-Soul, the Supreme Good, The Truth, The First Cause, The Supreme Value, The Thing in Itself, The Mystery etc. Theism acknowledges that this god is a living being having personality, will and emotions. Theists believe in a personal God who is the creator and sustainer of life. The answers for the questions 'Who is god?' 'What is god?' are attempted by the theists.

In discussing theism there arises another important question. It is like when was the human mind started to think about God? Many theistic theologians believe that "God consciousness" is innate in the human mind. But while we study the phenomenon of religion one understands that "God consciousness" in humans came first through experiencing fear. Here fear can be seen as the sense of "the sacred". In this search of the "Sacred" emerges theism in the form of animism, then polytheism, then gradually in to henotheism, and at last developed in to monotheism. In monotheism religion becomes institutionalised, cold, and formal. The sense of the "sacred" is lost and institutionalism paves way for doctrines, creeds, and confessions. Fortunately in this postmodern era humans are searching back to their original religiosity in which the "Other" the "Absolute" manifests in multiple forms.

1.1   INTRODUCTION

The term theism derives from the Greek theos meaning "god". The term theism was first used by Ralph Cudworth (1617–88). The view usually entails the idea that God is beyond human comprehension, perfect and self-sustained, but also peculiarly involved in the world and its events. Advaitins define god as '*neti neti*', which means 'not this not that' to prove the fact that

God is an 'another kind of being' which cannot be described by finite human speculations. A famous western theologian Paul Tillich attempts a definition of God in his book Systematic Theology: "God is a being who transcends the realm of ordinary experience in power and meaning. It/He is the image of human nature or subhuman powers raised to a superhuman realm." Traditionally God can be defined as an omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent Being who is self-existent, immutable, self-conscious and personal. God is genderless because God does not come under the category of the comprehensible. God thus can be addressed as He/She/It because God is definitely some another kind of being who does not come under phenomenological expressions of the human mind. The God of theism is intelligent and powerful. This God is self-revealing, active in relation to humans, and is worthy of worship. The God of the theists communicates His will to humans, creates, preserves, and destroys. He is the all in all, absolute sovereign in all things in relation to the universe.

1.3   TYPES OF THEISM

Monism

Monism is a philosophical position that maintains that Reality is One. It means reality is an undivided or undifferentiated oneness or unity. Monism holds a very prominent position in Advaitic Hinduism. Monism is the belief that only God is real and all other things are unreal. Advaita attributes individual's reasoning of existence to *maya* or illusion. God is the only real and all diversities the human mind experiences are unreal. According to Sankara everything we perceive as individual and particular –objects, people, thoughts, even gods—are real only in the sense that they are one with the Absolute, the Brahman. This is an ideology which says the universe is the manifestation of god within his/its own essential unity. God of the monists is the Absolute and is abstract. This God cannot be described or defined by the limited human language. God is incomprehensible and not communicable. Ascribing personality, emotions, intellect, and other anthropomorphic or zoomorphic attributes to God is the manifestation of a lower or carnal human mind and religiosity. These attributes do not belong to the "Being" of God.

Monotheism

Monotheism is the belief that only one deity exists. Some modern day monotheistic religions include Christianity, Islam, Judaism and some forms of Buddhism and Advaidic Hinduism. Some scholars (ex. Sigmund Freud) argue that monotheism might have had its origin in Egypt. In his article The Origins of Religion, Freud says the King Akhenaton reintroduced the worship of the Sun god Aten in 1375 BCE. Akhenaton made Aten's religion as the sole religion and projected Aten as the monotheistic God. He also prohibited any other forms of religion and worshiping of other gods by royal decree. Freud suggests that Moses the founder of Judaism might have been influenced by the monotheism of Akhenaton when he carved the concept of one God for the Jews. Some people, for example, the conservative Christians and the Orthodox Muslims and Jews believe that the original self-revelation of God was His singularity. In the Hebrew Torah and the Bible we read the *Shema*, "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is One Lord". In Islam also we see this idea in the Holy Quran. The Quran teaches that God is one and has no partners to share His divine glory. Muslims regularly recite the Shahadah, "there is no God but Allah". Christianity goes slightly away from the traditional monotheism of Judaism and Islam because of the concept of Trinity, in which the Christians see One God in Three

personalities. When the traditional monotheistic faiths like Judaism, Christianity and Islam are scrutinized from a rational perspective they fail to be monotheistic, they all tend to be either henotheistic or promote monolatrism. If a person says he/she believes in the existence of only one God then one has to believe that this God is called in different names in different places and times. Let's for example think about water. Where ever we go in this planet the chemical component of water is the same H2O. The name humans address the water varies from place to place. In English we call water, Tamil- *thaneer*, Hindhi-*pani*, Sanskrit-*jal*, Malayalam-*vellam*, Manipuri-*ising* and so on. Same say if only one God exists then God is named differently by different people. But this view is not at all accepted by the major monotheistic faiths of the world.

Polytheism

Polytheism is the belief that there is more than one deity. It is a belief in plurality; and in the plurality that manifests in many forms. It is a system of symbolizing reality in a plural way in order to give meaningful account for the multifaceted religiosity experienced by humans.

In practice, polytheism is not just the belief that there are multiple gods; it usually includes belief in the existence of a specific pantheon of distinct deities. Polytheism is seen wide spread in almost all cultures. Popular Hinduism, Egyptian religion, Greek religion etc are overtly polytheistic. People worship various gods and goddesses. High ritualistic practises are common among the polytheists. The priestly class is at most benefited by polytheism. Polytheism makes the religious life vibrant. Many temples can be built and various myths and epics can be circulated. Polytheism is gaining prominence in this postmodern era due to the factor that polytheistic belief promotes and assimilates all the indigenous and popular narratives. The idea of the "many" opens way for all forms of beliefs, worship and religiosity.

Henotheism

The viewpoint/belief that there exists more than one deity, but outmost worship is of only one of them. The henotheist exclusively worship only one God, while agreeing the fact that other deities exist and they may be legitimately worshiped by other people groups. Henotheist also believes that the God whom they worship is the Supreme of the pantheon of existing deities. This view is akin to the Yahweh worship of Mosaic Judaism of the pre-prophetic era.

Kathenotheism

The viewpoint/belief that there is more than one deity, but only one deity is worshipped at a time or ever, and another may be worthy of worship at another time or place. If they are worshipped one at a time, then each is supreme in turn. Kathenotheism is often common in polytheistic religions in which natural forces are worshiped. Deities such as the Rain god is worshipped when there is need for rain. Sun god is worshipped in times of harvest, god of fertility is invoked in marriage and god of education is communed when children go for exams, etc.

Monolatrism

It is the belief that there may be more than one deity, but that only one is worthy of being worshipped. Sometimes people who claim to be monotheists fall into the category of Monolatrism when they try to be polemic against the people of other faiths. Monolatrism sometimes makes people to desecrate the deities whom they do not revere. Religious

fundamentalism is a form of Monolatrism in which the devotee of a particular deity tries to force his religion or deity as the "Absolute" on the fellow humans.

Pantheism

The belief that the physical universe is equivalent to a god or gods, and that there is no division between a Creator and the substance of its creation. In other words, God and the world is identical. Pantheism states that "God is all in all." God pervades all things, contains all things, subsumes all things, and is found within all things. Nothing exists apart from God, and all things are in some or other way identified with God. The Universe is God and God is the Universe. All is God and God is All. This is another form or an idea similar to Monism.

Panentheism

Panentheism is belief that the physical universe is joined to a god or gods. However, it also believes that a god or gods are greater than the material universe. Panentheism means "all is in God". It means that the universe is in God, but God also exists beyond the universe. Here God is seen to be with the creation. Panentheism denotes the belief that the reality of the world and the whole created order does not exhaust the reality of God without remainder. Yet it also holds in common with pantheism that God's presence and active agency permeates the world, actively sustaining it in every part. Panentheism stresses foremost the divine immanence but does not deny divine transcendence altogether.

Deism

Deism is the belief that at least one deity exists and created the world, but that the creator(s) does/do not alter the original plan for the universe. Deism typically rejects supernatural events (such as prophecies, miracles, and divine revelations) prominent in organized religion. Instead, Deism holds that religious beliefs must be founded on human reason and observed features of the natural world, and that these sources reveal the existence of a supreme being as creator.

Autotheism

Autotheism is the viewpoint that, whether divinity is also external or not, it is inherently within 'oneself' and that one has a duty to become perfect (or divine). Autotheism can also refer to the belief that one's self is a deity.

1.4   KINDS OF THEISM

Classical theism

Classical theism refers to a form of Theism in distinction to modern ideas about God such as Theistic Personalism, Open Theism and Process Theism. Classical Theism began with the works of the Greek philosophers, especially Platonists and Neoplatonists and was developed into Christian Theology by the Scholastics, primarily by Thomas Aquinas (1224-1275). Among the leading defenders of classical theism were Augustine (354–430), Anselm (1033–1109), and Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274). In the modern world perhaps the most popular exponents of classical theism were William Paley (1743–1805) and C. S. Lewis (1898–1963). One of the fundamental points of Classical Theism is: how do we acquire knowledge of God? Knowledge of

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God cannot be gained by *a priori* methods. Therefore, the philosophical methodology of Classical Theism is *a posteriori*. Classical Theism holds first of all that in order to establish the nature of God we have to prove His existence. This is done by a posteriori methodology which proceeds from the effect to the existence and nature of its cause. In his *Summa Theologiae,* Thomas Aquinas used the famous Five Ways (all of them metaphysical proofs) to prove God's existence. Other philosophical arguments adherents use to support Classical Theism include the argument from morality, and the teleological argument. Major arguments against Classical Theism include the problem of evil and the hiddenness of God. Classical Theism is primarily and historically based on doctrines of several classical philosophers, but primarily on Aristotelian metaphysics.

Existential Theism
Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) is the proponent of Existential Theism. Existential Theism begins with some of the same propositions of classic theism. It starts with the existence of God, and his character as shown in religious scriptures. God is infinite, benevolent, and sovereign. Existential Theism sees the universe as being created by God, operating according to the laws He set up, yet continually under God's direction, an "open system." This form of existentialism focuses on subjective, personal human experience. Here existence precedes essence. Existential Theism offers meaning to a life experience full of seeming contradictions; a world we can never fully understand. Existentialism finds ultimate meaning in relationships. Existential Theism realizes that adherence to a creed and a set of moral standards is not enough. True religion is acted out by showing love to others, and true faith opens a direct, intimate communication between the soul and God. One of the positive aspects of Existential Theism is that it deemphasizes the role of Scripture as God's primary means of self-revelation, choosing instead to begin with human experience.

Existential Theism insists that each person must take the "blind leap of faith" to believe in God. These theists hold to the view that no one can ever really know "transcendent" truth. But choose to cope in such a world by believing that there is a meaning, even if we can't understand it. To an Existential theist religion starts with ourselves, not with God. Therefore the absurdity of life is realized clearly. Although s/he does not immediately perceive that God exists, s/he chooses to believe so based upon the very real need for meaning in a seemingly meaningless world. Thus, the question of whether or not God exists is not solved by reason, but rather by faith.

Empirical Theism
The Reverend Thomas Reid, (1710 –1796), was the founder of the Scottish School of Common Sense. The laws of nature, according to Reid, are the laws by which God's agency manifests itself and insofar as natural science and philosophy reveal the laws of nature, they reveal God's intentions. God could have willed that the laws were otherwise than they are and he could suspend or alter a law of nature (resulting in a miracle). But so long as the laws of nature that God wills are in place, the events over which they range are governed by necessity. To put this in contemporary terms, the events that come about in accordance with the laws of nature are nomologically necessary rather than metaphysically necessary. To the question then why do not all humans come to the awareness of God, Reid proposes an answer. He says that as God is the basic background of the universe, and as such, the situation is like that of a fish in water. The fish can not find the water because it is the medium he is constantly in; looking through the water all

the time for his entire existence the fish sees only the other things that show up through the water. This indicates that though humans could be looking at God all the time (so to speak) and not aware of seeing God, have the concepts in our minds that pertain to him.

Idealistic Theism
George Berkeley (1685 -- 1753), who also known as Bishop Berkeley (Bishop of Cloyne), is the proponent of Idealistic Theism. Berkeley believed God to be present as an immediate cause of all our experiences. He did not evade the question of the external source of the diversity of the sense data at the disposal of the human individual. He strove simply to show that the causes of sensations could not be things, because what we called things, and considered without grounds to be something different from our sensations, were built up wholly from sensations. There must consequently be some other external source of the inexhaustible diversity of sensations, the source of our sensations, Berkeley concluded, could only be God. Berkeley's theistic (mystic) idealism, claimed that nothing separated man and God (except materialist misconceptions, of course), since nature or matter did not exist as a reality independent of consciousness. The revelation of God was directly accessible to man, according to this doctrine; it was the sense-perceived world, the world of man's sensations, which came to him from on high for him to decipher and so grasp the divine purpose. Theistic Idealism is an ontology that holds that reality itself is essentially spirit or consciousness. God is "Consciousness". This view holds that consciousness, not matter, is the ground of all being.

Pragmatic theism
Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) is the proponent of Pragmatic Theism. Pragmatism refers to experimental empirical, and purposive thought "based on and applying to experience". Pragmatism begins with the idea that belief is that on which one is prepared to act. Peirce believed in God, and characterized such belief as founded in an instinct explorable in musing over the worlds of ideas, brute facts, and evolving habits — and it is a belief in God not as an actual or existent being (in Peirce's sense of those words), but all the same as a real being. In his hypothesis God is a "necessary Being". He also says that God is an "infinitely incomprehensible Being". He sees God as independent from actual human opinions but yet discoverable by inquiry. Inquiry is a kind of inference process, a manner of thinking and semiosis. Peirce held that all thought is in signs, issuing in and from interpretation, where 'sign' is the word for the broadest variety of conceivable semblances, diagrams, metaphors, symptoms, signals, designations, symbols, texts, even mental concepts and ideas, all as determinations of a mind or quasi-mind, that which at least functions like a mind.

Peirce feels that belief in God is not a momentary mode of consciousness; it is a habit of mind essentially enduring for some time, and mostly (at least) unconscious; and like other habits, it is, perfectly self-satisfied. The need for belief arises in doubt. For him doubt is a state in which habitual actions are blocked or confused and from which organic irritation and irresolution result. Resolution and unobstructed conduct, on the other hand, are products of belief, which is a form of stability and satisfaction. It is the function of scientific thought to produce true beliefs. Thus in pragmatic theism confused signs about God are translated into clearer signs by the power of inquiry.

1.5   LET US SUM UP

The unit gives a descriptive picture about theism. With the treatment of definition of theism as belief in God, the unit elaborates on different types and kinds of theism. As an introduction to theism the unit does justice to giving merely details of theism.

1.6   KEY WORDS

Pragmatic Theism: Pragmatism refers to experimental, empirical, and purposive thought "based on and applying to experience.

Idealistic Theism: Berkeley believed God to be present as an immediate cause of all our experiences. He did not evade the question of the external source of the diversity of the sense data at the disposal of the human individual.

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UNIT 2   ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Contents

2.0   OBJECTIVES

This Unit is to give the student some arguments about the Existence of God. The basis for these arguments is reason, but then we realize and have to accept that the topic we are studying, namely, the Existence of God, is such that we cannot come to any universal conclusion, given the topic of our study.

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Believers might not need proofs for the existence of God, even so we feel the need to speak of arguments in favour of the existence of God. On the other hand most non-believers or atheists would not feel the need of proving their non-belief or non-acceptance of God, because they see this as most natural. The responsibility then seems to be on the believers to give some arguments to prove the existence of God. While we agree that there can never be a universal proof for the existence of God, even so we can definitely speak of arguments in favour of the existence of God. The aim of this chapter is to examine certain arguments that have traditionally been used to prove or demonstrate the existence of God. We shall examine different types of arguments and we shall also look at some individual philosophers who had significant arguments to prove the existence of God.

2.2   EALIER ARGUMENTS ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Augustine

The God of Augustine is the idealization of everything that man considers good and worthy. He is absolute power, perfect goodness, the source and creator of everything.   He knows everything and has so controlled the universe that everything is determined by him forever. St. Augustine's central proof of God's existence is from thought, the proof from within. It begins from the apprehension of the mind of necessary and changeless truths which is present to all. This truth is superior to the mind which cannot change it or amend it. The mind varies in its apprehension of truth, but truth remains ever the same. Eternal truths must be founded on being and reflect the Ground of all truth. They reflect the necessity and immutability of God who is the Ground of eternal and necessary truth. St. Augustine also seeks to prove the existence of God from the

external and corporeal world but these are more like hints, or reminders. He was keen to show that all creation proclaims God who is recognized in the dynamic attitude of the soul towards God. The soul seeks happiness, and some seek it outside themselves. St. Augustine tries to show that creation cannot give the soul the perfect happiness it seeks, but points upwards to the living God who must be sought within. He seeks to demonstrate the existence of God from his effects. He views the rational knowledge of God in close connection with the search of the soul for the Truth which is a kind of self revelation of God to the soul.

Anslem

The first type of argument that is used to show the existence of God is the ontological argument, and it is so called because it attempts to show that the very concept of the idea of God implies his existence in reality. That is to say, if a person is able to clearly conceive the idea of God then he or she ought to be able to understand and accept that God must exist. It was St. Anselm, the eleventh century Archbishop of Canterbury who first gave a serious formulation of this argument. His argument was as follows:

God is the greatest possible being. He is "That than which nothing greater can be thought". God exists at least in the mind or understanding. A being who exists only in the mind is not so great as a being who exists in reality as well as in the mind. If God existed only in the mind, he would not be the greatest possible being. So "that than which nothing greater can be thought" must exist in the mind as well as in reality. Hence, God must exist in reality. (as well as in the mind.) This argument met with many objections because of its claim that the existence of something can be inferred merely from its definition.

Gaunilo a contemporary of Anselm produced a parallel argument, substituting the concept of God with that of the "most perfect island". Following this argument, logically the 'most perfect island' must exist in reality. But it was not the case, thus proving the argument wrong. But Anselm replied that this argument applied only to God, because the concept of God is unique in the sense that God is the only necessary being. All other beings, as the 'island' are finite objects and hence not necessary. Hence we can always conceive a more perfect island, but God is already the greatest possible being, and nothing greater can be thought of. We cannot think of a merely perfect God, while we can always think of a more perfect island.

Immanuel Kant also objected to this argument, because he said, that one cannot legitimately think of 'existence' as a property which an entity may or may not have, or have to varying degrees. When we say of something that it exists, we are talking of it as already actualized. Existence is not a 'property' of a thing as for instance its being red or blue or yellow. So it cannot be a property that adds something to the greatness of God. From Anselm's argument it appears as if existence in reality adds something to the greatness of God.

2.3 SCHOLASTIC ARGUMENTS ON EXISTENCE OF GOD

Aquinas

Another argument that strives to prove the existence of God is the so called Cosmological argument. This argument strives to proceed from the fact of the existence of the world to a transcendent creator. These arguments originate in the thinking of Aristotle and have been presented by Thomas Aquinas who used Aristotle's ideas as the intellectual medium to put down

his own religious philosophy. These are commonly referred to as the Five Ways of St. Thomas. His arguments could be presented as follows.

From Motion: Everything that moves is moved by something. That mover is in turn moved by something else again. But this chain of movers cannot be infinite or movement would not have started in the first place. Therefore, there must be an unmoved mover. (whom we call God.)

From the nature of the efficient cause: Everything has a cause. Every cause itself has a cause. But you cannot have an infinite number of causes. Therefore, there must be an uncaused cause, which causes everything to happen without itself being caused by anything else. Such an uncaused cause is what people understand by 'God.'

From possibility and necessity: Individual things come into existence and later cease to exist. Therefore at one time none of them was in existence. But something comes into existence only as a result of something else that already exists. Not all things can be ONLY possible. There must be one that is of itself Necessary. Therefore, there must be a being whose existence is necessary, 'God'.

Teleological argument is related to the sense of the word 'telos' which signifies the meaning, end or purpose. Here we are speaking of the telos, of the world. In a way this argument also argues that the sense of purposeful design that we see in nature suggests that the world has a designer, namely God. That is why this argument is also referred to as the Way of Design or the Fourth Way of Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas links the idea of causation to that of purpose. He says that causation gives things their perfection. And then he links this to the idea of purpose. He holds that goal directed behavior is in all beings, even if they lack awareness. Such beings that lack awareness are directed to their goal by someone who has the awareness and understanding that they themselves lack. Everything in nature is directed to its goal.

Al-Kindi and Al-Ghazali *Kalam* Cosmological Argument

The *Kalam* Argument for the existence of God originated and became highly developed in Islamic theology during the late Middle Ages. It gets its name from the word "*kalam*", which refers to Arabic philosophy or theology. It is an Arabic term that literally means 'argue' or 'discuss', though it has also been translated as 'theology' or 'dialectical theology'. Traditionally the argument was used to demonstrate the impossibility of an actual infinite existing in the real world, as well as an argument from temporal regress, thus showing that the universe cannot be eternal.

Everything that begins to exist has a cause of its existence. (Causal principle.)

The universe (space, time, and matter) began to exist. (Evidenced by two philosophical arguments, the Big Bang, and the second law of thermodynamics.)

Therefore, the universe has a cause of its existence.

Sub-argument:

As the cause of the universe (space, time, and matter), the cause must be outside of space, time and matter, and therefore be spaceless, timeless, and immaterial. Moreover, the cause must be a personal agent, otherwise a timeless cause could not give rise to a temporal effect like the universe. (Argument expanded.)

This is an accurate picture of God.

Therefore, God exists.

The first premise of the argument is the claim that everything that begins to exist has a cause of its existence. In order to infer from this that the universe has a cause of its existence the proponent of the *kalam* cosmological argument must prove that the past is finite, that the

universe began to exist at a certain point in time. The crucial premise of the *kalam* cosmological argument, then, is the second: "The universe has a beginning of its existence". How do we know that the universe has a beginning of its existence? Might not the universe stretch back in time into infinity, always having existed? The proponent of the *kalam* cosmological argument must show that this cannot be the case if his argument is to be successful.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What are the strengths and the weaknesses of the Ontological Argument

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2)   What are the different types of Cosmological Arguments?

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Bonaventure

While St. Bonaventure supported the relation of philosophy and theology, he did formulate arguments for the existence of God. He philosophizes in the light of what he already believes in. His arguments are rational and he makes no reference to dogma in them. Yet he pursues his arguments in the light of the faith which he possesses. In *De Mysterio Trinitatis* (5,29) Bonaventure gives a series of brief arguments for the existence of God. He says if there is a being from another, there must exist a being which is not from any other, because nothing can bring itself out of a state of non-being into a state of being, and finally there must be a first Being which is self-existent. Again, if there is possible being, being which can exist and being which can not exist, there must be a being which is Necessary, that is a being which has no possibility of non-existence, since this is necessary in order to explain the reduction of possible being into a state of existence. If there is a being, a potency, there must be a being in act, since no potency is reducible to act except through the agency of what is itself in act. Ultimately, there must be a being, which is pure act, without any potentiality, God. Every human being has a natural desire for happiness, which consists in the possession of the supreme Good, which is God. Therefore, every human being desires God. However, there can be no desire without some knowledge of the object. Therefore, the knowledge that God or the supreme Good exists is naturally implanted in the soul. The human will is naturally orientated towards the supreme Good, which is God, and this orientation of the will is inexplicable unless the supreme Good, God, really exists.

John Duns Scotus

In his commentary on *the Sentences*, Scotus argues as follows. We have to proceed from creatures to God by considering the causal relation of either efficient or final causality. Contingent being, is caused by nothing, or by itself, or by another. As it is not possible for it to be caused by nothing or by itself, it must be caused by another. If that other is the first cause, then we have found what we are looking for. If not, then we need to proceed further. But in the vertical order we cannot proceed forever searching for this dependence. Nor can we suppose that

4

contingent being cause one another because then we shall proceed in a circle without arriving at any ultimate explanation of contingency. We cannot escape by saying that the world is eternal, since the eternal series of contingent beings itself requires a cause. Similarly in the order of final causality there must be a final cause which is not directed to any more ultimate final cause. The first efficient cause acts with a view to the final end. But nothing other than the first being itself can be its final end. So the first efficient cause cannot be of the same nature as the effect, but must transcend all its effects. And as first cause it must be the most eminent being.

William Paley (1743 – 1805) gave the example saying that if one was to find a watch lying on the ground, one would assume that it had a maker and had been designed by a watch maker. This would be natural because one can see immediately that it is made up of different parts which work together. They work in harmony to tell us the time. The world too he says is like a machine, with different parts designed so that they have a part to play in the whole. The intricate design of the world in which, like the watch, different parts worked together in such a way that suggested a complex design and planning. The design is such that when looked at as a whole one cannot but think of the designer of the world, who is God. Religious common sense tends to look at the intricacy of nature as pointing to a God who is the designer and provides a purpose to creation. There is no evidence to sustain an analogy between human creativity and the idea of a divine creator. It is difficult to sustain the teleological approach as a logical argument. At the best we can only say that the world appears to have some order and purpose. For the believer, it supports his or her belief. But to the atheist, it is logically inconclusive.

2.4   OTHER ARGUMENTS FOR EXISTENCE OF GOD

Moral Argument

This line of argument examines those aspects of human experience which relate to religion. It asks whether there is anything in the way in which people respond to the idea of God which can be used to prove that God exists. One possibility is the experience of morality, namely that we have a sense of what we ought to do and also a sense of guilt when one realizes that one has done what is believed to be wrong. The second possibility is the religious experience itself. Moral rules arise as God's commands, from an objective look at human nature and the structures of the world or as the product of human society and human choice. We look at the second possibility. Aristotle related morality to his idea of a final cause. He held that we ought to do that which leads to our maximum self fulfillment. Once we discover our true nature we will want to act accordingly. By this approach we could say that morality is rational and objective. If one experiences moral obligation, it implies that one is free to act and that one will experience happiness as a result of virtue. For this to be possible there has to be some overall ordering principle which will reward virtue with happiness, and this might be called God. This was the argument of Kant. He seemed to be saying that you cannot prove the existence of God, but one's sense of morality implies that the world is ordered in a moral way, and that this in turn implies belief in God.

If one believes that there is an objective moral order, it may be used either to suggest that the world is created by a moral being, God, or to show that morality is well established on objective rational grounds and no God is needed. On the other hand, if morality is a human product, no God is required to account for moral experience. Hence the moral argument cannot prove the

5

existence of God. Atmost it can illustrate the way in which the idea of God is used in situations where there is a moral choice to be made. This is the Fifth Way of St. Thomas.

Argument From Religious Experience

There is in every person the capability of self-transcendence in every experience. That is to say, a very ordinary this-worldly experience seems to point beyond itself and reveals something about the meaning of life as a whole. It reveals to us the religious and the transcendent dimension. Some people do use this as an argument for the existence of God. For those who have had a religious experience it is impossible to prove the non existence of God. One cannot argue against their experience. But then the issue is that there are various ways of interpreting what has been experienced. What one person calls God may have a perfectly rational explanation to someone else. While we could be mistaken about an experience, it is also possible that we might have a correct experience and have truly experienced God. This is true also of our religious experience. But this requires a previous knowledge of what God is so that we can say whether the experience is correct or not.

The problem is that such knowledge is not possible of God. Because if there was such knowledge then there would be no discussion on the existence of God, because if God exists then his existence would be evident to all and there would be no such debate. Hence if religious experience is a source of knowledge of God, it remains convincing only to those who accept or share this experience. But to the philosopher, the proposition 'God exists' can be either correct, incorrect or meaningless. Religious experience can thus become the basis for the argument for the existence of God only when all people accept one definition of the word 'God'. If religious experience according to different cultures can be found to have a common core, then there is hope of coming to a common understanding of the term 'God'. But if we do not arrive at a common core then most will be unconvinced by the argument from religious experience. This argument may be enlightening and persuasive, but it is not logically compelling. That is why this argument is not much liked by philosophers. However for people with a religious mind, it is the most persuasive of all arguments.

2.5 MODERN PHILOSOPHERS ON EXISTENCE OF GOD

Descartes

Descartes has "proved" the existence of God by way of the Cogito argument. Descartes offers two arguments for the existence of God. The first, considered in Meditation Three, is known as the "Trademark Argument." The second, proposed in Meditation Five, is called the "Ontological Argument." The Trademark Argument arises out of the fact claimed by Descartes that there is within each of us an idea of a supreme being, which was placed within us by the thing that created us. The purpose of this idea was to act as the mark of a tradesman placed within us. From examination of this idea, it follows, says Descartes, that God exists. His argument firstly involves the acknowledgement of such an idea within ourselves. This idea of God is one of a being who is "eternal, infinite, omniscient, omnipotent, and the Creator of all things that exist...

The primary argument made by Descartes in meditation five is demonstrating that God exists because God is a perfect being and that existence is necessary for perfection. Descartes uses analogies such as the relationship between a mountain and a valley. The mountain and the valley are dependent on one another and proving that one exists will prove that the other exists also. This case is showing that if one were to find a mountain, one would know that there is a valley

somewhere nearby. This case does not prove that any mountain or valley exists, but it does prove that if you were to find one you would find the other.

Descartes applies this argument to God and perfection. First he makes the claim that God is perfect. Part of our agreed definition for God is, simply that God is perfect. Then Descartes goes on to attribute perfection to existence. "Existence is a perfection" Descartes makes it very clear that existence is a necessary part for perfection. *Substance* is the primary determination- *accident* adds quality to it- is a secondary determination. 'Substance is one, which requires nothing else other than itself in order to exist.' God is the substance which is infinite, independent, all knowing, all powerful and by which man and all that exist have been created. God is the pure subject- Other creatures too can be called substance in as much as they depend on god.

Through the process of abstraction we get the idea of perfect being from a limited and imperfect being. God – means who has all perfections in an unlimited way. Existence is perfection- so He should have existence. Perfection is further divided into Essential and Existence. God's existence follows from the fact that existence is contained in the "true and immutable essence, nature, or form" of a supremely perfect being. Descartes as a conceptualist takes essences to be ideas in human minds. Existence is included in the essence of a supremely perfect being, but not in the essence of any finite thing. Thus, it follows solely from the essence of the former that such a being actually exists.

Descartes' final position then is that essence and existence are identical in all things. What distinguishes God from creatures is his grade of existence. We can produce an ontological argument for God, and not for finite substances, because the idea of a supremely perfect being uniquely contains necessary — or ontologically independent of existence.The former adds to what one is and the latter makes our very being-not adding something and not becoming a part of what we are. Hence, there is a need to assert God as *substance* and the inevitability of his Existence, which is thus proved.

Spinoza

He is a God Intoxicated man as Germans brand him. He comes out with the philosophy of ONENESS or UNIFICATION. The Substance exists by itself and by itself alone – bodies and minds do not come under this, for they exist by virtue of the divine activity. God alone can be the absolute and infinite substance. God has two relatively infinite attributes – Extension and thought. Extension is modified and forms thoughts. Thought is infinitely diversified and forms minds. Mind and matter or in other words, soul and body are manifestation of a common principle. Everything is basically one. A tailored definition of substance from Descartes is vividly seen; *Substance is that which can be understood without the help of any other thing.* Under his vision of the scheme of things God and soul or substance and mode difference is obliterated. Soul in its functions is connected with the life of a body which is perishable but is immortal in its divine part, the intellect. God banishes from the soul of the philosopher all fear of death, and fills him with an unmixed joy.

Leibniz

He is the first one to give us a word 'theodicy.' His indeterminism, many realities were all opposed to the one reality and determinism of Spinoza. He brings in the concept of *Monad* and further proceeds to expound the theory of pre-established Harmony. Divine intervention needed for the soul and body to agree. God regulates the soul by the body or body by the volitions of the soul, as a watchmaker constantly regulates one clock by the other. God becomes the unskilful watchmaker unable to create a perfect machine - needing winding up the clock from

7

time to time, continuous repair, the oftener mending it, the poorer a mechanic is lacking sufficient insight to make it run forever. Theological rationalism – or Leibnizian rationalism – subordinates the will of God to divine reason and its eternal laws. The God of Leibniz is a sovereign bound by laws which he cannot unmake, a kind of constitutional King and Chief Executive of the universe rather than all powerful divine. The supreme power is not the will of God *taken* by *itself,* but his will governed by his eternal laws of his intelligence, laws that determine his conduct without constraining him, since they constitute the very essence of his nature. The Supreme Being is nature manifesting itself through the medium of a personal will.

Hume

Hume considers that in respect of 'our idea of God' we have no relevant impression(s) that can serve as the origin of this idea. His rigorous premise that our ideas reach no further than our experience makes him skeptical about the traditionally held proofs especially those having recourse to Causality. Being an empiricist he held that the existence of God can not be proved on the basis of experience neither he is the subject of belief or faith. Human reason is incapable of apprehending the reality of God. Proofs are misleading and futile. The argument for God's existence, intelligence and goodness from design — based on our observation of beauty and order in the world, the veil of orthodoxy are refuted thus.

A. Argument from analogy is futile. Things such as heat, cold and gravitation etc., cannot be explained on the basis of thought or reason. Laws of human life differ from that of animal life and the purpose one discovers in human life cannot be imposed upon other forms of existence-so better not to deduce the fact of the existence of God from the fact of universal existence.

B. Whole- not the basis of part; Thought, reason and purpose are only part of creation- don't use it to analyze the entire creation. Human world and natural world are different and one cannot be used to deduce the other.

C. God doesn't resemble Human mind. Man's mind is subject to incessant change and to conceive of God as being similar to the human mind is rather fallacious.

D. Nature of God derived from nature of creation. Creation is not perfect and so logical conclusion would be that God too is imperfect. Nature as the basis of comparison would lead us to conceive of God who cannot satisfy us.

Reasoning or arguments of any kind fails. The true roots theism can be discovered in the psychological dynamics that first give rise to polytheism. The same (irrational) forces that shape polytheism serve to explain the rise of theism and the instability and variations that we discover within it. God's being is "so different, and so much superior" to human nature that we are not able to form any clear or distinct idea of his nature and attributes, much less one based on our own qualities and characteristics. We cannot prove the accuracy of belief, namely God as the author of life, on the basis of our experience because it is limited and imperfect. Better to detest from conceiving god as the creator of mechanical instrument. God as *the soul of the universe* would better suffice us.

God as the cause of all morality not assumed since it is not out of experience. Our experience does not vouch for any moral order in the universe. It is wrong to assume that God is moral even though man's reason is incapable of realizing this fact. Besides various elements of human nature operate independently from our religious beliefs i.e., pride, sympathy, moral sense etc.

8

When we do not know the nature of god, we can not argue about his existence on the basis of this nature. The belief in God arises rather out of man's *physical* and *psychological needs.* Thus the ontological proofs are refuted.

Philosophy of irreligion

We can describe Hume as a "skeptic" or "agnostic" as concerns his fundamental views on religion. These labels incorrectly suggest that on this issue Hume's position is one of intellectual "neutrality" — taking no stand for or against religion. The most accurate and informative label for describing Hume's views on this subject, would be is '*irreligion*' which would avoid any serious misrepresentation. Calling Hume's views on this subject *irreligious* avoids, on one side, attributing any form of unqualified or dogmatic atheism to him, while, on the other, it also makes clear that his fundamental attitude towards religion is one of systematic hostility and criticism (i.e., he believes that we are better off without religion and religious hypotheses and speculations). It captures the full strength and scope of Hume's skeptical stance concerning the metaphysical claims of orthodox religion. This covers not just his views about the being and attributes of God but also his views about the soul and a future state, miracles and the foundations of morality. The label of irreligion serves effectively to identify these wider concerns and places appropriate emphasis on Hume's destructive intent in respect of religious systems. Hume's avowal is to discredit the metaphysical and moral paraphernalia of orthodox religious systems and to redirect human investigations to the study of the "science of man", whereby we may develop a secular, scientific account of the foundations of moral and social life.

Kant's Idea of God

An idealist, profounder of critical philosophy Kant argues that all types of proofs are fallacious. The ontological arguments fail because it treats existence as if it were a 'real predicate.' It is not a concept of something which could be added to the concept of a thing. It is merely the positing of a thing or of certain determinations as existing in them. Even if existence is not 'predicate' it is nevertheless indubitable and certain. An alternative proof would be if one posits something as possible-the notion, do exist and that indeed absolutely necessarily exists-this complete reality be united in a simple being-thus a need of a perfect being, that accounts for the possibility or what so ever.

The causal argument fails because it uses the category of cause without realizing that only in the schematized form is the category significant; because it assumes that the only way to avoid an actually an infinite causal series in the world is to posit a first cause- also pre-supposes, identifies the *necessary being* or first cause with God. His critique of speculative theology is found in the '*the idea of pure reason*'. ant stated the practical necessity for a belief in God in his *Critique of Practical Reason*. As an idea of pure reason, we do not have the slightest ground to assume in an absolute manner; the object of this idea, but that the idea of God cannot be separated from the relation of happiness with morality as the "ideal of the supreme good." The foundation of this connection is an intelligible moral world, and "is necessary from the practical point of view". He says "One cannot provide objective reality for any theoretical idea, or prove it, except for the idea of freedom, because this is the condition of the moral law, whose reality is an axiom. The reality of the idea of God can only be proved by means of this idea, and hence only with a practical purpose, i.e., to act as though (*als ob*) there is a God, and hence only for this purpose". Voltaire's contention "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him" becomes true in Kant's statement.

The moral proof which is based on the purposiveness in the moral order, on the existence of the moral law, on the phenomenon of moral conscience and the feeling of responsibility, is peremptory from the standpoint of practical reason & even as a pure theory it shares the weakness of the teleological proof of which it is, at bottom, merely a variation. Thus the moral proof of God's existence neither begins from a concept nor from a fact about the world but from an immediately experienced moral situation. Thus God is the highest idea, the idea of highest unity, of the one absolute whole including and encompassing everything. This idea transcends experience, and it is one of the results of reason which brings under one head all happenings. The impossibility of experience of whole universe makes *this idea an entity of this whole*, personified as God. This idea of whole, belief in His Existence is necessary for moral life, serving as foundation for our ethical principles. The *categorical imperative*, always act so that one can will the maxim or determining principle of one's action, inherent in reason itself, accounting for the 'good will'- all become proof of God who posses our moral ideas, having absolute power, perfectly wise, good and powerful to join happiness and goodness. Yes we cannot experience God through reason yet reason can bring God back as a necessary unknown. Using the name of god one must live a good moral life-bad life will bring evil.

- The ontological proof fails–the idea of God assures us the objective existence of a Supreme Being. It seems to be an unwarranted and flimsy conclusion indeed.
- The cosmological argument fails-it falsely assumes that there can be no infinite series of cause and effects without the first cause-for avoiding infinite regression posit a first and necessary cause. Yet there is yawning chasm which separates the necessary from the contingent and the absolute from the relative. Even if granting the cogency of the proof it would be more of a personal being than a necessary being.
- The teleological or physic-theological proof infers from the finality revealed in nature the existence of an intelligent creator. Though impressive it has no value from scientific point of view.

The real God of Kant is freedom in the service of the ideal, or good will. Kant's theology is merely an appendix to his ethics. The personal God of Kant reminds us of the celebrated epigram of the contemporary philosopher, if there were no God we should have to invent one.

Checking the progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your Answers.

1) Define the key concepts in Descartes; substance, accidents and innate ideas.

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2) Explain the failure of ontological and causal arguments in proving the existence of God in the Kantian perspective.

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3)How does Hume refute the age-old proofs for the existence of God?

2.6   LET US SUM UP

The traditional theodicy provides us with the sufficient material with proofs for and against the existence of God. Here we deal with the modern philosophers' arguments either proving it directly or in an in-direct way disproving the former attempts and establishing one's own attempts. We start with the rationalists, proceeding to empiricists and culminating our study with the idealists. Only selected few philosophers are taken for our study for leaving the rest is due to time and space constraints. All the same students can further their exploration incorporating them in their personal study.

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UNIT 3 PROMINENT THEISTIC PHILOSOPHERS OF INDIA

Contents

3.0   OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to make the students acquainted with the background, origin and development of Indian Theism. The discussion will bring out the philosophical significance of Indian theism by highlighting a few prominent Indian theistic philosophers.

3.1   INTRODUCTION

Theism as understood commonly is a philosophically reasoned understanding of reality that affirms that the source and continuing ground of all things is in God; that the meaning and fulfillment of all things lie in their relation to God; and that God intends to realize the meaning and fulfillment. Theism is, literally, belief in the existence of God. Though the concept is as old as philosophy, the term itself appears to be of relatively recent origin. Some have suggested that it appeared in the seventeenth century in England. At the end one could say that the term is used to denote certain philosophical or theological positions, regardless of whether this involves a religious relationship to the God of whom individuals speak. Let us discuss the basic philosophies of the theistic philosophers of India from ancient period to contemporary period following one or the other above schools of philosophical tradition.

3.2   SANKARA (788 – 820)

Adi Sankara following the thought of Upanishadic teaches and that of his teacher's teacher Gaudapada consolidated one of the deep theistic philosophies of all time. Advaita was his main philosophy. Advaita literally means "non-duality." Adi Sankara wrote extensive commentaries on the major Vedantic scriptures and was successful in the revival and reformation of Hindu thinking and way of life.

Adi Sankara's Advaita is best summed up in the following verse: *Brahma satyam jagan mithya jiva brahmaivah naparah.* Brahman alone is the real, the world is illusory and the individual and universal soul are one. According to this school the appearance of dualities and differences in

this world is an superimposition of Brahman, called Maya. Maya is the illusionary and creative aspect of Brahman, which causes the world to arise. Maya is neither existent nor non-existent, but appears to exist temporarily, as in case of any illusion (for example mirage). In fact Sankara began his whole deliberation with the *sutra*: "*Atha to brahmam jignasa*" – "now therefore the enquiry into Brahman", a call to free enquiry which sets the tone for all speculation.

When a person tries to know Brahman through his mind, due to the influence of Maya, Brahman appears as God (*Isvara*), separate from the world and from the individual. In reality, there is no difference between the individual and soul (*Jivatman*) and Brahman. The spiritual practices such as devotion to God, meditation and self-less action all purify the mind and indirectly helps in perceiving the real. One whose vision is obscured by ignorance he does not see the non-dual nature of reality; as the blind do not see the resplendent Sun. Hence, the only direct cause of liberation is self-knowledge which directly removes the ignorance. After realization, one sees one's own self and the Universe as the same, non-dual Brahman. Existence-knowledge-Bliss-Absolute.

Adi Sankara had a two-level theory of Brahman, perceiving it as *nirguna*, without attributes, but manifesting itself with personal attributes, *saguna*. Nirguna being ultimately true and *saguna* false Sankara maintained the strict monism in understanding the philosophy of Reality. The Brahman-world relation in Shankara is explained in the snake and rope analogy where the illusion is caused by mistaking a rope for a snake.

Sankara's appeal lay as much in his erudition and dialectical skill as in his being a child prodigy. He lived for barely 30 years: yet he set ablaze the intellectual world of his times, redefinition, revamping and revitalizing old concepts with great strength.

3.3   RAMANUJA (1017-1137)

Sri Ramanuja was a *Vedanta* philosopher (Vedanta means the end of the Vedas and refers to the philosophy expressed in the end portion of the Veda, also known as the Upanishads), born in Tamil Nadu in 1017 CE. At his earlier state he studied *Advaita Vedanta* (Absolute Idealistic Monism) under the monist teacher Yadavaprakasa, but in later period he disagreed with this teacher and went on to propagate *Visistadvaita* philosophy. He was a great thinker, philosopher and scriptural exegete. He is seen by Vaishnava sects of Hinduism as the third and most important teacher (*Acarya*). He got his initial inspiration from Yamunacharya who inspired him: to teach the doctrine of *Saranagati* (surrender to God) as the means to reach Moksha; to write *Visistadavaita* Bhashya for the *Brahma Sutras* of Vyasa; and then to perpetuate the philosophy of Parasara the author of *Vishnu Purana*.

Main Tenets of Ramanuja's Philosophy:
From the outset it should be noted that Ramanuja's philosophy is referred to as Vishishtadvaita because it combines Advaita (oneness of God) with Vishesha (attributes). Adi Sankara had argued that all qualities or manifestations that can be perceived are unreal and temporary. On the other hand Ramanuja believed them to be real and permanent and under the control of the Brahman. God can be one despite the existence of attributes, because they cannot exist alone; they are not independent entities. Ramanuja taught Vishishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism) that

2

states that the world and Brahman are united, like a soul and body. He acknowledged the existence of differences, and believed that the identity of an object as a part was as important as the unity of the whole. The theology espoused by him posits that Brahman is not devoid of attributes but is expressed as personal as opposed to impersonal. According to him qualities are real and permanent and under the control of Brahman. Brahman can be one despite the existence of attributes, because they cannot exist alone; they are not independent entities. They are *prakaras* or modes. *Sesha* or the accessories, and Niyama or the controlled aspects, of the one Brahman.

In this philosophy, *Isvara* has two inseparable *prakaras* viz., the world and the *jives.* These are related to him as the body is related to the soul. They have no existence apart from him. They inhere in Him as attributes in a substance. Matter and *jivas* constitute the body of *Isvara. Isvara* is their indweller. He is the controlling reality Matter and *jivas* are the subordinate elements. They are termed *visesanas* or attributes. Ishvara is the *visesya* or that which is qualified. Ramanuja sought to define that the followers of Sankara (Monistic) are wrong when they state that understanding the philosophy of the Upanishads without knowing and practicing *dharma* can result in knowledge of Brahman. The knowledge that leads to Brahman that ends spiritual ignorance is meditational, not testimonial or verbal.

Ramanuja's main contention was that there is no knowledge source in support of the claim that there is a distinction less (homogeneous) Brahman. All knowledge sources reveal objects as distinct from other objects. All experience reveals an object known in some way or other beyond mere existence. Testimony depends on the operation of distinct sentence parts (words with distinct meanings). Thus the claim that testimony makes known that reality is distinction less is contradicted by the very nature of testimony as knowledge means. Even the simplest perceptual cognition reveals something as qualified by something else. Inference depends on perception and makes the same distinct things known as does perception.

Against Advaitic contention that perception cannot make known distinctness but only homogeneous being since distinctions cannot be defined, well, sorry, perception makes known generic characters that differentiate things. According to Ramanuja remembering could not be distinguished from perceiving, because there would be only the one object (being). And no one would be deaf or blind. Furthermore, Brahman would be an object of perception and the other sources (*prameya*). He also holds that Advaitin argument about prior absences and no prior absence of consciousness is wrong. Similarly the Advaitin understanding of *avidya* (ignorance), which is the absence of spiritual knowledge, is incorrect, "If the distinction between spiritual knowledge and spiritual ignorance is unreal, then spiritual ignorance and the self are one."

A few Objections of Ramanuja to Adi Shankara:
1. The nature of Avidya: Avidya must be either real or unreal; there is no other possibility. But neither of these is possible. If *avidya* is real, non-dualism collapses into dualism. If it is unreal, we are driven to self-contradiction or infinite regress.
2. The incomprehensibility of avidya: Advaitins claim that *avidya* is neither real nor unreal but incomprehensible (*anirvacaniya*). All cognition is either of the real or the unreal: the Advaitin claim flies in the face of experience, and accepting it would call into question all cognition and render it unsafe.

3

3. The grounds of knowledge of avidya: No *pramana* can establish *avidya* in the sense the Advaitin requires. Advaita philosophy presents *avidya* not as a mere lack of knowledge, as something purely negative, but as an obscuring layer which covers Brahman and is removed by true *Brahma-vidya* (knowledge of Brahman). Avidya is positive nescience not mere ignorance. Ramanuja argues that positive nescience is established neither by perception, nor by inference, nor by scriptural testimony. On the contrary, Ramanuja argues, all cognition is of the real.

4. The locus of avidya: Where is the avidya that gives rise to the (false) impression of the reality of the perceived world? There are two possibilities; it could be Brahman's *avidya* or the individual *jiva*. Neither is possible. Brahman is knowledge; *avidya* cannot co-exist as an attribute with a nature utterly incompatible with it. Nor can the individual *jiva* be the locus of *avidya*: the existence of the individual *jiva* is due to *avidya*; this would lead to a vicious circle.

5. *Avidya's* obscuration of the nature of Brahman: Shankara would have us believe that the nature of Brahman is somehow covered over or obscured by *avidya*. Ramanuja regards this as an absurdity; given that Advaita claim that Brahman is pure self-luminous consciousness, obscuration must mean either preventing the origination of this (impossible since Brahman is eternal) or the destruction of it – equality absurd.

6. The removal of avidya a by *brahma-vidya*: Advaita claims that *avidya* has no beginning, but it is terminated and removed by *brahma-vidya*, the intuition of the reality of Brahman as pure, undifferentiated (*nirguna*) Brahman, arguing that whatever exists has attributes: Brahman has infinite auspicious attributes. Liberation is a matter of divine grace: no amount of learning or wisdom will deliver us.

7. The removal of *avidya*: For the Advaitin, the bondage in which we dwell before the attainment of Moksha is caused by *maya* and *avidya*; knowledge of reality (*brahma-vidya*) releases us. Ramanuja, however, asserts that bondage is real. No kind of knowledge can remove what is real. On the contrary, knowledge discloses the real; it does not destroy it. What exactly is the saving knowledge that delivers us from bondage to *maya?* If it is real then non-duality collapses into duality; if it is unreal, then we face an utter absurdity.

Some of Ramanuja's most important philosophical works include:
- Sri-bhasya (a commentary on Vedanta Sutras),
- Vedanta Sara (essence of Vedanta),
- Vedartha Sangraha (a resume of Vedanta)
- Vedanta Dipa (the light of Vedanta)
- Gita-bhasya (a commentary for the Bhagavad-gita).

Check your progress I

Note: Use the phase provided for answers.

1) How does Ramanuja differ from Adi Shankara?

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2) Explain critically the basic philosophy of Ramanuja.
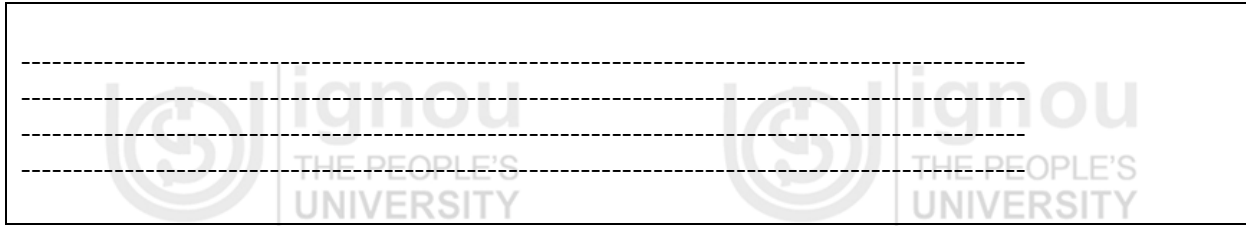
3.4   MADHVA (1238-1317)

Madhvacharya was the most fascinating of the Hindu sage-philosophers and one of the greatest theistic thinkers of all time. He was an Indian Wittgenstein whose rapier-sharp critiques matched his memorable and profound aphorism. More to the point, he was an intellectual juggernaut who single-handedly reversed the slide toward monism and re-established theism as a dominant force.

Born near Udupi in South India, he left his family at the age of 16 to take up life as a religious ascetic. From beginning Madhava would believe only in his experience and the principles of reason. Rejecting Advaita on rational and religious grounds, he systematically laid out the case for theism, eventually convincing even his own Guru. By the time of his death he had written 37 books, converted the most prominent Advaita scholars in India to theism, and assembled eight disciples to carry on his work.

Madhvacharya's task was two-fold: 1) to show that theism is taught by experience, reason and the Hindu scriptures and 2) to refute the monism that was popular in his time. He was motivated by four principles:

1. A determination to remain true to experience above all, in the spirit of science,
2. A commitment to sound reason,
3. A fervent devotion to a personal God that drove all his actions,
4. Fearless tenacity in expounding his vision in the most hostile environments.

The underlying theme in all Madhvacharya's work was his famous exposition of the five differences:

1. The difference between the *jiva* (soul) and *Ishvara* (Creator),
2. The differences between *jada* (insertient things, e.g. matter) and *Ishvara*
3. The difference between various *jives*,
4. The differences between *jada* and *jiva:* and
5. The differences between various *jades.*

Madhvacharya presented a very simple vision of the world. It was clear to him that there were differences and distinctions in the world. Matter was distinct from mind. One material thing was distinct from another, one person from another. Above all, there was a radical difference between God and the world. This is in a nutshell is his doctrine of Panchabeda or five differences, which stated that there was an absolute distinction between God and the soul, God and matter, souls and matter, each individual soul and another, and each material thing and another. There is an unbridgeable gulf between God and all other beings because God is the only independent Reality.

5

The theme of difference, individuality and uniqueness is fundamental in Madhvacharya's thought as it was for John Duns Scotus in the West. By the very fact that something is what it is, says Madhvacharya, it is obviously different from everything else, and this is shown to us by both reason and our senses. The substance of each particular thing is a unique combination of many properties. While many other things could possess these same properties, the difference between each and everything is the uniqueness of the specific combination of properties. At the very least there is a difference in location for physical things.

The source of all these properties and their unique combination is God the great inventor and sustainer. "God Himself", said Madhvacharya, "is the determining cause of the distinctive natures of the various tastes, their essences and their characteristics themselves, in a special sense. It is not to be understood that those special characteristics and essences are determined by the intrinsic nature of the substances themselves. Bur far from it. Not only the substances, but their respective essence and characteristics and the characteristics of those characteristics themselves are all derived from his immanent powers and presence in them."

In understanding the five differences, we come to grasp the properties of all the things in the world and the relationships between them. Most important of all, we come to realize our total dependence on God.

Starting with the five principles, Madhva focused his attention on three areas:
1. How we know. We are able to know what is the case about things thorugh three sources: experience, reason and divine revelation. The primary guarantor of truth and certainty in our coming to know something is a capability he called Sakshi. His theory of knowing and truth is very important because it stands in sharp contrast to the skepticism of his contemporaries.
2. God and World. Reality may be divided into that which is independent and dependent God is wholly independent and the world is entirely and always dependent on God. God is infinitely perfect.
3. Matter and Spirit. The world is made up of two kinds of substance, matter and spirit, material things and souls. The individuality and uniqueness of each and every thing is an obvious fact of experience.

He further affirmed that:
1. We really do exist,
2. We have a consciousness and an individual identity that we will retain permanently,
3. We can know things,
4. God exists and we are distinct from and dependent on God; God has attributes that can be known,
5. The ultimate goal of life is union with God, a union in which we retain our distinctive identities.

Check your progress II

Note: Use the phase provided for answers.

6

1) What are the four philosophical principles of Madhava and develop it with five differences as he expounded?

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2) What was his main attention to develop the philosophy?

3.5   NIMBARKA (1130-1200)

Nimbarkacarya was a great proponent of Vaishnava Philosophy of Dvaitadvaita that is duality in unity. Though there is a controversy about his time, S. N. Dasgupta dated Nimbarka to around middle of 14th Century. On the other hand Dr. S. A. Rizvi assigns the date of 1130-1200. But Dr. Bhandarkar has placed him as a philosopher after Ramanuja and has maintained his demise date as 1162 AD.

Basic Philosophy of Nimarkacarya:
Nimarka belonged to the school of Vaishanava philosophy that is known as Dvaitadvaita (duality and non-duality at the same time). The categories of existence, according to him, are three that is: *cit, acit,* and *Ishvara.* According to him *cit* and *acit* are different from *Ishvara*, in the sense that they have attributes and capacities, which are different from those of *Ishvara. Ishvara* is independent and exists by Himself, while *cit* and *acit* have existence dependent upon Him. At the same time *cit* and *acit* are not different from *Ishvara*, because they cannot exist independently of Him. Difference means a kind of existence which is separate but dependent, (*para-tantra-satta-bhava*) while non-difference means impossibility of independent existence (*svatantra-satta-bhava*).

He thus equally emphasizes both difference and non-difference as against Ramanuja, who makes difference subordinate to non-difference; in as much as, for him *cit* and *acit* do not exist separately from Bhrahman, but its body or attributes. Thus, according to Nimbarka, the relation between Brahman, on the one hand, and the souls (*cit*) and universe (*acit*) on the other, is a relation of natural difference-non-difference (*svabhavika-bhedabheda*), just like between snake and coil, or between sun and its rays. Just as the coil is nothing but the snake, yet different from it, just as the different kinds of stones, though nothing but earth, are yet different from it, so the souls and the universe, though nothing but Brahman (*brahmatmaka*), are different from Him because of their own peculiar natures and attributes.

Thus, according to Nimbarka, there are three equally real and co-eternal realities, viz. Brahman, the *cit* and the *acit*. Brahman is the Controller (*niyantr*), the *cit* the enjoyer (*bhoktr*) and the *acit* the object enjoyed (*bhogya*).

Nimbarka accepts *parinamavada* to explain the cause of animated and inanimate world, which he says exist in a subtle form in the various capacities (*saktis*) which belong to Brahman in its natural condition. Brahman is the material cause of the universe in the sense that Brahman brings the subtle rudiments into the gross form by manifesting these capacities. For Nimbarka the highest object of worship is Krishna and His consort Radha, attended by thousands of *gopis,* or cowherdesses, of the celestial Vrindavan. Devotion according to Nimbarka, consists in *prapatti,* or self-surrender.

Five Sadhanas:
Sri Nimbarka propounded five methods of salvation:
1. **Karma (ritual action)**
   This is performed conscientiously in a proper spirit, with one's *varna* (caste) and *ashrama* (phase of life) thereby giving rise to knowledge which is a means to salvation.
2. **Vidya (knowledge:)** This is not a subordinate factor of karma but also not as an independent means for everyone; only for those inclined to spending vast lengths of time in scriptural study and reflection of deeper meanings.
3. **Upasana or dhyana (meditation):** It is of three types. First is meditation on the Lord as one's self that is meditation on the Lord as the Inner Controller of the sentient. Second is meditation on the Lord as the Inner Controller of the non sentient. Final one is meditation on Lord Himself, as different from, the sentient and non-sentient. This is again not an independent means to Salvation for all, as only those qualified to perform the *upasana* (with *Yajnopavitam*) can perform this *Sadhana.*
4. **Prapatti (surrender to the Lord):** This is devotion and surrender to the lord God as Shri Radha Krshna. This method of attaining Salvation, known as Prapatti Sadhana, contains elements of all the other means, and is most importantly, available to all. This is Sadhana and this in turn leads to Para Bhakti – the highest devotion characterized by Madhurya Rasa – the sweet emotions of devotion experienced by those perfected in Sadhana Bhakti.
5. **Gurupasatti:** This is the devotion and self surrender to guru. Best realized as a part in Prapatti, and not as an indepenxdent means, although it can be so.

Shri Nimbarka made the "Bhasya" (commentary in which all the words of the verses are used, in contradistinction to a *tika,* which is a more free commentary) of the Brahmasutra on his Dvaitadvaita Vedanta (Principle of Dualism-Non-dualism in his famous book "Vedanta Parijata Sourabha".

Check your Progress III

Note: Use the phase provided for answers.

1. What is the basic philosophy of Nimbarka?

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2. Develop philosophically his five Sadhanas.

3.6   AUROBINDO (1872-1950)

Sri Aurobindo was a thought provoking Philosopher who was a freedom fighter, guru and a yogi. The central theme of Aurobindo's vision is the evolution of human life into life divine. According to him human being is a transitional being. Human being is not final. The step from man to superman is the next approaching achievements in the earth evolution. It is inevitable because it is at once the intention of the inner spirit and the logic of nature's process. His main philosophical writings are *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga,* while his principal poetic work is *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol.*

Basic Philosophy of Involution and Evolution

Sri Aurobindo propounded two movements: that of involution of consciousness from an omnipresent Reality to creation, and an evolution from creation onward. The process by which the Energy of creation emerged from a timeless, space less, ineffable, immutable Reality, Ari Aurobindo refers to as the Involution. In that process the Reality extended itself to Being/Existence (Sat), Consciousness (that generated a Force) – Chit; and Delight (Ananda) – self enjoyment in existing and being conscious. Through the action of a fourth dimension, Supermind that is Truth Consciousness, the Force (Chit) of Sat-Cit-Ananda was divided into Knowledge and Will, eventually formulating as an invisible Energy that would become the source of creation. Through its own willful self-absorption of consciousness, the universe would begin as In-conscient material existence. The process of conscious existence emerging out of the Inconscient is referred as evolution. Initially, it emerges gradually in the stages of matter, life, and mind. First matter evolves from simple to complex forms, then life emerges in matter and evolves from simple to complex forms, finally mind emerges in life and evolves from rudimentary to higher forms of thought and reason. As each new principle emerges, the previous stages remain but are integrated into the higher principle.

Aurobindo's Philosophy of Reality

A central tenet of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is that the Truth of existence is an omnipresent Reality that both transcends the manifested universe and is inherent init. This Reality, referred to as Brahman, is an Absolute: it is not limited by any mental conception or duality, whether personal or impersonal, existent or nonexistent, formless or manifested in form, timeless or extended in time, space less or extended in space. It is simultaneously all of these but is bound by none of them. It is the Transcendent beyond the universe. In its highest manifested poise, its nature may be described as Sachchidananda – infinite existence, infinite consciousness, and infinite delight or bliss – a triune principle in which the three are united in a single Reality. In other words, it is fully conscious and blissful infinite existence. This Brahman is our deepest and

9

secret Reality. This is the metaphysical bliss for Aurobindo's yoga. Yoga is thus a discipline given to consciously unite our phenomenal existence and life with our essential Reality.

This Brahman is not bound to its infinite existence, not bound to its infinite consciousness and the force inherent in that consciousness, not bound to its infinite bliss. He also explains that by definition Brahman is capable of manifesting within its absolute existence innumerable, limited, even distorted and contrary forms of its being.

According to Aurobindo it is the Brahman who suffers for us, it is not imposed on someone or something outside the Brahman. Secondly, the limitation and ignorance are inherent consequences of the plunge of the Absolute consciousness into the in conscience and its slow evolutionary awakening – pain, suffering, and evil developed as consequences or corollaries of limitation and ignorance. Thirdly, while pain, suffering, and evil are abhorrent to our limited ethical sensibilities, they also may serve a purpose in the larger scheme of the evolutionary process.

Aurobindo's Philosophy of Human Being
Aurobindo argues that Man is born an ignorant, divided, conflicted being; a product of the original inconsceience (unconsciousness) inherent in Matter that he evolved out of. As a result, he does not know the nature of Reality, including its source and purpose; his own nature, including parts and integration of his being; what purpose he serves, and what his individual and spiritual potential is, amongst others. In addition, he experiences life through division and conflict, including his relationship with others, and his divided view of spirit and life. To overcome these limitations, Man must embark on a process of self-discovery in which he uncovers his Divine nature. To that end, he undertakes a three-step process, which he calls the Triple Transformation: 1) Psychic Transformation, 2) Spiritual Transformation and, 3) Supra-mental Transformation.

Aurobindo's greatest discovery was the existence of a Psychic Being (an Evolving Soul) within that is the essence of our spiritual selves. If we forge our way into the deepest parts of our being the subliminal realm, we will come upon a Personal Evolving Soul. From this Psychic Being we can overcome the limits of consciousness of the individual human. From there we perceive our true nature and essence; we become more aware of our surroundings; we become one with others and life; we experience and inner Guide that influences to move in the right direction and catches our negative propensities as they arise on the surface; we come in touch with the transcendent reality.

The development of human society and world culture is another important aspect of Aurobindo's future vision. In his book *The Human Cycle,* Aurobindo described the various stages of the development of human society which have led to the present subjective age that is beginning, and the possibilities of a future spiritual age. This spiritual age would be characterized by the dominance of a spiritual ideal and trend in world culture.

3.7   RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA (1836-1886)

10

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was a Bengali religious leader. A worshipper of goddess Kali. He was a teacher of Advaita Vedanta of Hinduism and preached that all religions lead to the same goal, placing spiritual religion above blind ritualism. The Hindu renaissance that India experienced in the 19th century may be said to have been spurred by his life and work. Though born in a Hindu family he followed Islam for sometime and then embraced Christianity for a while, this in many ways changed his philosophy of life as an enlightened person.

The Vaishnava Bhakti traditions speak of five different moods, referred to as *bhavas* – different attitudes that a devotee can take up to express his love for God. They are: Shanta, the "peaceful attitude", Dasya, the attitude of a servant; Sakhy, the attitude of a friend; Vatsalya, the attitude of a mother toward her child; and Madhura, the attitude of a woman towards her lover. Sri Ramakrisha at some point in the period between his vision of Kali and his marriage practiced Dasya Bhava, during which he worshiped Rama with the attitude of Hanuman, the monkey-god, who is considered to be the ideal devotee and servant of Rama. According to Ramakrishna, towards the end of this Sadana, he had a vision o f Sita, the consort of Rama, merging into his body. In 1864, Ramakrishna practiced Vaatsalya bhava under a Vaishnava guru Jatadhari. *During* this period, he worshipped a metal image of *Ramlala* (Rama as a child) in the attitude of a mother. According to Ramakrishan, he could feel the presence of child Rama as a living God in the metal image. After certain time he dressed himself inwomen's attire for several days and regarded himself as one of the Gopis of Vrindavan. He thus practiced a Madhura Bhava to root out the idea of sex, which is seen as an impediment inspiritual life. According to Ramakrishna, towards the end of this Sadhana, he attained Savikalpa Samadhi – vision and union with Krishna. After his vision of Kali, he is said to have cultivated the Santa Bhava – the child attitude – towards Kali.

Teachings

Ramakrishna used stories and parables to convey his messages. His teachings rejected caste distinctions and religious prejudices. His main philosophy was to emphasize God-realization as the supreme goal of all living beings. He taught that *kamini-kanchana* is an obstacle to God-realization. *Kamini-kanchan* literally translates to "women and gold," Partha Chaterjee wrote that figure of a woman stands for concepts or entities that have "little to do with women in actuality" and "the figure of woman -and-gold signified the enemy with: that part of one's own self which was susceptible to the temptations of ever-unreliable worldly success".

Ramakrishna's mystical realization, classified by Hindu tradition as *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* (that is constant meditation thought to be absorption in the all-encompassing Consciousness), led him to believe that the gods of the various religions are merely so many interpretations of the Absolute, and that the Ultimate Reality could never be expressed in human terms. This is in agreement with the Rigvedic proclamation that "Truth is one but sages call it by many a name." As a result of this opinion, Ramakrishna actually spent periods of his life practicing his own understandings of Islam, Christianity and various other Yogic and Tantric sects within Hinduism.

Ramakrishna looked upon the world as Maya. His experience of *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* gave him an understanding of the two sides of *maya*. He referred this as *Avidyamaya* and *Vidyamaya*. . He explained that *avidyamaya* represents the dark forces of creation (e.g. sensual desire, evil passions, greed, lust and cruelty), which keep people on lower planes of consciousness. These

11

forces are responsible for human entrapment in the cycle of birth and death, and they must be fought and vanquished. Vidyamaya, on the other hand, represents higher forces of creation (e.g. spiritual virtues, enlightening qualities, kindness, purity, love, and devotion), which elevate human beings to the higher planes of consciousness. He concludes that with the help of *vidyamaya,* devotees can rid of themselves *avidyamaya* and achieve the ultimate goal of becoming *mayatita* – that is free from *maya.*

The four key concepts in Ramakrishna's teachings were the following:
- The oneness of existence
- The divinity of human beings
- The unity of God
- The harmony of religions

Ramakrishna practiced several religions, including Islam and Christianity, and taught that in spite of the differences all religions are valid and true and they lead to the same ultimate goal – God. Ramakrishna taught that *jatra jiv tatra Shiv* (wherever there is a living being, there is Shiva). His teaching, "*Jive daya noy*, *Shiv gyane jiv seba*" (not kindness to living beings, but serving the living being as Shiva Himself) is considered as the inspiration for the philanthropic work carried out by his chief disciple Vivekananda.

3.8   RAMANA MAHARSHI (1879-1950)

Sri Ramana Maharshi was born in a village called Truchuli near Arupukkotai, Madurai in Tamil Nadu. He maintained that the purest form of his teachings was the powerful silence which radiated from his presence and quieted the minds of those attuned to it. Though his primary teaching is associated with Non-dualism, Advaita Vedanta, and Jnana yoga, he recommended Bhakti to those he saw were fit for it, and gave his approval to a variety of paths and practice.

Basic Teachings of Ramana Maharshi:
Ramana's teachings about self-enquiry, the practice he is most widely associated with, heave been classified as the Path of Knowledge (*Jnana Marga*). Though his teaching is consistent with and generally associated with Hinduism, the Upanishads and Advaita Vedanta, there are some differences with the traditional Advaitic school, and Sri Ramana gave his approval to a variety of paths and practices from various religions. His earliest teachings are documented in the book *Naan Yaar?* (who am I ?), first written in Tamil. We can describe his philosophy in the following manner:

1. As all living beings desire to be happy always, without misery, as in the case of everyone there is observed supreme love for one's self, and as happiness alone is the cause for love, in order to gain that happiness which is one's nature and which is experienced in the state of deep sleep where there is no mind, one should know one's self. For that, the path of knowledge, the inquiry of the form "Who am I?" is the principal means.
2. Knowledge itself is "I". The nature of this knowledge is existence-consciousness-bliss.
3. What is called mind is a wondrous power existing in Self. It projects all thoughts. If we set aside all thoughts and see, there will be no such thing as mind remaining separate;

therefore, thought itself is the form of the mind. Other than thoughts, there is no such thing as the world.

4. Of all the thoughts that rise in the mind, the thought "I" is the first thought.
5. That which rises in this body as "I" is the mind. If one enquires "In which place in the body does the thought "I" rise first?" It will be known to be in the heart (spiritual heart is 'two digits to the right from the centre of the chest'). Even if one incessantly thinks "I", "I" it will lead to that place (Self).
6. The mind will subside only by means of the enquiry "Who am I?" The thought "Who am I?" destroying all other thoughts, will itself finally be destroyed like the stick used for stirring the funeral pyre.
7. If other thoughts rise, one should, without attempting to complete them, enquire, 'To whom did they arise?' it will be known 'To me'. If one then enquires 'Who am I?' the mind (power of attention) will turn back to its source. By repeatedly practicing thus, the power of the mind to abide in its source increases.
8. The place where even the slightest trace of the 'I' does not exist, alone is Self.
9. Self itself is God.

Sri Ramana warned against considering self-enquiry as an intellectual exercise. Properly done, it involves fixing the attention firmly and intensely on the feeling of "I" without thinking. It is perhaps more helpful to see it as 'Self-attention', or "Self-abiding'. The clue to this is in Sri Ramana's own death experience when he was 16. After raising the question 'Who am I?' he "turned his attention very keenly towards himself". Attention must be fixed on the 'I' until the feeling of duality disappears. Although he advocated self-enquiry as the fastest means to realization, he also recommended the path of *bhakti* and self-surrender (to one's Deity or Guru) either concurrently or as an adequate alternative, which would ultimately converge with the path of self-enquiry.

Sri Ramana followed the basics of Advaitic school of thought; however, he differed from this school on certain issues. Advaitic school recommends a negationist *neti, neti,* ("not this", "not this") path, or mental affirmations that the Self was the only reality, such as "I am Brahman" or "I am He", while Sri Ramana advocated the enquiry "*Naan Yaar*" (Who am I). Furthermore, unlike the traditional Advaitic school, Sri Ramana strongly discouraged most who came to him from adopting a austere lifestyle. In other words, the traditional Advaitic (non-dualistic) school advocates "elimination of all that is non-self (the five sheaths) until only the Self remains". The five *kosas,* or sheaths, that hide the true Self are: Material, Vital, Mental, Knowledge, and Blissful. Sri Ramana says, "enquiry in the form 'Who am I' alone is the principal means. To make the mind subside, there is no adequate means other than self-enquiry. If controlled by other means, mind will remain as if subsided, but will rise again".

His method of teaching was characterized by the following:
He urged the people who came to him to practice self-enquiry;
He directed people t look inward rather than seeking outside themselves for Realization. He viewed all who came to him as the Self rather than as lesser beings. He never promoted or called attention to himself. Instead, Sri Ramana remained in one place for 54 years, offering spiritual guidance to anyone of any background who came to him, and asking nothing in return. He considered humility to be the highest quality. He said the deep sense of peace one felt around a

seer was the surest indicator of their spiritual state, that **equality towards all was a true sign of liberation**, and that what a true seer did was always for others, not themselves.

Check your Progress IV

Note: Use the phase provided for answers.

1) Explain the Aurbindo's Philosophy of Reality and Human Person.

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2) Bring out the salient features of Ramakrishna's Philosophy of life?

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3) What are the basic philosophical nuances of Ramana Maharshi?

3.9   LET US SUM UP

In this unit on the Prominent thinkers of theism in India, we have first of all summarized the meaning of theism in Indian philosophical context. Secondly, we gradually analyzed the basic philosophy of theism against atheism. We took resort to the a few prominent thinkers in that line of thought. We began from Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita and then saw how Madhava differed from Ramanuja, who is most fascinating of the Hindu sage-philosopher and one of the greatest theistic thinkers of all time. Madhava by rejecting Advaita on rational and religious grounds, systematically laid out the case for theism. Later Nimbarka with his Dvaitadvaita (duality in unity) assessed the significance of theism. He equally emphasized both difference and non-difference, as against Ramanuja, who makes difference subordinate to non-difference, as much as, for him *cit* and *acit* do not exist separately from Brahman, but its body or attributes. In the following period we seen Aurobindo synthesizing Eastern and Western theism with the philosophy of Involution and Evolution. The central tenet of Aurobindo's philosophy is that the Truth of existence is an omnipresent Reality that both transcends the manifested universe and is inherent in it. This Reality, referred to as Brahman, is an Absolute which is not limited by any mental conception or duality. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa revitalized the modern understanding of theism with his human perspective of understanding the Reality. His four key concept bring out the essential elements of this philosophy: the oneness of God, the divinity of human beings, the unity of God and the harmony of religions. It was Ramana Maharshi who came out authentically to ask the fundamental question of, "Who I am" which will take one into the inner journey getting to know the reality within. Though his primary teaching is associated with Non-dualism, Advaita Vedanta, and *Jnana-Yoga*, he recommended Bhakti to those he saw were fit for

14

it. He conclude that the place where even the slightest trace of the "I" does not exist, alone is Self. And the Self itself is God.

3.10   KEY WORDS

Vedanta – ved ka anth or 'end of the Vedas". *Advaita* - non-duality. *Maya* - illusionary and creative aspect of Brahman which causes the world to arise. *Jivatman* – individual soul. *Visishtadvaita* – qualified non-dualism. *Dvaita*–dualism. *Dvaitadvaita* – independent existence of Brahman. Sri Arunachala Aksharamanamalai – The Marital Garland of Letters in praise of God. *Prapatti* – surrender to the Lord. *Nirvikalpa* – constant meditation.

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UNIT 4	PROMINENT THEISTIC PHILOSOPHERS OF THE WEST

Contents

4.0   OBJECTIVES

In the West, many philosophers have seriously debated on the existence and nature of God. There have been various approaches to understand and interpret the problem throughout the history of Western philosophy, which, considered in this Unit, is usually divided by scholars into four periods:

- Ancient Western Philosophy
- Medieval Western Philosophy
- Modern Western Philosophy
- Contemporary Western Philosophy

In this Unit, all the prominent theistic philosophers are treated under one or other period that corresponds to their time of life and activity.

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The term *theism* derives from the Greek *theos* meaning "god" was first used by Ralph Cudworth (1617- 1688). It refers to a doctrine concerning the nature of a monotheistic God and God's relationship to the universe. It conceives of God as personal, present and active in the governance and organization of the universe. The use of the word arose in the wake of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century to contrast with the then emerging deism which contended that God, the transcendent and supreme, did not intervene in the natural world and could be known rationally. The following are some of the most prominent theistic philosophers of the West: Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Anselm, Aquinas, Descartes, Leibniz, Whitehead, Marechal, Tillich and Rahner.

4.2   ANCIENT WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Plato (428-348 BCE)

For Plato, God is the efficient cause of the order in the universe. The form or Ideas exist in a world of their own. Demiurge (a god), the efficient cause, makes everything in the world according to the pattern of the forms. In this way, the forms are the exemplary laws of the things in the world, whereas God is the efficient cause.

Aristotle (384-322 BCE)

Every motion requires some principle in act. Every motion requires an act for its movement; then the universe in general, which consists of several acts and motions, requires a First Mover. However, the First Mover is not Creator-God; for the world existed from all eternity without having been created from all eternity. God forms the world, but did not create it. God forms the world, or he is the source of motion, by drawing it, i.e., by acting as final cause. In Aristotle's view, if God caused motion by efficient physical cause, then he would be changed as there would be a reaction of the moved on the mover.

He must act, therefore, as Final Cause, by being the object of desire. The first mover, should move things or cause changes without being moved, without having any potentiality within Himself, otherwise the first mover itself would change, calling for another cause which is a contradiction. Hence, the first mover should be the unmoved mover.

The First Mover, in sofar as he is unmoved, is not in potency. If he is not in potency, then he must be in Pure Act, i.e., Pure Perfection. That which is in pure act is not material; for that which is material is always in motion. That which is not material is spiritual. Hence, the first unmoved mover is spiritual. That which is spiritual is Intelligence or Thought. In this way, the First Unmoved Mover is pure intelligence or thought.

Plotinus (c. 204/5-270 CE)

God is absolutely transcendent; He is the One, beyond all thought and all being, ineffable and incomprehensible. Neither essence, nor being nor life can be predicated of the One. It is not because it is less than any of these things but because it is more. The One cannot be identical with the sum of individual things, for it is these individual things which require a source or principle, and this Principle must be distinct from them and logically prior to them.

If the One were identical with each individual thing taken separately, then each thing would be identical with every other and the distinction of things, which is an obvious fact, would be illusion. "Thus the One cannot be any existing, but is prior to all existents." Since God is One, without any multiplicity, there can be in the One no duality of substance and accident, and Plotinus is thus unwilling to ascribe any positive attributes to God, so as to avoid any delimitation of God by predication. He has neither thought nor will nor activity.

God emanates. How can Plotinus account for the multiplicity of things? God cannot limit himself to finite things, as though they were part of Him; nor can He create the world by a free act of his Will since creation is an activity and we are not justified in ascribing activity to God and so impairing his unchangeability. Hence, Plotinus had recourse to the metaphor of emanation.

4.3   MEDIEVAL WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Augustine (354-430 CE)

According to Augustine, the human mind apprehends necessary and changeless truths which is present to all and gives itself to all alike. This truth is superior to the mind in sofar as the mind has to bow before it and accept it. The mind does not constitute it, nor can it amend it. The mind recognizes that this truth transcends it and rules it throughout rather than the other way around. If it were inferior to the mind, the mind could change it or amend it. If it were equal to the mind, it would itself be changeable, as the mind is changeable. The mind varies in its apprehension of truth, apprehending it now more clearly, now less clearly, whereas truth ever remains the same. Therefore this unchangeable truth is neither inferior nor equal to our minds, but superior and more excellent. The unchangeable or eternal truth must be founded on Being which reflects the ground of all truth. For, eternal truth cannot be conceived without a ground of truth, 'the Truth in whom, and by whom, and through whom those things are true which are true in every respect.' Eternal truth presupposes Eternal Being.

Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109 CE)

The Neo-Platonic doctrine of universals (a doctrine of Realism stating that the universal or general nature of an object exists prior to the particular material thing) was utilized by Anselm in his famous ontological argument for the existence of God. According to this philosophy of Neo-Platonic Realism, the extent to which any object is real depends upon the degree of its universality. Inasmuch as God is the most universal Being, he is the most real of all beings. Anselm's ontological argument (delineated in his book, Proslogion) can be paraphrased in this way: That than which nothing greater can be thought exists at least in one's understanding. That than which nothing greater can be thought cannot exist only in the understanding, but in reality as well, which is greater. Therefore, that than which nothing greater can be thought exists both in the understanding and in reality. God is that than which nothing greater can be thought. Therefore, God exists both in understanding and in reality. The monk Gaunilo of Marmoutier criticized Anselm's ontological argument on the ground that the argument did not actually prove its conclusion. For example, said Gaunilo, anyone could claim to possess an idea of an unreal object, such as a perfect island, as proof of its existence. Anselm replied that an idea of an unreal object does not prove its existence but that the idea of God does imply his existence because the idea portrays him not as an imaginary or possible object, but as a perfect, indispensable, necessary Being.

Cosmological Argument: In his work *Monologion*, Anselm accepted the doctrine of Platonic Realism that truth, goodness, beauty, and other universals have an existence of their own independent of the individual things to which the universals may apply. Thus beauty exists irrespective of any specific beautiful object, such as a beautiful sunset. Universals exist in particular objects but they also exist apart from the particular objects in which they are found. For example, many good things exist, some of which possess a greater amount of good than others do. Such things possess only relative good, depending upon their worth, but they are not absolutely good. Inasmuch as some things possess more goodness than others do, there must be an absolute, a standard which can be used to evaluate their comparative goodness. This absolute good is the *summum bonum* or greatest good, namely, God. Reference to a good or better quality implies God as possessing the highest or best quality. Faith in God must be accepted as the absolute standard for all rational thought. The individual should unconditionally subordinate one's judgment to that of the universal Church. In other words, rational

philosophical thought must give way to revealed theology – 'I believe in order to understand' (*credo ut intellegam*).

Aquinas (1225-1274 CE)

Aquinas put forward five arguments for the existence of God. *Arguments from Motion*: The first and more manifest way to prove God's existence is the argument from motion. It is certain that in the world some things are in motion. Now whatever is in motion is put in motion by another. If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this must also be put in motion by another. But this cannot go on to infinity, for then there would be no first mover, and hence no mover at all. Therefore, it is necessary to arrive at a first mover, put in motion by no other. This first mover is God. *Argument from Causality*: In the world of experience there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known in which a thing is found to be an efficient cause of itself. In such a case, it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Hence, it is necessary to admit a first efficient cause to which everyone gives the name 'God.' *Argument from Contingency*: We find in nature things that are possible to be and not to be, since they are found to be generated, and to be corrupted. Hence they are possible to be and not to be. But if at one time nothing was in existence but in possibility, it would have been impossible for anything to have begun to exist. Consequently, even today nothing would be in existence – which is absurd. Therefore, not all beings are merely possible. There must exist something the existence of which is absolutely necessary. Such a necessary being is God. *Argument from Gradation of Perfection*: Among beings there are some more and less good. 'More' or 'less' are predicated of different things which resemble in their different ways as these are things which are the best, the truest, the noblest etc. Therefore, there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their perfection. We call him God. *Argument from Design*: We see that even things which lack intelligence act for an end. Whatever lacks intelligence cannot move toward an end unless it is directed by some intelligent being. Hence, an intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end. We call this being God.

4.4   MODERN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Descartes (1596-1650 CE)

For Descartes, there are 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. 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 we 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 or more so than 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 am I 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.

Leibniz (1646-1716 CE)

Leibniz has also three arguments for the existence of God. *Ontological Argument*: Leibniz re-presents the ontological argument in a slightly different way. "Only God, or the necessary Being, has this privilege, *that he must exist if he is possible*. And since nothing can prevent the possibility of that which contains no boundaries, no negation and therefore no contradiction, this alone suffices to know God's existence, *apriori*" (Mon. 45). The argument may be explained in this way: There are possible (possible means more than the non-contradictory. All possible things are positively ready to become existent, if there would be a necessary reason for them to do so. God is not only non-contradictory, but he has also in himself the sufficient reason for his existence) or contingent truths. These possible truths may or may not actually occur. Their occurrence is conditioned by certain necessary and actual ground that makes these truths possible. This actual ground cannot lie within the series of contingent and possible truths themselves since they are not necessarily actual. But nothing could even be possible unless there were some actual ground outside itself that could make it so. For possibility implies the capacity under some conditions to become actual. Now the existence of God as an infinite Being is possible, since there is no logical contradiction in the idea of God to prevent it being possible. And the idea of God is that of a being that has no limits, and so there could be nothing outside of such an idea to prevent it from existing actually. Since there is nothing to prevent either the possible or the actual existence of God on the one hand, and on the other the assumption of his existence is necessary to serve as the ground that will account for contingent and possible truths, we can conclude that God does actually exist. *God as the Principle of Sufficient Reason*: God is the only sufficient Reason that can account for the existence of contingent beings. Hence, "there is but one God and this God is sufficient." *God as the Perfect Monad*: God as monad is an individual, a person. But he transcends all monads. He is supernatural and super-rational, the most perfect and most real being. Man cannot form a perfectly clear idea of God, because God is the highest monad and man is limited and imperfect. God, being perfect, does

not undergo change and development as do all other monads. He is complete in himself and his knowledge is complete. He sees all things whole and at a glance. He is reality fully realized. He created the world according to a plan and chose this world as the best of all possible worlds. His choice was determined by the principle of goodness, that is, by moral necessity. He is also determined by logical necessity in so far as the fundamental laws of thought are binding on him as well as on man.

4.5   CONTEMPORARY WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Whitehead (1861-1947 CE)

Alfred North Whitehead makes an attempt to distinguish between the two modes of being as *actuality and potentiality*, i.e., the type of actuality, and the type of pure potentiality which require each other as actuality is the exemplification of potentiality and potentiality, the characterisation of actuality. The notion of 'process' is intelligible only when the notions of 'potentiality' and 'actuality' are taken into account. For the very nature of process implies that there is transformation of potentiality into actuality resulting in evolution. The process of evolution is constantly expanding. Through every actual entity, the world perpetually perishes and recreates itself. Whitehead does not believe in mechanism as none of the laws of nature give the slightest evidence of necessity. Though every actual entity is guided by its own subjective purpose, yet on a cosmic scale, God is the ultimate principle and directing force. He is called the 'principle of limitation' or 'the principle of concretion', the substratum of the eternal objects. God is not only the creator but also the companion of the world which emanates from God and is also enjoyed by Him. God and world evolve together side by side without ever reaching a static completion. The evolution of God together with that of world exhibits a dualism left unbridged. The relation of God with the world is not the relation of the world with God. The world depends on God, but by that it does not follow that God depends on the world. However, God's nature is both primordial and consequent. *Primordial* nature reveals him as changeless and timeless; whereas *consequent* nature reveals him as dynamic, constantly in process of becoming and is continually enriching himself through the universal prehension of new elements. As God is both primordial and consequent, he is also both transcendent and immanent. God is *transcendent* in the way every event transcends another event; he is also *immanent* insofar as he is present in every being. Hartmann's ontology, like Whitehead's metaphysics, continues to hover between the empirical and the *apriori*, between science and ordinary experience.

Marechal (1878-1944 CE)

A more acceptable approach for a validation of the existence of God is suggested by Joseph Marechal, a Belgian philosopher, in the fifth cahier of his classical work: *The Point of Departure of Metaphysics*. A single formulation of the argument is the following: A limited being, as such (that is by virtue of its very limitedness) depends totally on the unlimited Being. His method is known as transcendental method by which an analysis of a given human activity is carried out in view of exposing its necessary conditions experienced in direct judgment. This direct judgment is an existential act which cannot be denied. We shall seek to uncover its necessary conditions, and among these we will discover the validity of the principle of transcendental causality, which is the unlimited Being or God.

6

Direct judgment is an act of the intellect in which we say something of an object as presented to (us) our sense. It is the immediate affirmation or denial that something does or does not exist. For instance, 'There is something,' is direct judgment. But 'God exists' or 'there is no such thing as a soul,' are not direct judgments for they are not immediate affirmations or denials. Rather, they are conclusions based on other more immediate affirmations or experience. Now, no one can deny direct judgments. To deny direct judgment would mean denying immediate affirmation which is impossible. For instance, if one says 'there is nothing,' at least that 'nothing' should be there which is again 'something.' Hence direct judgment of 'there is something' is an inescapable and undeniable fact of human experience.

Direct judgment is a movement, a dynamic process: In every judgment, my intellect goes beyond the finite to the infinite, beyond the relative to the Absolute, beyond beings to Being itself. Hence, my intellect and direct judgment are dynamic.

Affirmation in Direct Judgment Experiences a Limit: In every direct judgment as presented to our senses we affirm two kinds of things about something; what it is (its essence, its 'thisness') and that it is (its existence). I experience the 'is-element' as actually limited by the 'this' element (i.e., I experience the limitation of existence by essence). To be this means not to be that. For example, to be a cow means to be just a cow and not a non-cow. There are millions of things excluded by this restriction. Essence is, then, a limitation in itself. But 'to be' does not imply any limitation by itself: 'to be' means just to be and the only thing it opposes itself to, or cuts itself off from, is 'not to be,' nothing. When I make an existential judgment and say: 'This is,' what I am expressing, in effect, is that the unlimitedness of 'to be' is, in this situation, restricted to being the 'to be' of just this particular essence. In other words, the dynamic movement of my intellect experiences a limit, a check to its movement.

This means that my intellect, in every affirmation, is ultimately tending towards the unlimited Being. I do experience the limitation of existence. In experiencing the limitation, I do tend toward the unlimited existence. For, in recognizing a limit, one goes beyond that limit. Now, we have seen that existence does not imply a limitation in itself. If existence is limited, it is limited by something other than, outside of itself, i.e., essence. In other words, I am tending towards pure existence, absolute and unlimited existence, unrestricted by any essence.

The unlimited Being, ultimate end of my intellectual dynamism, really exists. We may establish it along three distinct paths: *Starting from the reality of the observable world around us:* We accept the world around us as real. If the world is real, then the ultimate end of this world should also be real. For, if one is willing to accept that the world (the immanent object) is real, one must accept logically and honestly the reality of the unlimited Being in as much as it is one of the constitutive conditions of our world or proximate object. *Starting from the fact that the unlimited being is not consciously sought*: My striving after the unlimited Being in all my intellectual activity is not a conscious or explicit desire. I am so unconscious of it that I need to undergo a long interior analysis and reflection before I become explicitly conscious of it. The fact that I am not explicitly aware of it is a fact that I did not fabricate it for myself. If its existence is not something I have fabricated and yet it attracts me, it must exist independently of me. *Starting from the fact that the unlimited Being can be no mere ideal*: Our analysis has deduced the possibility of the unlimited Being – not from a mere analysis of the concept of unlimited or perfect Being, but from an undeniable fact, the activity of my direct judgment, there

is a link of real dependence of the former on the latter. They depend, as beings, on the unlimited Being totally. *Something is Being and direct judgment is dynamic, a movement*: The unlimited being as transcendental means that which is present in each and every experience. Direct judgment of 'something' is transcendental in so far as it is present in all human experience, in sofar as it is the *a priori* condition of further experience. *Transcendental is the unconditioned:* This transcendental dynamic process is the condition of further experience and advancement in knowledge. Since it is the condition of all other experiences, it must be unconditional. In this way it is the unconditioned condition of all other conditions. *The unconditioned is unlimited*: It is unconditioned, for there is no other condition to limit it. What is not limited by another condition is always the unlimited. *The unlimited is the Absolute*: What is unlimited does not depend on another for its existence. It is self-subsistent, i.e., it exists by itself. Such self-subsistent Being is the Absolute or God.

Paul Tillich (1886-1965 CE)

Tillich's fundamental approach to God seems to be ontological since both phenomenological and epistemological approaches presuppose the ontological. Phenomenologically God is human's ultimate concern. The divine is a matter of passion and interest for human, avoidable only by being completely indifferent. The epistemological approach consists in the search for truth in which the ultimate concern (God) is identified as the ground of truth.

According to Tillich, human thought begins with being and it cannot go behind it. Thought is founded on being. However, thought can imagine the negation of everything that is, and it can describe the nature and structure of being – ontological structure consisting of individuality and universality, dynamics and form, freedom and destiny – which give everything that is the power of resisting non-being. "If one asks why there *is* not nothing, one attributes being even to nothing." The question of being is the ultimate question raised by mythology, cosmology, and metaphysics. These have asked the question of being both implicitly and explicitly and have tried to reason it out. For, the world is a structured whole, which is objective reason; the self is a structure of centredness, which is subjective reason. "Reason makes the self a self, namely, a centred structure; and reason makes the world a world, namely, a structured whole." Being would be chaos without reason, without the *logos* of being. That is to say, being would not be being but only the possibility of it (*me on*). Where there is reason there are a self and a world in interdependence. The function of the self in which reason actualizes its rational structure is the mind, which is the bearer of subjective reason, and the world is reality, which is the bearer of objective reason. The dynamic character of being and reason implies that every being has the tendency to transcend itself and to create new forms. Nevertheless, everything tends to conserve its own form as the basis of its self-transcendence. It is impossible to speak of being without also speaking of becoming since every being tends to unite identity and difference, rest and movement, conservation and change. Becoming is as genuine in the structure of being as is permanence in the process of becoming.

The question of being implies the question of God. The finitude of being drives us to the question of God, which concerns human ultimately. Whatever concerns a human ultimately is God. The being of God is being itself, which does not mean 'highest being' as superlative places God on the level of other beings while elevating him above all of them. On the contrary, being

itself refers to the ground of being, the power of being, the power inherent in everything resisting non-being. Hence it is better to say that God is the power of being in everything and above everything, the infinite power of being. For if God is not being-itself he is subordinate to it. As being-itself God is beyond essence and existence. Logically, God as being-itself is 'before,' 'prior to,' the split which characterizes finite being. As power of being, God transcends every being and also the totality of being, namely, the world. Consequently, God cannot be objectified, cannot be brought into the subject-object structure of being. For, an object is that toward which the cognitive act is directed, be it God or a stone, be it one's self or a mathematical definition. The problem of logical objectification is that it never is merely logical as it carries with it ontological presuppositions and implications. God ceases to be the ground of being and becomes one among others if he is brought into the subject-object structure of being. God cannot but be the subject, even if he becomes a logical object, just as being itself is beyond every subject-object structure by going beyond finitude and infinity. Being-itself is beyond finitude and infinity; otherwise it would be conditioned by something other than itself and the real power of being may escape it. Being itself limitlessly transcends every finite being. On the other hand, finite being participates in being-itself and in its infinity. Otherwise the finite would not have the power of being, and it would be swallowed by non-being. This double relation of all beings to being itself provides being-itself with a double characteristics: creativity and 'abysmality.' Being-itself is creative as it enables every finite being to participate in the infinite power of being. Being-itself is also abysmal as it enables every finite being to participate in it in a finite way, i.e., all beings are infinitely transcended by their creative ground. God – being-itself or the absolute – is the creative ground of the ontological structure of being without being subject to this structure. That is, God *is* the structure that has the power of determining the structure of everything that has being.

Rahner (1904-1984 CE)

For Karl Rahner, Being (*esse*) is the 'wither' (*Worauf*) of the pre-apprehension which is the condition of the possibility of abstraction. Hence it is also the condition of the possibility of complete return which makes possible an objective knowledge. It follows from this that the 'wither' of the pre-apprehension as such is not an object of the first order. It is also not the object of a metaphysical intuition. For on the one hand, it is the wither of the pre-apprehension which describes its scope. It is given only in the consciousness of the pre-apprehension itself. On the other hand, it is not given as such in the finite real. But it is given and realized in the absolute Being. Here Rahner denies of Being both metaphysical intuition and objective or thematic knowledge. The only possibility is that of a pre-apprehension of Being in and against its own all-encompassing horizon which is the condition of the possibility of abstraction (hence of finite knowledge). Thus the pre-apprehension of Being is at the same time a pre-apprehension of the absolute. The pre-apprehension of Being would be impossible without this horizon. The pre-apprehension implies certain knowledge of that which is pre-apprehended, i.e., an unthematic knowledge of Being itself. Knowledge is already the Being-present-to-itself of Being. Being-present-to-itself is a self-realization. Therefore, Being realizes itself in its being pre-apprehended in the horizon of the absolute Being, i.e., God

4.6   LET US SUM UP

It is certain that everyone has an experience of 'something.' This experience of 'something' is an inescapable experience. One may escape from a particular experience, but one cannot escape from experiencing something. It can be further demonstrated in the following manner: The most fundamental and radical question which one can pose is this: Is there anything at all? The answer can either be a negation or an affirmation. If it is a negation it should be so: 'There is nothing.' Such an answer is self-contradictory as the answer affirms a negation which is again 'something.' Hence absolute negation is impossible. For, paradoxically every absolute negation presupposes an absolute affirmation upon which the negation rests. An affirmative experience of 'something' is not 'that which is not,' but 'that which is' or 'Being.' Thus, experience of 'something' or Being is the ultimate starting point of human thought. In other words, human thought begins with Being. However, there can be no realm of Being without the dialectical participation of non-being in Being. This dialectical participation through the categories unites Being with non-being and makes it finite. Although every finite being participates in the structure of Being, only the human is immediately aware of this structure; only the human is that being in whom all levels of Being are united and approachable; and only human is 'Dasein' in whom the structure of Being is disclosed and through whom the question of Being is raised. This question implies the question of God, which concerns the humans ultimately. If anything beyond a simple assertion is said about God, it would point to something beyond itself, i.e., it is *symbolic* (Paul Tillich). A symbol not only points to something beyond itself, but also participates in that to which it points. The symbol 'God,' points to something beyond itself, to the absolute reality to which it points, while participating in the power of the absolute reality itself. As this reality is absolute, it is the ultimate depth, the 'abyss,' which includes within it, everything that is not absolute. The finite beings have no existence apart from this ultimate depth. This ultimate depth 'underlies, penetrates, transforms and unifies' (Bernard Lonergan) every segment of the finite, elevating it to the realm of the divine. It follows that every attempt to separate the finite from the power of the infinite absolute is futile (as attempted by the atheists). There is no finite without the infinite. Thus we can say that finite is essentially and inevitably in the infinite. Human, 'a being-in-the-world' (Martin Heidegger), is essentially and fundamentally a being-in-God too. Hence, human should no longer strive to 'prove' the existence of God, but to realize the meaningfulness of one's own existence, along with other non-human beings, in the all-encompassing power of the being of God, who is the absolute ground and goal of one's own existence.

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