

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

MPY – 002

Western Philosophy

Block 1

INTRODUCTION TO WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

UNIT 1
Characteristics of Western Philosophy

UNIT 2
Divisions of Western Philosophy

UNIT 3
Major Issues of Western Philosophy

UNIT 4
Major Thinkers of Western Philosophy

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Philosophy is an important branch of human knowledge. The conceptions of philosophy and approaches of philosophy have been varied with social context. Western philosophy has been constructed on certain propositions. The western philosophy has taken its starting point from Greco- Roman philosophy. The western philosophy under the spell of modernity has an impact on the non- western world too. The objective of this chapter is to make familiar the characteristics of western philosophy. Western philosophy is a philosophy evolved from western civilization and its historical development. With changing socio- economic and political conditions, western philosophy too changed over a period of time. The approaches and styles of doing philosophy may vary, but we can identify certain features on which western philosophy got constructed. It does not mean that it dismissing the philosophical thought of western society, but arguing for new methods of inquirers in understanding the western reality against the dominant view of western philosophy.

Unit 1 explores the some of the basic characteristics of western philosophy with an historical note. Western philosophy from its Greek origin has been dealing with realities of world, religion, God, human. Modern western philosophy has not only critical about orthodox religion but also came with ideals of secularism, humanism, scientific temperament, progress and development. Skepticism, rationality, individualism and scientific methods are influenced the human conception in understanding the world.

Philosophy is a search, a search for wisdom of life. In the course of time this process of their thinking turned into a method and latter into school, system or thought. In **Unit 2** on “Divisions of Western Philosophy”, we would describe the development of the western thought from the Pre- Socratic to the Contemporary continental philosophies with a special reference to major schools. It enables the student not only to know the mere history of western philosophy but how thought or thinking pattern is evolving to a newer problems and newer solutions.

The **unit 3** is an overview of concerns, methods and issues of Western Philosophy. Human beings exist in the world and with the world. All questions about reality are also questions about ourselves and the way we interpret our knowledge about reality. All questions of philosophy are also existential questions. The issues arising out of various branches of philosophy in dealing with the question of reality are spelt out in this unit.

Unit 4 provides the brief view of important philosophical ideas of major thinkers of western thought who enriched the philosophical enterprises. In the history of western philosophy, we may find many philosophers with diverse philosophical streams. Historically, it is evident that the idea of philosophy has been changing from time to time with changing social context. The history of philosophy is constituted by its interrelation between the ideas, agents and social context. But this is confined to a selectively few thinkers as a representative of the prominent philosophical movements. This unit introduces the importance of each philosopher and their contribution to philosophy.

COURSE INTRODUCTION

Philosophy is the rational and critical inquiry into basic principles. *Philosophy* means the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Philosophy comprises all areas of speculative thought and included the arts, sciences, and religion. The term philosophy is often used popularly to mean a set of basic values and attitudes toward life, nature, and society—thus the phrase "philosophy of life." Philosophy is the mirrors the context, time and land. Each ideology is shaped by its geographical, cultural and temporal aspects of certain region. Philosophy, qualified as Western Philosophy is no exception to it.

The Greco-Roman philosophers are speculative about reality. The philosophers are Pre-Socratic period are having a naturalist orientation. Heraclitus materialistic monism is a representative of this age. Plato's philosophy is in response to sophists and other democratic states of his times. He represents the age and ideals of aristocracy by proposing the philosophers rule. He had an attempt to rationally construct and codify the value system for an aristocratic change. The medieval philosophers approach is theological. The modern philosophers are critical about orthodox religions and treat the philosophical problems with a temperament of science. Descartes method of doubt and his search for certainty represents the mood of modern western philosophy. The modern philosophy has two dominant traditions, empiricism and rationalism. Locke, Berkeley and Hume represent the former and Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza represents latter. Kant through his critical philosophy reconciled both of these traditions.

Hegel through his philosophical method, dialectical idealism, adds new dimension to philosophy. Marx, through his dialectical materialism has not only changed the orientation of philosophy but also outlined the purpose. The phenomenologist Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger tries to capture the essence of the world through typical scientific way. In continuation of this the existentialist thinkers declares that *existence precedes essence*. Jean Paul Sartre is the important thinker of existentialism. The analytical philosophers gave new direction to philosophy by saying philosophy as critique of language. The analytical philosophy has two dominant approaches, logical atomism represented by Bertrand Russell and early Wittgenstein, and logical positivism of A.J. Ayer, Carnap. Wittgenstein is a prominent analytical philosopher and set the boundaries for this kind of philosophy. He moved from his early logical atomistic position to ordinary language philosophy.

The continental philosophers such as Immanuel Levinas gave new direction by questioning the pre occupied assumptions of modern western philosophy by focusing on ethics and *other*. The postmodernist philosophy has not only critical about modern western philosophy and its dominant discourses but also provides new way of inquiry in understanding the social reality. Lytord, Derrida, Foucault, Barth, Frederic Jameson are some of the leading philosophers of postmodernism. Derrida's method of *deconstruction* is worth noting and Foucault's emphasis of relation between knowledge and power provides new direction in philosophy by bring into view the marginalized discourses.

Block 1 introduces Philosophy in Western tradition focusing on its characteristics, major division, issues and prominent thinkers. **Block 2** deals with Greek philosophy starting from speculation about the underlying nature of the physical world to Socratic method of enquiry and Platonic and Aristotelian systems of philosophy.

Block 3 goes back to the medieval period brought Christian scholastic philosophy along with Jewish and Islamic philosophy. The philosophy of this period is characterized by analysis of the nature and properties of God; the metaphysics involving substance, essences and accidents. The philosophy of medieval age was an attempt to construct religious thought with reasoned account of its various doctrines.

Block 4 mainly surveys rationalism of Descartes, empiricism of Hume, transcendentalism of Immanuel Kant and of Hegel's Dialectical Absolutism. This block will provide students broad background in the history of modern western philosophy, preparing you for both advanced work in the history of philosophy and contemporary study of a wide range of topics including epistemology, philosophy of science, philosophy of mind, and metaphysics.

Block 5 & 6 broadly speaks of the western philosophers and traditions in the contemporary period starting from 19th century to the present day. However, these blocks present major thinkers and trends during this period they are not exclusive. These also present variety of trends and philosophical thinking like Marxism, existentialism, linguistic philosophy, process philosophy, pragmatism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, structuralism, postmodernism, etc., adding to the richness of philosophical quest.

UNIT 1 CHARACTERISTICS OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

‘Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences . . . The result of philosophy is not a number of ‘philosophical propositions’, but to make propositions clear.’ Says Wittgenstein. Philosophy is an important branch of human knowledge. It is an effort to understand the world systematically and holistically. The conceptions of philosophy and approaches of philosophy have been varied with social context. Western philosophy has been constructed on certain propositions. This chapter explores the some of the basic characteristics of western philosophy with an historical note. The western philosophy has taken its starting point from Greco- Roman philosophy. It has followed by medieval thought which has mostly influenced by the religion. The modern western philosophy has not only critical about orthodox religion but also came with ideals of secularism, humanism, scientific temperament, progress and development. Skepticism, rationality, individualism and scientific methods are influenced the human conception in understanding the world. The western philosophy under the spell of modernity has an impact on the non- western world too. This has been coincided with colonial rule of western over Afro-Asian nations. However, western modernity has different meanings and implications for the world. In recent times, the methods and foundations of western philosophy and its ideals of modernity has been attacked in west and outside by the thinkers postmodern, post colonial and communitarians. The objective of this chapter is to make familiar the characteristics of western philosophy.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Philosophy is the search for comprehensive view of nature, an attempt at a universal explanation of things. The ideas of philosophy have evolved with social necessity of times. Philosophy is neither science nor religion, though historically it has been entwined with both. In the beginning the distinction between science, religion, and philosophy was not as clear as it became in later centuries. The function of philosophy is critical evaluation of our beliefs and clarification of concepts. Philosophy is the search for conceptual clarity in all areas of life. Philosophy maintains the distinguishing features of abstraction and concern for truth. Philosophers analyse and clarify concepts. Philosophy tries to explore critically the foundations of human practices, such as science, politics, religion or morality. The distinctive feature of philosophy is logical argument. Philosophers engage in arguments either by inventing of their own or by criticizing other people

or doing both. Philosophy involves expounding existing ideas, creating new imaginative ideas, and critically assessing the soundness of the arguments put forward in support of views claimed to be true. Philosophers are often debated what is ultimate reality? How do we know that reality? What constitutes good life? What is the meaning of life? These questions gave rise to branches of philosophy such as metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, logic and aesthetics. These questions are interrelated in evaluating the social reality and in understanding the world in order to lead a good life. Western philosophy is a philosophy evolved from western civilization and its historical development. With changing socio- economic and political conditions, western philosophy too changed over a period of time. But it had maintained its continuity from Greek philosophy to the contemporary times. The approaches and styles of doing philosophy may vary, but we can identify certain features on which western philosophy got constructed. In the light of contemporary struggles, the very assumptions and foundations of philosophy are under scrutiny. It does not mean that it dismissing the philosophical thought of western society, but arguing for new methods of inquirers in understanding the western reality against the dominant view of western philosophy.

1.2 BRIEF HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

The philosophical ideas have to be understood historically. The social context plays a crucial role in understanding the ideas of philosophers. In fact, our ideas emerged out of social tensions and chaos of the world. Philosophy is a social expression of this situation and provides comprehensive understanding of social reality. Philosophical ideas not only provide clarification but also lead for betterment of life. In other words, philosophers prompt a direction for humanity by providing the comprehensive and critical understanding of the world in which they live. Historically, Western philosophy has enriched by many philosophers of western countries. In ancient times, Greco-Romans are the leading philosophers. In medieval times, the Greek philosophy has influenced the religion and comes with philosophy of religion. The modern philosophy developed with industrial revolution of the west. Though British, German and French and American and other European nations have different social and political contexts, there are efforts to construct philosophical thought of these as western. Within west, we may find different philosophical traditions with different styles of doing philosophy and at the same time we may find some kind of convergence of philosophical thought commonly identified as western philosophy.

The western philosophy finds its roots in Greek philosophy of 6th century B.C. Greek philosophy has considered as a starting point for western philosophy. The later philosophy has shaped by this philosophy. In other words, the very definition and nature of philosophy of west has identified, continued and developed further from the Greek philosophy. The Greek philosophy has not only speculated about the world, but also tries to differ from the religion and theology. It has its roots in naturalism and critical about prejudice, beliefs and tradition. 'From the very beginning, Greek philosophy was an intellectual activity, for it was not a matter only of seeing or believing but of thinking, and philosophy meant thinking about basic questions in a mood of genuine and free inquiry.' (Stumpf, p.4)

For our understanding we may divide history of western philosophy into ancient, medieval and modern, and contemporary.

- a. Ancient philosophy- (Greek, Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy) Greek philosophy from Thales to Aristotle, Greco-Roman Philosophy, Neo Platonism of the Alexandrian School.
- b. Medieval philosophy or scholasticism from fifth to fifteenth century. (Patristic and Scholastic Philosophy)
- c. Modern philosophy- the renaissance from the 15th to the 17th century, the period of enlightenment from Locke to Kant, German philosophy from Kant to Hegel
- d. Contemporary philosophy from 1860 to the present. (20th century - Postmodernism)

Greco-Roman Philosophy

The early Greek philosophers are concerned about the nature of things. What is everything made of, or what kind of stuff goes into the composition of things? What is permanent in existence? Thales considered the element 'water' as the foundation of all physical reality. Others were following Thales with alternative solutions. The Pythagoras came with mathematical basis of all things. There are attempts to explain change and permanence. Heraclitus came with a proposition that 'all things are in flux'. Parmenides, the founder of Eleatic school of philosophy is critical about both Heraclitus and Milesian philosophies that all things emerge out of something else. He rejects very notion of change and considered phenomenon of change is basically an illusion. For him, the concept of change was logically neither thinkable nor expressible. Whatever exists 'must be absolutely, or not at all. Thales believes that every thing is made up of water, Anaximenes believes everything is made of air, Anaximander believes that everything s made up of 'boundless', Democritus believes everything is made up of atoms.

Ancient Greek philosophy may be divided into the pre-Socratic period, the Socratic period, and the post-Aristotelian period. The pre-Socratic period was characterized by metaphysical speculation, often preserved in the form of grand, sweeping statements, such as "All is fire", or "All changes". Important pre-Socratic philosophers include Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Democritus, Parmenides, and Heraclitus. The Socratic period is named in honor of the most recognizable figure in Western philosophy, Socrates, who, along with his pupil Plato, revolutionized philosophy through the use of the Socratic Method, which developed the very general philosophical methods of definition, analysis, and synthesis. While Socrates wrote nothing himself, his influence as a "skeptic" survives through Plato's works. Plato's writings are often considered basic texts in philosophy as they defined the fundamental issues of philosophy for future generations. These issues and others were taken up by Aristotle, who studied at Plato's school, the Academy, and who often disagreed with what Plato had written. The post-Aristotelian period ushered in such philosophers as Euclid, Epicurus, Chrysippus, Hipparchia the Cynic, Pyrrho, and Sextus Empiricus.

Medieval Philosophy

The medieval period of philosophy came with the collapse of Roman civilization and the dawn of Christianity, Islam, and rabbinic Judaism. The medieval period brought Christian scholastic philosophy, with writers such as Augustine of Hippo, Boethius, Anselm, Robert Grosseteste, Albertus Magnus, Roger Bacon, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, Nicholas of Cusa, and Francisco Suárez. The philosophy of this period is characterized by analysis of the nature and properties of God; the metaphysics involving substance, essences

and accidents. That is, qualities that is respectively essential to substances possessing them or merely happening to be possessed by them.

Many of these philosophers took as their starting point the theories of Plato or Aristotle. Medieval philosophy had been concerned primarily with argument from authority, and the analysis of ancient texts using Aristotelian logic. The philosophy of medieval age was an attempt to construct religious thought with reasoned account of its various doctrines. In other words, it characterizes with synthesis of theology and philosophy. The doctrines of Plato and Aristotle were reinterpreted to fulfill their religious demands. In medieval age to a large extent the speculative theories of Aristotle combined with theological presuppositions in the Bible. The state has been subordinated to spiritual dominion, to the power of the Pope.

Renaissance

The Renaissance saw an outpouring of new ideas that questioned authority. Roger Bacon (1214–1294) was one of the first writers to advocate putting authority to the test of experiment and reason. Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) challenged conventional ideas about morality. Francis Bacon (1561–1626) wrote in favor of the methods of science in philosophical discovery. Renaissance, embracing the classical tradition, highlighted the Greek culture as supreme achievement in western civilization, and also had a stressing the importance of this world, by emphasizing the dignity of man, by championing the possibilities of reason and pointed to a new scientific age. The ideal of Humanism was the most important intellectual development emerged out of renaissance. It has belief in man and a passion for learning. Humanists believed that reason is self-sufficient and more important than faith. Though the ideals of humanism in renaissance age mostly confined to aristocratic class, it stresses exact knowledge, the validity of reason and need for moderation in making intellectual assertions. Interestingly, the period of renaissance coincided with an expansion of Western Europe. Nature was regarded as the standard of all things. The Machiavelli, the renaissance thinker believed that religion should be dominated by the state. It did not matter whether a religion were true or false. Machiavelli, the realist viewed man not an image of God but as a creature governed by self-interest. In philosophy, the Renaissance refers to the period of the break-up of feudalism (15th to early 17th century), when trade grew up around the merchants and craftspeople of Northern Italy particularly, and a bourgeois society began to flourish and gave rise to a humanist culture in opposition to the official scholasticism.

Modern Western Philosophy

The modern philosophy begins with immense faith in human capacity to know every thing. The authority of the church was diminished and the authority of science got increasing. Though the method of philosophy was radically changed with modern western philosophy, but the much of its content remained same. The medieval philosophy had close nexus to theology, but the modern philosophy was subservient to scientific methodology. The modern philosophy developed the philosophical method, formation of philosophical systems and humanism. The modern western philosophy flourished with philosophical traditions of Rationalism of Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza, and Empiricism of Locke, Berkley and Hume. The reconciliation of these two can be seen with enlightenment philosopher Kant. It has taken to further heights by the Hegel through his method of Dialectical idealism, and Dialectical Materialism of Marx. The modern western philosophy has further carried by analytical, phenomenological and continental philosophical traditions.

1.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Though it is a difficult task to characterize or identify the specific features of western philosophy, but we may mark some common features marked with western philosophy. Philosophical traditions may vary from ancient Greek philosophy to contemporary western philosophy, but there are efforts to construct the essential features of western philosophy. The idea of west got its prominence and distinctiveness in relation to other Afro-Asian nations, which are under the control of colonial rule of west. The following are some of the features of western philosophy:

Philosophy as an Intellectual Speculation

From the beginning, western philosophy characterizes as an intellectual enterprises in understanding the social reality. As Bertrand Russell viewed philosophy is something intermediate between theology and science. Like theology, it consists of speculations on matters as to which definite knowledge has so far, been unascertainable; like science, it appeals to human reason rather than to authority, whether that of tradition or that of revelation. As Russell argues all *definite* knowledge belonged to science, and all dogma as to what surpasses definite knowledge belonged to theology. All the questions of the most interest to speculative minds are such as science can not answer, and the confident answers of theologians no longer seem so convincing as they did in earlier times. Western philosophy from its very beginning maintained that philosophy is distinct from science and theology. Science is the realm of empirical investigation and attempts to understand the world explain the observable events and formulate the laws of nature, and a human experience has explained accordingly. We also find some of the questions answered differently from this. In some occasions the questions generated by science may pass beyond its ability to solve them. There are attempts to understand the world as whole and some times beyond this empirical phenomenon. The final cause and meaning of the world have been found by invoking God, or universal idea or a supreme principle. This kind of inquiry in understanding the world has treated as metaphysical. This may have convergence with religion and faith. In other words, it is justifying the central claims of religion by providing a rational grounding.

Philosophy as distinct from theology, began in Greece in the sixth century B.C. after running its course in antiquity, it was again submerged by theology as Christianity rose and Rome fell. Its second great period, from eleventh to fourteenth centuries, was mostly dominated by Catholic Church. This period was brought to an end by the confusions that culminated in the reformation. The third period, from the 17th century to the present, is dominated, more than either of its predecessors, by science; traditional religious beliefs remain important, but are felt to need justification, and are modified wherever science seems to make this imperative. Few of the philosophers of this period are orthodox from catholic standpoint, and the secular state is more important in their speculation than the church. However, Western philosophy for the most part consists of insightful remarks about the nature of reality or human beings ('everything changes' or 'the unexamined life is not worth living', or no decision is a decision), analyses the fundamental concepts ('knowledge is justified true belief'), and systematic treatments of the basic structures of reality ('everything is a body' or 'Only minds and ideas exists')

Classification of Philosophy

Western Philosophy has evolved into various branches in course of time. One may find clear cut divisions in western philosophy into *metaphysics*, *epistemology* and *axiology*. And axiology further classified into *ethics*, *aesthetics* and *logic*. The most of the philosophical questions raised and systems of philosophy was developed around the issue of ultimate reality. In that sense metaphysical questions are central to philosophy. It deals about the conceptual schemes in understanding reality. Epistemology is an inquiry into the nature, origin, conditions and limits of knowledge. It is a science of knowledge. Scientific and logical understanding of the world got its priority with an emphasis on epistemology. The questions of knowing ultimate reality are addressed by revisionary metaphysics with a marked difference from speculative metaphysics. As a result, whether epistemology is subservient to metaphysics or otherwise, is a debating point for some time. Though philosophers initiated their debates in pursuit of well being and good society, they are primarily concerned either with metaphysics or epistemology. In this process, ethics has treated subservient to both. In recent times, the continental philosopher Levinas came with a proposition that ethics as first philosophy by negating the dominant way of doing philosophy by prioritizing either metaphysics or epistemology. However, one may find clear cut compartmentalization of western philosophy into metaphysics, epistemology and axiology, and developed accordingly.

Metaphysics

In the history of western metaphysics usually we find two conceptions – *descriptive* and *reversionary* metaphysics. The philosophers such as Aristotle, Kant and Strawson are forerunners of former and the Descartes, Leibniz, and Berkeley are representatives of reversionary metaphysics. This distinction may not cover all metaphysical systems, but it has been greatly influential in reviving work in metaphysics. Descriptive metaphysics is content to describe the actual structure of our thought about the world; reversionary metaphysics is concerned to produce a better structure. Descriptive metaphysics aims to describe the most general features of our conceptual scheme, that is, to describe reality as it manifests itself to the human understanding. Conceptual analysis is its main method. Reversionary metaphysics, on the other hand, attempts to revise our ordinary way of thinking and our ordinary conceptual scheme in order to provide an intellectually and morally preferred picture of the world. The reversionary metaphysicians generally like to establish a well-organized system beyond the world of experience.

The issue of appearance and reality occupies important place in the history of metaphysics. The distinction between appearance and real paves the way for idealism. This views that we have direct access to in sense-perception is at best the mental representations of things. Plato explains that sensible world is in some sense less real than the Forms. For Plato, the ‘forms’ are unchanged, eternal, universal and known to reason alone. Descartes distinction between the mental and physical provides the basis for the identification of a realm of appearances as distinct from reality. Kant’s transcendental *idealism* views that appearances are to be regarded as being, one and all; representations only, not things in themselves, and that time and space are therefore only sensible forms of our intuition. For Hegel no appearance can be absolutely false, and therefore in absolute contrast with reality, despite the natural opposition between the concepts of appearance and reality. From Hegelian point of view appearance can be only a less coherently

organized form of reality; the supposed contrast that the terms 'appearance' and 'reality' suggests is thus, officially, a matter of degree, not strict opposition. In this sense, reality is in a sense both other than and inclusive of appearance. Reality both transcends and also includes its appearances. Realism proposes alternative view to idealism. According to this reality is independent of us and our minds, and that what we think, understand and recognize does not necessarily exhaust what that reality involves. Against idealism and phenomenalism, realism asserts the independent existence of material objects and their qualities. The dualism of Descartes was vigorously attacked by Hobbes. Matter and mind are not separate, he declared; they are homogeneous and are subject to the same laws. The great dualism in nature is only between matter and spirit, and spirit is a subject for theology, not for philosophy. Space and time, Hobbes maintained, do not possess metaphysical reality; they are merely 'attenuated' images of the physical body. They have a material content which characterizes the nature of all reality. Hobbes interpreted the religion naturalistically and argues that the source of religion, lie in curiosity and fear.

From Nature Centric to Ethical and Human Centric

The first philosophers of Greek thought are mostly concerned about the nature, the physical world and its composition. The principle question had been about the natural physical world to shifted to ethical, how human beings should behave. The sophists and Socrates shifted the concern of philosophy to the study of man. Instead of debating about alternative theories of nature, philosophers started addressing themselves to the problem of human knowledge, asking whether it was possible for the human mind to discover universal truth. Could there be a universal concept of goodness if men were incapable of knowing any universal truth?

Ethical discourses are central to any philosophical systems. Some of the philosophers are directly addressed the well being and social good. The philosophical ideas of some of the philosophers have implications for ethics. The sophists consider *man is measure of everything*. For them, what gives pleasure is good. Socrates emphasized on *virtue as knowledge* and *unexamined life is not worth living*. Socrates devised a method for arriving at truth, linking *knowing* and *doing* to each other in such a way as to argue that to know the good is to do the good. Plato considered good with identification of cardinal virtues. Medieval philosophers maintained goodness with religious morality and the authority of religious text. The modern philosophers were started identifying with the ideals of humanism and secularism. The utilitarian philosophers such as Bentham and J.S. Mill developed ethical theories in the line of utility. The consequence of action determines the good. Kant again revised the virtue ethics through good will and categorical imperative. G. E. Moore argues that good is indefinable. Any attempt to define it in naturalism leads to a naturalistic fallacy. But at the same time he argues that objective moral truths are known through intuition. The emotive theory of ethics of A. J. Ayer with an application of method of logical positivism argues that ethical statements are neither positive nor negative. But ethical statements exclamatory and indicates emotions.

The ethics of ancient and medieval theories are founded on religious morality. The ethical theories of modern times are developed on the human nature. J.S.Mill maintains that human being by nature seeks pleasure and avoids pain. For Kant, human beings by nature are rational and argue for universal moral duty on this basis. The existential thinker Jean Paul Sartre argues that there is no human nature as such. Human beings are made up in situation. There is no objective morality, but subjective.

Comprehensive Understanding

Socrates developed dialectic as a method of argumentation. Plato brought together all the major concerns of human thought into a coherent organization of knowledge. This comprehensive understanding of reality became a feature of western philosophy and had influence on later philosophers of west.

The history of western philosophy reveals that, Plato has critically appraised. As whitehead remarked that 'the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.' The earliest philosophers, the Milesians were concerned chiefly with the constitution of physical nature, not with foundations of morality. Similarly, the Eleatic philosophers Parmenides and zeno were interested chiefly in arguing that reality consists of changeless, single reality, the one. Heraclitus and Pythagorean, on the other hand, considered reality as always changing, full of flux, and consisting of a vast multitude of different things. Socrates and sophists showed less interest in physical nature and instead, steered philosophy into arena of morality. Plato's great influence stems from the manner in which he brought all these diverse philosophic concerns into a unified system of thought. Plato argues that the kind of knowledge that helps one to distinguish between shadows, reflections, and real objects in the visible world is just the kind of knowledge that man needs to discriminate the shadows and reflections of the genuinely good life. Plato had argued that the truth of the world is not revealed to ordinary sense perception, but to reason alone; the truths of reason are necessary, eternal and *a priori*; that through the cultivation of reason man can come to understand himself, God, and world as these things are in themselves, freed from shadowy overcast experience.

Skepticism

Skepticism is doubting or denying the possibility of attaining true knowledge. In ancient Greece, the sophists provide their argument based on skepticism. The modern skepticism is associated with Hume, and J.S.Mill. It is reaction against dogmatic metaphysics and is the logical consequence of a through –going empiricism. Descartes introduced the method of doubt, which has influenced the western philosophy significantly. He considered doubt is the source of knowledge. To doubt was not an end in itself; it was a process of purification, of eliminating various false hoods, and of ultimately arriving at an unshakable foundations of truth. In fact, our doubt implies the reality of our thoughts. Doubting means thinking, this implies a self consciousness. *Cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am).Descartes regarded it as primary truth of reason. For Locke, skepticism was not an end in itself; it was prelude to a more scientific philosophy. Though out the western philosophy, one form or other skepticism has becomes one of its features. In fact, Western philosophy has progressed further with skepticism.

Scientific Method

Rational understanding of the world has one of the dominant features of philosophy. The rational understanding has enriched with scientific method against dogmatic and orthodox religious traditions. Descartes was a founder of seventeenth century continental rationalism. It was Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz fashioned a new ideal for philosophy. In the wake of developments in science, it was inevitably philosophy was affected by this new ways of

discovering facts. The early modern philosophers considered the methods of science a fresh way of developing knowledge.

As Fredirich Mayer out lined in *A History of Modern Philosophy*, modern philosophy has reflecting the spirit of science. In 16th and 17th centuries philosophy was influenced a lot by the dev elopement of natural and physical sciences. It has changed the perspective of philosophers. In 18th century the growth of the social sciences changed the outlook of philosophers. The optimism of 18th century philosophers was based on belief that progress can be achieved by making the world more rational, by eliminating obsolete traditions, and by destroying the spirit of prejudice. In 19th century, the growth of new biological concepts stimulated philosophical thinking, but the conclusions of biology were less comforting. The new scientific theories of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo revolutionized man's concept of the physical world. There is no doubt that the scientific discoveries and scientific methods of looking at world have changed the direction and conception of western philosophy in a significant way.

Philosophical Method

Philosophical method is a combination of rules, assumptions, procedures, and examples determining the scope and limits of a subject and establishing acceptable ways of working within those limits to achieve truth. The question of philosophical method is itself a matter for philosophy and constitutes a major example of the reflective nature of the subject. Historically, the philosophers disagree about the appropriate philosophical method. The identifying mark of a philosophical school or movement lies mainly in the method it adopts. Ancient philosophy was developed according to various interpretations of dialectic method, and modern philosophy was initiated by Descartes 's method of doubt. Analytic philosophy is characterized by linguistic method, while non-analytic European philosophy is characterized by phenomenological, historical, and textual methods. Historically, philosophers have tried to model their work on the methods of successful sciences, such as mathematics, physics, biology, psychology, and computer science, but the appropriate relationship between philosophical and scientific method is a matter of dispute. Some philosophers draw methodological implications from the claim that philosophy is a part of science or ancillary to science, while others derive their account of philosophical method from the claim that philosophy is prior to science.

The method of philosophy is empirical as well as rational, inductive as well as deductive. In the history of western philosophy, we find different theories of philosophical methods and the limits of knowledge. Dogmatism, skepticism, criticism and dialectic are prominent methods of inquiry. Dogmatism is the method of philosophical inquiry without a prior criticism of knowledge. A dogmatic philosophy assumes without hesitation the capacity of mind to know realities. It assumes, without justification, i.e, without explanation or proof, certain fundamental principles as well as self-evident or axiomatic and then deduces conclusions from them. It does not question the truth of the premises with which it starts. Dogmatism generally characterizes ancient philosophy, for the first inclination of the human mind is to act without questioning itself. Skepticism is doubting or denying the possibility of attaining true knowledge. In ancient Greece, the sophists provide their argument based on skepticism. The modern skepticism is associated with Hume, Mill. It is reaction against dogmatic metaphysics and is the logical consequence of a through –going empiricism. Kant used the critical method. Kant points out that knowledge is not wholly built of sensations as Hume supposes, it involves *a priori* as well as *a posteriori*

elements- reason as well as sensation. The matter of our ideas is furnished by senses; their form is the work of reason. This is reconciliation of both empiricism and rationalism.

The conflict of opposite dogmas gives rise to doubt as to the possibility of knowledge. Dogmatism gives rise to skepticism. Doubt leads to reflection, skepticism to criticism. Hume's critical reflection leads to extreme skepticism. According to him, we can never pass beyond the range of actual and possible sensations, and knowledge is wholly built up out of the elements of sensations. As per the critical method of Kant knowledge involves not merely sensations, but also certain a priori notions (forms and categories) supplied by the thinking principle from within itself. Our knowledge of the world has no resemblance of kind to the 'real world', so that there are two worlds- a world of human thought and a real world of things-in-themselves.

Dialectic is a method used to a form of reasoning by finding out contradictions or opposites. It is classified into negative and positive dialectic. The negative dialectic as a method was used by Socrates. It consists in exposing the inconsistencies or self-contradictions involved in opinions and thereby destroying them. The positive dialectic method was adopted by Hegel. It is essentially a process of reconciliation or unification. Hegel maintained that human thought proceeds dialectically; its movement involves a process of contradiction and reconciliation. An idea can be understood only in relation to its opposite or contradictory. Heidegger's Phenomenological method views Philosophy as the study of phenomena, where phenomena referring to whatever 'shows itself'. Phenomena are not mere appearances, but those things which *show themselves* to consciousness.

Further, philosophers approached reality from different stand points. Descartes described reality as dualism consisting of two basic substances, thought and extension; Spinoza proposed monism, saying that there is only a single substance, Nature, which has various attributes and modes; Leibniz was pluralist, saying that although there is only one kind of substance, the monad, there are nevertheless different kinds of monads accounting for the various elements in nature. It is evident that there are different philosophical methods adopted in the tradition of western philosophy.

Theories of Knowledge

In Greek philosophy, knowledge is perception held by atomists and the sophists. Protagoras and Gorgias are important thinkers in this regard. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle are important critics of this theory. For Socrates and his student Plato, knowledge means what is universal and valid and free from contradiction. Perception is momentary and relative to different persons. For Aristotle that no sense contradicts itself at the same moment about the same object. If all opinions and appearances be equally true, then it would lead to self contradicting statements. The modern philosophy has an emphasis on human capacity to know the world against the medieval view. It appealed to natural agencies in place of super natural ones. In modern philosophy, empiricism and rationalism are come with a distinct view of knowing the reality. The empiricists draw their model from empirical experience of everyday life. The rationalists draw their model from mathematics. For empiricists, experience is the source of knowledge and for rationalists, reason is the source of knowledge. The empiricists believe that mind is a clean state or *tabula rasa*. All the character of knowledge are acquired through sense-experience. As per rationalism, intellect is an independent source of knowledge. This gives us innate or a priori ideas.

Knowledge, according to it, consists in these innate ideas alone. These self evident universal truths are given by our intellect, the best example of which is found in mathematics. According to rationalism, experience does not constitute but serves an occasion for the exercise of intellect, whose innate ideas constitute knowledge. Intellect is an independent source of knowledge. This supplies us with self evident innate ideas. Knowledge is constituted by innate ideas alone. Knowledge so gained is universal and necessary.

Rationalism and empiricism are chief currents of modern western philosophy. It is Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz of continental nations fashioned a new ideal for philosophy. They are influenced by the progress and success of science and mathematics; they attempt to provide philosophy with the exactness of mathematics. They set out to formulate clear rational principles that could be organized into a system of truths from which accurate information about the world could be deduced. Their emphasis was upon the rational capacity of human mind, which they now considered the source of truth about man and about the world. Although they did not reject the claims of religion, they did consider philosophical reasoning something independent of supernatural revelation.

The British empiricists Locke, Berkeley and Hume consider experience as the source of knowledge. Empiricism is the view that all our knowledge is based on experience alone, and that, therefore, the true philosophical method is experimental or empirical. Locke argues that all knowledge is derived from experience; do not deny the possibility of metaphysical knowledge. For Hume, nothing is really knowable or thinkable beyond the range of experience no certainty or knowledge about realities. Attack on innate ideas- Locke started his philosophy with an examination of the first principles of knowledge and attacks the doctrine of innate ideas. The doctrine of innate ideas is popular with continental philosophers especially Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza. It was derived from Plato and thus had a very ancient lineage. It gave regularity and consistency to knowledge; it explained the universality of ideas and concepts. Locke pointed out that this universality is not real and there is no reason for the acceptance of innate ideas.

Theories of Truth

The prominent theories of truth are correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic. According to the correspondence theory, a claim is true if it corresponds to what is so (the "facts" or "reality") and false if it does not correspond to what is so. What we believe or say is true if it corresponds to the way things actually are- to the facts. A belief is true if and only corresponds to a fact. This view could be seen in various forms throughout the history of western philosophy. In modern times, the analytical philosophers Russell and G.E. Moore holds this position. According to the coherence theory of truth, a statement is true if it is logically consistent with other beliefs that are held to be true. A belief is false if it is inconsistent with (contradicts) other beliefs that are held to be true. A belief is true if and only if it is part of a coherent system of beliefs. The idealistic philosophers are in favour of this theory. Like correspondence theory, this theory too prominent in western philosophical thought. This theory is associated with British idealists in modern times. According to the pragmatic theory, a statement is true if it allows you to interact effectively and efficiently with the cosmos. The less true a belief is, the less it facilitates such interaction. A belief is false if it facilitates no interaction. In other words, truth is end of inquiry. Truth is satisfactory to believe. The most famous advocate of the pragmatic theory is the American philosopher William James.

Political Philosophy

Western philosophy has diverse traditions of political philosophy, from social contract to communitarianism. Historically, Greek thought followed the Christian natural law. The Christian natural law was undermined by the individualism of seventeenth century. This period was informed by the new vision of progress and freedom. Science had revolutionized people's life and thinking. Relationship between individual and god was replaced by the relationship between individual and individual as the foundation of social enquiry. This individualism becomes the basic characteristic of the subsequent liberal tradition. The idea of social initiative and social control surrendered to the idea of individual initiative and individual control. In simple terms, new material conditions gave birth to new social relationships and new philosophy was evolved to afford a rational justification for the new world which had come into being. This new philosophy became known as liberalism. Liberalism acquired different flavors in different national cultures. The difficulties in liberal theory lie in its basic foundations of seventeenth century individualism and its quality of possessiveness. The possessive quality lies in the conception of the individual as essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities owing nothing to society. The individual was seen neither as a moral whole, nor as a part of a larger social whole, but as a proprietor of himself. The basic assumption of possessive individualism – that man is free and human by virtue of his sole proprietorship of his own person, and that human society is essentially a series of market relations, were deeply embedded in seventeenth century foundations. This theory may correspond with the market society of seventeenth century. Society becomes the web of free equal individuals related to each other as proprietors of their own capacities. Society consists of relations of exchange between proprietors. Political society becomes a calculated device for the protection of this property and for the maintenance of an orderly relation of exchange. Later theories of politics tried to articulate from the point of community or individual in relation to community. The inconsistency lies inherently in the market society itself. Market society automatically brings the class differentiations. The propertied class would like to hold power over the subordinate classes. Men no longer saw themselves fundamentally equal in an inevitable subjection to the determination of market. Alternatives emerged for the market system. Articulation of proletarian politics gave a serious blow to the liberal politics. There are altogether different assumptions about man and society. The community has replaced individual. Marxist theory aims at the radical change in society and its human relations. Human society has seen from the perspective of the class considers human being as primarily a producer. His relations are determined by his involvement in social production. Other than the Marxist notion there is a conservative political theory would like to see society from the point of view of community. Conservatism has reverence for tradition, religion and age old custom. Edmund Burke is the one of the examples for conservative tradition. As per the conservative views, the inherent imperfections of human nature make a strong state necessary. It is needed to control the anti-social impulses of the individual. State has been seen as a crucial institution necessary to prevent society from dissolving into disorder and chaos. The conservative thinkers consider the forms of inequality and privilege as ineradicable and necessary elements of society. In the domain of political thought, the contemporary dilemma can be phrased broadly in terms of the relationship between 'contract' and 'community'. The liberals have 'persistently tended to cut the citizen off from the person', putting on their pedestal 'a cripple of a man' without a 'moral or political nature' and without 'moorings in any real community'. Libertarianism is an individualist philosophy, with a strong focus on the rights of citizens in a democracy. Whereas the libertarian Rawls seemed to present his theory of justice as universally true, communitarians argued that the standards of justice must be found in forms

of life and traditions of particular societies and hence can vary from context to context. Liberals insist that democratic self-government requires a fair and neutral political framework in which individuals can enjoy freedom and be treated as equals. As such, a democratic state must be as minimal as possible; its primary function is to maintain the social conditions and political institutions under which free and equal persons can live harmoniously together. On the communitarian view, democracy requires that individuals embody the virtues that make them capable of the true freedom of self-Government, and that these virtues can be properly nurtured only within the context of a proper community. Therefore, the state in a democratic society must undertake the project of forming its citizens' characters by providing the necessary conditions under which communities, and hence the individuals who compose them, can flourish.

Liberals posit a self that is by nature autonomous and thus enters into social associations by voluntary choice. According to communitarians, selves are essentially tied to the social contexts within which they live. Such contexts form the dispositions, desires, interests, and commitments of individuals. Communitarian thinkers in the 1980s such as Michael Sandel and Charles Taylor argued that Rawlsian liberalism rests on an overly individualistic conception of the self. However, the western political thought has dominant streams such as liberalism, conservatism radicalism and communitarianism.

1.4 CRITICAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

In recent times, there are many critical notes about the dominant constructions of western philosophy from within west and outside. The postmodern philosophical inquiries are not only critical about grand philosophical narratives but also provide different direction to philosophy by bringing into view the marginalized philosophical narratives. The periphery has brought into centre by celebrating the differences, which is either subsumed or negated in generalization. The social movements such as feminists, blacks, ethnic, ecological, post colonial are critical about the very foundations and constructions of western philosophy. The continental thinker Emmanuel Levinas opposes the orientation of western philosophy with a claim of *ethics as first philosophy*. Against the construction of philosophy around centre, he proposes 'other' as central. The postmodern thinker, Michel Foucault discusses possibility of discourse by analyzing the relationship between knowledge and power. Antonio Gramsci reminds the role of intellectuals in forming counter hegemony against ruling class hegemony. Edward Said in *Orientalism* exposes the colonial interests in writing/viewing other. The post colonial thinkers are not only critical about western imperialist forces but also their knowledge systems by highlighting the specificity of indigenous/local cultures. The western rationality and its scientific progress were critically viewed. Against the modern liberal self, embedded self was celebrated.

The distinguishing characteristic of postmodernist theorizing is its rejection of traditional philosophy and metaphysics. The postmodernists claim to have rejected not one thesis or another but rather the entire philosophical tradition from Plato through George Santayana. They problematised the notion of modernity and the philosophy constructed around that idea. The theoretical discourses of modernity from Descartes through the Enlightenment and its progeny championed reason as the source of progress in knowledge and society, as well as the privileged locus of truth and the foundation of systematic knowledge. Reason was deemed competent to discover adequate theoretical and practical norms upon which systems of thought and action could be built and society could be restructured. This Enlightenment project is also operative in the American, French, and other democratic revolutions which attempted to overturn the feudal

world and to produce a just and egalitarian social order that would embody reason and social progress. Yet the construction of modernity produced untold suffering and misery for its victims, ranging from the peasantry, proletariat, and artisans oppressed by capitalist industrialization to the exclusion of women from the public sphere, to the genocide of imperialist colonialization. Modernity also produced a set of disciplinary institutions, practices, and discourses which legitimate its modes of domination and control. The Postmodern theory argues that meaning is not simply given, but is socially constructed across a number of institutional sites and practices. The postmodern thinkers such as Foucault and others analyze the institutional bases of discourse, the viewpoints and positions from which people speak, and the power relations these allow and presuppose. They interpret discourse as a site and object of struggle where different groups strive for hegemony and the production of meaning and ideology. From these beginnings in the 1960s and 1970s, postmodernists continued their attack on conventional philosophic and social scientific approaches, developing a wide range of views that challenged the notion of progress, truth, reality, and values. Among the writers who are often classified as postmodernist are Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Roland Barthes, Frederic Jameson, Jacques Derrida, Felix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze, Paul Virilio, and Arthur Kroker. Postmodern philosophy is a philosophical direction which is critical of the foundational assumptions and structures of philosophy. There is no single world view that captures reality, no master story (or meta-narrative) that underlies humanity. Reason is to be distrusted because there is no way to know which person's reason is reliable. There is no such thing as objectivity. There is no "truth" to appeal to for understanding history and culture. There are no moral absolutes. The West, with its colonialist heritage, deserves ridicule. Texts, whether religious or philosophical or literary, do not have intrinsic meaning. Ideas are cultural creations.

1.5 LET US SUM UP

Western philosophy is an intellectual enterprise in comprehensive understanding of reality. From the beginning it evolved as a distinct discipline by keeping distance from both theology and science. It has classified into metaphysics, epistemology and axiology and developed further in the same line of demarcation. Skepticism, scientific method, individualism are identified as the features of modern western philosophy. In metaphysics, descriptive and revisionary are two dominant approaches of doing metaphysics. In epistemology, Empiricism and rationalism are two chief currents in knowing reality and the theories of knowledge are further developed by different thinkers. Correspondence, coherence and pragmatic are prominent theories of truth. In Political philosophy, liberalism, radicalism, conservatism and communitarianism are prominent theories. However, in recent times with the rise of new social movements and postmodern thinking, the dominant constructions of western philosophy are under scrutiny.

1.6 KEY WORDS

Metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, skepticism, philosophical method, postmodernism, liberalism, empiricism, rationalism, theories of truth, renaissance, medieval, modern, Greco-Roman

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UNIT 2 DIVISIONS OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

The unit introduces the major divisions of philosophy in Western tradition. The divisions are based on the historical and geographical background of the philosophers.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Philosophy is not merely a subject it is an 'activity.' Consequently one does not study philosophy one does it. People tend to consider philosophy as some extremely complex intellectual activity. Philosophy is a search, a search for wisdom of life. In this search philosophers at various stages have asked different questions at different times and expounded new horizons of answers day after day for their problems. In the course of time this process of their thinking turned into a method and latter into school, system or thought. Therefore here in this unit "Divisions of Western Philosophy" we would describe the development of the western thought from the Pre-Socratic to the Contemporary continental philosophies with a special reference to major schools. This would enable the student not only to know the mere history of western philosophy but how thought or thinking pattern is evolving to newer problems and newer solutions.

2.2 PRE-SOCRATIC PERIOD

Ancient Greece was the cradle of western civilization. Its earliest known thinkers around the year 500 B.C are called the Pre- Socratic philosophers. The contributions of this period could be well studied through the major schools of this time.

The Milesian/Ionian School

The Milesian school of thought was founded in the 6th century BC. The ideas associated with it are exemplified by three philosophers from the Ionian town of Miletus, on the Aegean coast of Anatolia: Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes. Not satisfied with the mythological explanations offered by the prevalent Greek polytheistic religion they were the first to use the skills of human thought to solve certain problems that arose from the physical nature of the

cosmos. Their problem was of the substance or the problem of the one and the many. To understand this multiplicity they agreed that there should be some sort of fundamental underlying unity. So they started with the basic question about "the essence of things" From where does everything come? From what is everything created? How do we explain the plurality of things found in nature?

Thales c. [624-550 BCE]: said water is original stuff [possible observation: nourishment, heat, seed, contain moisture], out of water everything comes but Thales does not indicate how. **Anaximander** c. [611-547 BCE]: the essence or principle of things is the infinite a mixture, intermediate between observable elements, from which things arise by separation; moisture leads to living things. He speculated and argued that *aperion* "the Boundless," the infinite substance as the origin of everything that exist. **Anaximenes** [588-524 BCE]: First principle is definite: air; it is infinite. From air all things arise by rarefaction and condensation a scientific observation thus the Milesians represent advance from qualitative-subjective to quantitative-scientific explanation of modes of emergence of being from a primary substance

Pythagorean School

Pythagoreans' main problem was the harmony, order, unity and proportion in the world. The world is a harmonious order, a cosmos. The Pythagorean account actually begins with Anaximander's teaching that the ultimate substance of things is "the boundless," or what Anaximander called the "*apeiron*." The Pythagorean account holds that it is only through the notion of the "limit" that the "boundless" takes form.

The main characteristic of Pythagorean School was its ascetic and religious character. Philosophy was for salvation, it is a way of life not so much knowledge of cause of ultimate things. The school was influenced by Orphicism, which had a common way of life and believed in transmigration of soul. According to the tradition, Pythagoreanism developed at some point was seen as two separate schools of thought, the *mathematikoi* ("learners") and the *akousmatikoi* ("listeners"). The *mathematikoi* were supposed to have extended and developed the more mathematical and scientific work begun by Pythagoras, while the *akousmatikoi* focused on the more religious and ritualistic aspects of his teachings. The *akousmatikoi* claimed that the *mathematikoi* were not genuinely Pythagorean, but the *mathematikoi*, on the other hand, allowed that the *akousmatikoi* were Pythagorean, but felt that their own group was more representative of Pythagoras.

The Ephesian School

The Ephesian School of philosophy of the 5th Century B.C. essentially refers to the ideas of just one man, Heraclitus who did not have any direct disciples or successors that we are aware of. He is a native of Ephesus in the Greek colony of Ionia. Along with his fellow Ionians of the Milesian School, he looked for a solution to the problem of change, but his view was that the world witnesses constant change, rather than no change at all. *Panta Rei* which means "everything is in a state of flux", nothing is permanent. "One cannot step into the same river twice." Reality is becoming rather than being. Unity exists in tension of opposites. Reality is at

the same time one and many, opposites are composites. Thus makes apparently a logically incoherent claim that opposite things are identical, so that everything is, and is not, at the same time. This he exemplified by the idea that, although the waters in it are always changing, a river stays the same.

The transformation of material from one state into another does not happen by accident, he held, but rather within certain limits and within certain time and according to law or "logos", according to which all things are one. The difference is essential to unity. He considered that the basis of the entire universe is an ever-living fire (although this is used more as a symbol of change and process, rather than actual fire), so that the world itself consists of a law-like interchange of elements, symbolized by fire. This is the best symbol to express the constant changing one- in-many.

The Eleatic School

The school took its name from Elea, a Greek city of lower Italy, the home of its chief exponents, Parmenides and Zeno. Its foundation is often attributed to Xenophanes of Colophon, but, although there is much in his speculations which formed part of the later Eleatic doctrine, it is probably more correct to regard Parmenides as the founder of the school. Parmenides of Elea cast his philosophy against Heraclitus who said, "it is and is not the same and not the same, and all things travel in opposite directions." The fundamental reality for him is permanence, not change, being and not becoming, one and not many. Plurality and change are illusion. If A is being and B is being, A is the same as B. A cannot become B for both are Being. He held the view of 'ontological monism.' Being (*ontos*) is one (*Monos*). It is also called 'absolutism' there exists only one absolute independent and unrelated reality and nothing else. Parmenides argued that the first principle of being was One, indivisible, and unchanging. What will bring us to this knowledge is not opinion but reason. The former is the wrong way and relies on sense experience and erroneously takes plurality change as real. But with the way of reason, the right way reveals the truth, namely that reality is one and stable. This is the way that leads the knower behind the false appearances of sense knowledge.

Pluralist School

Empedocles of Agrigentum (490-430 BCE) was from the ancient Greek city of Akragas, Agrigentum in Latin, modern Agrigento, in Sicily. He appears to have been partly in agreement with the Eleatic School, partly in opposition to it. On the one hand, he maintained the unchangeable nature of substance; on the other, he supposes a plurality of such substances - i.e. four classical elements, earth, water, air, and fire. Of these the world is built up, by the agency of two ideal motive forces - Love as the cause of union, Strife/ Hate as the cause of separation. Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (500-428 BCE) in Asia Minor, also maintained the existence of an ordering principle as well as a material substance, and while regarding the latter as an infinite multitude of imperishable primary elements; he conceived divine reason or Mind (*Nous*) as ordering them. He referred all generation and disappearance to mixture and resolution respectively. To him belongs the credit of first establishing philosophy at Athens.

Atomist School

The first explicitly materialistic system was formed by Leucippus (5th century BCE) and his pupil Democritus of Abdera (460-370 BCE) from Thrace. Their school is a development of the philosophy of Empedocles who said that change was due to various proportions of the 4 elements. But he did not carry out the quantitative explanation of qualitative differences to its logical conclusion. So the atomists say that all things consist of a single kind of matter broken into tiny particles. According to them there are an infinite number of indivisible units which are called atoms (uncuttable a = not tome = Cut). These are imperceptible since they are too small to be perceived by senses. But Moving eternally through the infinite void, they collide and unite, thus generating objects which differ in accordance with the varieties, in number, size, shape, and arrangement, of the atoms which compose them.

Thus we can distinguish the pluralist and atomists in two ways: 1. Qualitative pluralism: those admitting principles are qualitatively different from one another. (Empedocles and Anaxogoros). 2. Quantitative pluralism: Those admitting the principles are qualitatively different in their shape, position and dimension (Leucippus and Democritus) Atomists

The Sophists

The development of Greek thought led to a spirit of free inquiry in poetry: Aeschylus [525-456 BCE], Sophocles [490=405 BCE], Euripides [480-406 BCE]; history: Thucydides [b. 471 BCE]; medicine: Hippocrates [b. 460 BCE]. The construction of philosophical systems ceases temporarily; the existing schools continue to be taught and some turn attention to natural-scientific investigation the resulting individualism made an invaluable contribution to Greek thought but led, finally, to an exaggerated intellectual and ethical subjectivism. The Sophists who were originally well-regarded came gradually to be a term of reproach partly owing to the radicalism of the later schools: their subjectivism, relativism and nihilism. For Protagoras, all opinions are true [though some "better"]; for Gorgias none are true [there is nothing; even if there were something we could not know it; if we could know it we could not communicate it]. Sophists exaggerated the differences in human judgments and ignored the common elements; laid too much stress on the illusoriness of the senses. Nevertheless, their criticisms of knowledge made necessary a profounder study of the nature of knowledge.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Define the concept of Reality in Ephesian and Eleatic school

.....

2) Distinguish the main differences between the Atomist and Pluralist

.....

2.3 THE SOCRATIC AGE

Socratic School: Socrates [469-399 BCE], of Xenophon, the key figure in transforming Greek philosophy into a unified and continuous project is the one still being pursued today by many. The Socratic problem was to meet the challenge of sophistry, which, in undermining knowledge, threatened the foundations of morality and state." Socratic method: includes the elements: [1] skeptical, [2] conventional, [3] conceptual or definitional, [4] empirical or inductive, [5] deductive a "dialectical" process for improving understanding of a subject, he convinced that truth is in every man's heart.

This method of Socratics has two aspects: Ironic- it is a process to help clear notions. He approaches as if seeking knowledge, confesses his utter ignorance and asks questions. Maieutic (midwifery) – drawing truth out of mind or art of delivering truth. This method helps to clear the mind of the inquirer of all over-hasty, inadequate and mistaken notions and prejudices. Thus philosophy is centred on truth and being. Every human being is pregnant with the truth and the teacher is nothing more than a helpful midwife. Man knows thyself and you will be virtuous. Knowledge is the highest good. Knowledge is virtue and ignorance is a vice. Self knowledge is the foundation of all true and certain knowledge. Self knowledge means the knowledge of powers hidden in the mind, pointing towards the existence of an innate knowledge. Knowledge is formed in the mind by the capacity of intellect which elaborates the findings of the senses.

Plato's Academy: The groundwork of Plato's scheme is the threefold division of philosophy into dialectic, ethics, and physics; its central point is the theory of forms. This theory is a combination of the Eleatic doctrine of the One with Heraclitus's theory of a perpetual flux and with the Socratic method of concepts. These forms are eternal, changeless and incorporeal which can be known only through thought. The things which we see around are only shadows or poor copies of the things that exist in the ideal world. The highest form is that of the Good, which is the ultimate basis of the rest, and the first cause of being and knowledge. Apprehensions derived from the impression of sense can never give us the knowledge of true being — i.e. of the forms. It can only be obtained by the soul's activity within itself, apart from the troubles and disturbances of sense; that is to say, by the exercise of reason. Dialectic, as the instrument in this process, leading us to knowledge of the ideas, and finally of the highest idea of the Good, is the first of sciences (*scientia scientiarum*).

The school founded by Plato, called the Academy (from the name of the grove of the Attic hero Academus where he used to deliver his lectures). Plato's Academy is often said to have been a school for would-be politicians in the ancient world, and to have had many illustrious alumni. In at least Plato's time, the school did not have any particular doctrine to teach; rather, Plato posed problems to be studied and solved by the others. There is evidence of lectures given, most notably Plato's lecture "On the Good" but probably the use of dialectic was more common. The academy was divided into three periods of the Old, Middle, and New Academy. The chief personages in the first of these were Speusippus (son of Plato's sister), who succeeded him as the head of the school (till 339 BCE), and Xenocrates of Chalcedon (till 314 BCE). Both of them sought to fuse Pythagorean speculations on number with Plato's theory of ideas. The two other Academies were still further removed from the specific doctrines of Plato, and advocated skepticism.

Aristotle's Peripatetic School

While Plato had sought to elucidate and explain things from the supra-sensual standpoint of the forms, his pupil preferred to start from the facts given us by experience. Philosophy to him meant science, and its aim was the recognition of the purpose in all things. Hence he establishes the ultimate grounds of things inductively — that is to say, by a posteriori conclusions from a number of facts to a universal. Matter is the basis of all that exists; it comprises the potentiality of everything, but of itself is not actually anything. A determinate thing only comes into being when the potentiality in matter is converted into actuality. This is effected by form, inherent in the unified object and the completion of the potentiality latent in the matter. For reason alone can attain to truth either in cognition or action. The end of human activity, or the highest good, is happiness, or perfect and reasonable activity in a perfect life. To this, however, external goods are more or less necessary conditions.

The followers of Aristotle, known as Peripatetics (Theophrastus, Strato of Lampsacus, Lyco of Troas, Aristo of Ceos, Critolaus Diodorus of Tyre,). The school originally derived its name Peripatos from the *peripatoi* ("colonnades") of the Lyceum gymnasium in Athens where the members met. A similar Greek word *peripatetikos* refers to the act of walking, and as an adjective, "peripatetic" is often used to mean itinerant, wandering, meandering, or walking about. The Peripatetic School tended to make philosophy the exclusive property of the learned class, thereby depriving it of its power to benefit a wider circle. This soon produced a negative reaction, and philosophers returned to the practical standpoint of Socratic ethics. The speculations of the learned were only admitted in philosophy where serviceable for ethics. The chief consideration was how to popularize doctrines, and to provide the individual, in a time of general confusion and dissolution, with a fixed moral basis for practical life.

2.4 EPICUREANS, STOICS AND NEO-PLATONISM

Epicurus of Samos and later of Athens was the founder of the Epicurean school. The powerful thought of Epicurus was hedonistic, following sensual pleasure. He hated all kinds of metaphysical speculation. Philosophy must concentrate more on the problem of man and the practical meaning. It must take special effort for the suffering of human being. He developed an unsparingly materialistic metaphysics, empiricist epistemology and hedonistic ethics. He taught that the basic constituents of the world are atoms and explained all natural phenomena in atomic terms. He taught that scepticism was untenable and that we could gain knowledge of the world relying upon the senses. Mental pleasures are greater than pleasures of the body, mental pains worse than physical pains therefore a life of prudence and wisdom is good and this has a naturalistic basis in the caprice of the world.

Stoics: The founder of the stoic school was Zeno. This school based itself on the moral ideas of the Cynics, Stoicism laid great emphasis on goodness and peace of mind gained from living a life of virtue in accordance with nature. It proved very successful, and flourished as the dominant philosophy from the Hellenistic period through to the Roman era. The stoics were materialists. They believed in determinism contrary to epicureans. Thus Epicureans and Stoics were concerned primarily with ethics however the ethics needed metaphysics and cosmology and theory of

knowledge and truth in terms of sense experience they were pioneers of the empirical tradition in epistemology.

Neo-Platonism

The closing period of Greek philosophy is marked in the third century CE, by the establishment of Neo-Platonism in Rome. Its founder was Plotinus of Lycopolis in Egypt (205-270) and its emphasis is a scientific philosophy of religion, in which the doctrine of Plato is fused with the most important elements in the Aristotelian and Stoic systems and with Eastern speculations. At the summit of existences stands the One or the Good, as the source of all things. It emanates from itself, as if from the reflection of its own being, reason, wherein is contained the infinite store of ideas. Soul, the copy of the reason, is emanated by and contained in it, as reason is in the One, and, by informing matter in itself non-existence, constitutes bodies whose existence is contained in soul. Nature, therefore, is a whole, endowed with life and soul. Soul, being chained to matter, longs to escape from the bondage of the body and return to its original source. To attain this union with the Good, or God, is the true function of humans, to whom the external world should be absolutely indifferent.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Define the philosophical method of Peripatetic school

.....

2) Define Epicurean Ethics

.....

2.3 MEDIEVAL SCHOLASTICISM

Scholasticism

Scholasticism is a medieval school of philosophy or perhaps more accurately, a method of learning taught by the academics of medieval universities and cathedrals in the period from the 12th to 16th Century. It combined Logic, Metaphysics and semantics into one discipline. The term "scholastic" is derived from the Latin word "*scholasticus*" and the Greek "*scholastikos*" meaning literally "devoting one's leisure to learning" or "scholar" and the Greek "*sholeion*" meaning "school". The term "schoolmen" is also commonly used to describe scholastics. Scholasticism is best known for its application in medieval Christian theology, especially in attempts to reconcile the philosophy of the ancient classical philosophers (particularly Aristotle) with Christian theology. However, in the High Scholastic period of the 14th Century, it moved

beyond theology and had its applications in many other fields of study including Epistemology, Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of nature, Psychology and even economic theory. Essentially, Scholasticism is a tool and method for learning which places emphasis on dialectical reasoning i.e. the exchange of argument or thesis, and counter argument or antithesis, in pursuit of a conclusion or synthesis, directed at answering questions or resolving contradictions.

Characteristics of Scholasticism

1. An acceptance of the prevailing Catholic orthodoxy. 2. Within this orthodoxy, an acceptance of Aristotle as a greater thinker than Plato. 3. The recognition that Aristotle and Plato disagreed about the notion of universals, and that this was a vital question to resolve. 4. Giving prominence to dialectical thinking and syllogistic reasoning. 5. An acceptance of the distinction between "natural" and "revealed" theology. 6. A tendency to dispute everything at great length and in minute detail, often involving word-play.

Scholastic method

The method is to thoroughly and critically read a book by a renowned scholar or author, reference any other related documents and commentaries on it, and note down any disagreements and points of contention. The two sides of an argument would be made whole through philological analysis (the examination of words for multiple meanings or ambiguities), and through logical analysis (using the rules of formal logic to show that contradictions did not exist but were merely subjective to the reader). These would then be combined into "*questionae*" and then into "*summae*" (complete summaries of all questions, such as St. Thomas Aquinas' famous "*Summa Theologica*", which claimed to represent the sum total of Christian theology at the time). The two methods of teaching are the "*lectio*" -the simple reading of a text by a teacher, who would expound on certain words and ideas, but no questions were permitted and the "*disputatio*" where either the question to be disputed was announced beforehand, or students proposed a question to the teacher without prior preparation, and the teacher would respond, citing authoritative texts such as the Bible to prove his position, and the students would rebut the response, and the argument would go back and forth, with someone taking notes to summarize the argument.

St. Anselm of Canterbury is sometimes misleadingly referred to as the "Father of Scholasticism", although his approach was not really in keeping with the Scholastic method. Probably a better example of Early Scholasticism is the work of Peter Abelard and Peter Lombard, particularly the latter's "Sentences", a collection of opinions on the Church Fathers and other authorities. The Franciscan and Dominican orders of the 13th Century saw some of the most intense scholastic theologizing of High Scholasticism, producing such theologians and philosophers as Albertus Magnus, St. Thomas Aquinas, Alexander of Hales and St. Bonaventure. Late Scholasticism (14th Century onwards) became more complex and subtle in its distinctions and arguments, including the Nominalists or Voluntarists theologies of men like William of Ockham. Also notable during the Late Scholasticism period are John Duns Scotus, Meister Eckhart, Marsilius of Padua, John Wycliffe, Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Siena and Thomas a Kempis

<h3>Check Your Progress III</h3>

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is Scholasticism?

.....

2) Define the Scholastic Method

.....

2.5 MODERN SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

Renaissance Humanism

The modern philosophy began with the Renaissance 1500 A.D, a land mark in European history pointing to the end of Christian Medievalism " and the beginning of a process that led to contemporary secularism. Renaissance means 'renewal,' or 'rebirth'. Thus this awakening to a new mentality characterized by the following traits: 1. A revival of Greek Humanism, in opposition to Christian religiosity. Humanism refers to a system or mode of thought or action in which human interests, values, and dignity predominate. It's philosophy is a variety of ethical theory and practice that emphasizes reason, scientific inquiry, and human fulfillment in the natural world and often rejects the importance of belief in God. 2. The rise of modern science with the end of the Ptolemaic theory and the Copernican revolution and religion (Galileo) raises the questions free thinking and the autonomous status for secular knowledge in regard to church authority. 3. The religious revolution of Luther who substituted the individual conscience for the church as a guide to biblical interpretation.

Thus it sets the Spirit of modern philosophy "as an awakening of the reflective spirit, a quickening of criticism, a revolt against authority and tradition, a protest against absolutism and collectivism, and a demand for freedom in thought, feeling and action. While medieval found its guide and inspiration in the Christian religion, modern turned its attention to the nature of the new science and its method which are Rational and empirical. Thus modern philosophies are either Rationalism and or Empiricism.

Rationalism

Rationalism derives from the Latin word "Ratio" meaning "Reason". Rationalism holds that genuine knowledge cannot come from sense perception or experience but must have its foundation in thought or reason. It makes reason instead of revelation and authority as the standard of knowledge. To employ reason is to use our individual intellectual abilities to seek evidence for and against potential beliefs. To fail to employ reason is to form beliefs on the basis of such non-rational processes as blind faith, guessing or unthinking obedience to institutional

authority. Rationalism gives emphasis on the a priori reason which means knowledge obtained prior to experience. It is universal, necessary and self evident. Hence this theory holds that certain ideas like ideas of causality, infinity and perfect being of God are inborn and highly indubitable.

Rationalism is also commonly called as Continental Rationalism, the term 'continental rationalism' would traditionally refer to a 17th century philosophical movement begun by Descartes. After Descartes several scientists and philosophers continued his teachings throughout continental Europe and accordingly were titled as Cartesians. A handful of philosophers influenced by Descartes were more original in developing their own views and they are Benedict Spinoza, Nicholas Malebranche and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz..

Rational Method: Continental rationalists maintained that we could deduce truths with absolute certainty from our innate ideas, much the way theorems in geometry are deduced from axioms. Mathematical demonstration was seen as the perfect type of demonstrating truth and accordingly mathematical proof became the model for all other kinds of demonstration. For them Mathematics provides a model of clarity, certainty and orderly deduction. The personal elements the subjective factors such as feelings and emotions are eliminated and body of presuppositions the truth of which is assured and built up. Although the empiricist used the same deductive reasoning but they put a greater emphasis on the inductive method following the British country man Francis Bacon. Thus rational method is basically predicting and explaining behavior based on mathematical reasoning and logic.

Empiricism

Etymologically the name comes from the Greek word '*Empeiria*', which corresponds to the Latin '*experientia*' which in turn takes the English meaning 'experience'. Empiricism is a system of thought which believes that there are no inborn truths and all knowledge springs from sense perception or experience and there is no absolutely certain knowledge without experiential verification of the perceived data. Reason can yield only probable knowledge. Empiricism thus holds that our world of experience is the object of philosophy and all knowledge is ultimately based on experience. Experience so understood has a variety of modes – sensory, aesthetic, moral, religious and so on but empiricist concentrate on sense experience. It goes to an extent of affirming that there is no other knowledge except that which comes from experience. The famous empiricists were John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume.

Characteristics of Empiricism: 1. According to empiricism human mind at birth is "tabula rasa" or a clean slate. The mind is being compared to a blank writing tablet, white paper and void of all characters. The mind is only potential or inactive before receiving ideas from the senses. 2. Sense experience as source of knowledge. Sensation and reflection the outer and the inner sense experience is the only windows through which the dark chamber of mind comes to be filled with light. 3. Empiricism does not deal with universals. It holds that universal propositions can satisfactorily be explained by particulars. 4. Empiricism denies intuition which enables us to grasp general truths about reality independently of experience as a result it accepts only inductive method which is a process of reasoning from a part to a whole, from particulars to generals, individuals to universals.

Kinds of Empiricism: There are two kinds of empiricism one is a stronger form and other in a weaker. Such distinction has to do with scope – whether the view takes all knowledge to be based on experience or restricts this claim to knowledge of the physical universe, eluding for example mathematical and/or religious knowledge. 1. **Material Empiricism:** The stronger form of empiricism is called material empiricism. It holds that the objectively existing outer world is the source of sense experience. It puts forward that the only things that shall be debatable among philosophers shall be things definable in terms drawn from experience. 2. **Idealist Empiricism:** It is a weaker form which limits experience to the sum total of sensations. Sensation is a kind of physical state occurring as a result of direct influence of the objects on the sense experience. It is also of two types namely External and Internal. External sensation is caused by any one of senses like sense of sight, touch, taste, sound and smell. Internal sensation is caused by reflection or psychical acts of human mind.

Enlightenment

The period of enlightenment refers to the European culture of the 18th century. This is the period in which the human became overconfident in the human reason and rationality. Anything which cannot be understood by rational knowledge was defied as meaningless or superstition. The two fundamental characteristics of the philosophy of enlightenment are: 1. Faith in the European reason and human rationality to reject the tradition and pre-establish institutions and thoughts. 2. Search for the practical useful knowledge as the power to control nature. There are six important features found in the philosophy of enlightenment. They are: 1. Belief in progress. 2. Achievement of anything by a self reliant use of reason. 3. Rejection of traditionalism, obscurantism and authoritarianism. 4. Religious doctrine had to be intelligible and rationally acceptable. 5. An increasing anti-clericalism and resistance to the view that the church should have power independent of secular authorities. 6. Great emphasis on the principles of natural liberty and equality and also religious toleration. This spirit was widely prevalent in Western Europe and thereby gave birth to different names like British, French, German and Italian Enlightenment.

Idealism

The word "idealism" has more than one meaning. The philosophical meaning of idealism here is that the properties we discover in objects depend on the way that those objects appear to us as perceiving subjects, and not something they possess "in themselves," apart from our experience of them. The very notion of a "thing in itself" should be understood as an option of a set of functions for an operating mind, such that we consider something that appears without respect to the specific manner in which it appears. The question of what properties a thing might have "independently of the mind" is thus incoherent for Idealism. Idealism offers an explanation of reality or human experience in which ideas are spiritual, non-materialistic elements are central. Just because we cannot measure thought, this does not mean that it does not exist or is not important. For individual people, thought is everything and perception is filtered to the extent that we are hard-pressed to know what is really 'out there'.

In Idealism, concepts are often viewed as being real. Though the idealist tradition could be traced in the early ancient in the form of Platonism, in the modern period with the subjective of

Berkeley etc., but Immanuel Kant influence upon the idealistic tradition is phenomenal. For Immanuel Kant, the human self, or 'transcendental ego,' constructs knowledge out of sense impressions, upon which are imposed certain universal concepts that he called categories. (**Transcendental idealism**) After Kant, Hegel concluded that the finite world is a reflection of the mind, which alone is truly real. (**Absolute idealism**) Truth is just the coherence between thoughts. He also considered the dilemma that as transient beings, this leads to reality also being transient. This German idealism led to a break through in the entire idealistic tradition and also remained a basis for later contemporary philosophies.

Check Your Progress IV

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is German idealism?

.....

2) Define the Two Schools of Modern Thought

.....

3) Define Renaissance Humanism

.....

2.6 CONTEMPORARY SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

The contemporary western philosophy could be traced from the beginning of the 19th century continued to 20th and 21st century. It deals with the upheavals produced by a series of conflicts within philosophical discourse over the basis of knowledge, with classical certainties overthrown, and new social, economic, scientific and logical problems. Contemporary philosophy was set for a series of attempts to reform and preserve, and to alter or abolish, older knowledge systems. This was done with the emergence of two main philosophy schools the Analytic school and the Continental school

Analytic School

Analytical school is the dominant philosophical tradition in the 20th century English speaking world. It is characterized by the logical and linguistic turn in philosophy. There are at least two reasons for this linguistic and logical turn in philosophy. First due to enormous success of

science and technology these philosophers felt science had taken over much of the territory formerly occupied by philosophy. Second new and more powerful methods of logic had been developed in the 20th century that promised to solve some of the perennial philosophical problems.

The term analysis (*analysis*) refers to the activity of taking something apart. It follows the epistemological principles that the whole can be explained with references to its parts. It is a method of inquiry in which one seeks to assess complex systems of thought by analyzing them into simpler constituent elements. This wide spread method was initiated by philosophers like Russell, Moore, Gottlob Frege and extensively by Wittgenstein. Thus for them the goal of philosophy is clarity and method of philosophy is analysis. Philosophical investigations move from subjective to objective and from psychological to logical realms. We are able to understand them in their essential nature for what they are in themselves not some idea or mental representation of them.

Continental School

Continental school of thought, in contemporary usage, refers to a set of traditions of 19th and 20th century philosophy from mainland Europe (France and Germany). This sense of the term originated among English-speaking philosophers in the second half of the 20th century, who used it to refer to a range of thinkers and traditions outside the analytic movement. Continental philosophy includes Phenomenology, Existentialism, Hermeneutics, Structuralism, post-Structuralism etc.

Features of Continental Philosophy: First, continental philosophers generally reject scientism, the view that the natural sciences are the only or most accurate way of understanding phenomena. Continental philosophers often argue that science depends upon a "pre-theoretical substrate of experience", a form of the Kantian conditions of possible experience, and that scientific methods are inadequate to understand such conditions of intelligibility. Second, continental philosophy usually considers these conditions of possible experience as variable: determined at least partly by factors such as context, space and time, language, culture, or history. Historicism is important while analytic philosophy tends to treat philosophy in terms of discrete problems, capable of being analyzed apart from their historical origins. Third continental philosophy typically suggests that "philosophical argument cannot be divorced from the textual and contextual conditions of its historical emergence". Fourth continental philosophy is an emphasis on Meta-Philosophy, i.e. the study of the nature, aims, and methods of philosophy. Ultimately, the foregoing distinctive traits derive from a broadly Kantian thesis that the nature of knowledge and experience is bound by conditions that are not directly accessible to empirical inquiry.

Existentialism

Existentialism is a multifaceted philosophical movement of the 20th century characterized by a deep concern for the meaning of individual subjective existence. What mattered for Hegel was the historical development of reason, for Feuerbach Humanity, for Marx the classless society and for the positivism the indefinite progress of science. All these philosophical systems dealt with

abstract essences and universal ideas. They over looked what EXISTS in the concrete, the Self, the Human subject. In dealing with the essences, they forgot EXISTENCE. Existentialism reacted against these approaches and looked upon philosophy as a meditation on subjective existence.. Existentialism is a philosophy that places emphasis on individual existence, freedom, and choice.They focused on the condition of human existence, and an individual's emotions, actions, responsibilities, and thoughts, or the meaning or purpose of life.

To arrive at their end the existentialists adopted the Phenomenological method which consists in describing the Phenomenon, that is the reality as it appears and presents itself to inner experience. The phenomenologist wants to go back to reality to avoid pitfalls of inherited traditions and preconceived ideas. To maintain for instance, the man is body and soul is not a description of reality but a projection of ideas. But to hold that man is a being for death is a description. In the same way when Hegel and the Marxists interpreted history in a dialectical way they made use of prejudicial categories but did nothing to describe reality. They were ideologists not phenomenologists.

Themes of Existentialism: (1) Existence precedes essence, in other words, you need existence to have essence. There is no predetermined "true" thing, it has to already exist in order to become what it is. (2) Anxiety and anguish. The fear or dread which is not directed at any specific object, it's just there. Anguish is the dread of the nothingness of human existence, the meaningless of it. According to Kierkegaard, anguish is the underlying, all-pervasive, universal condition of man's existence. (3) Absurdity. "Granted I am my own existence, but this existence is absurd." Everybody is here, everybody exists, but there is no reason as to why. We're just here, that's it, no excuses. (4) Nothingness. There is nothing that structures this world's existence, man's existence, or the existence of my computer. There is no essence that these things are drawn from, since existence precedes essence, then that means there is nothing. (5) Death. The theme of death follows along with the theme of nothingness. Death is always there, there is no escaping from it. To think of death, as everybody does sooner or later, causes anxiety. The only sure way to end anxiety once and for all is death.

Phenomenology

Edmund Husserl's phenomenology was an ambitious attempt to lay the foundations for an account of the structure of conscious experience in general. An important part of Husserl's phenomenological project was to show that all conscious acts are directed at or about objective content, a feature that Husserl called intentionality. In his work, the *Logical Investigations* (1901), he launched an extended attack on psychologism and develops the technique of descriptive phenomenology, with the aim of showing how objective judgments are indeed grounded in conscious experience—not, however, in the first-person experience of particular individuals, but in the properties essential to any experiences of the kind in question. He also attempted to identify the essential properties of any act of meaning. He developed the method further in *Ideas* (1913) as transcendental phenomenology, proposing to ground actual experience, and thus all fields of human knowledge, in the structure of consciousness of an ideal, or transcendental, ego. Later, he attempted to reconcile his transcendental standpoint with an acknowledgement of the intersubjective life-world in which real individual subjects interact. Husserl published only a few works in his lifetime, which treat phenomenology mainly in

abstract methodological terms; but he left an enormous quantity of unpublished concrete analyses. The other phenomenologists are Martin Heidegger (formerly Husserl's research assistant), Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Paul Sartre. Indeed, through the work of Heidegger and Sartre, Husserl's focus on subjective experience influenced aspects of existentialism.

Structuralism and Post-Structuralism

Inaugurated by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, structuralism sought to clarify systems of signs through analyzing the discourses they both limit and make possible. Saussure conceived of the sign as being delimited by all the other signs in the system, and ideas as being incapable of existence prior to linguistic structure, which articulates thought. This led continental thought away from humanism, and toward what was termed the decentering of man: language is no longer spoken by man to express a true inner self, but language speaks man.

Structuralism sought the province of a hard science, but its positivism soon came under fire by post-structuralism, a wide field of thinkers, some of whom were once themselves Structuralists', but later came to criticize it. Structuralists believed they could analyze systems from an external, objective standing, but the poststructuralists argued that this is incorrect, that one cannot transcend structures and thus analysis is itself determined by what it examines, while the distinction between the 'signifier and signified' was treated as crystalline by Structuralists, poststructuralists asserted that every attempt to grasp the signified results in more signifiers, so meaning is always in a state of being deferred, making an ultimate interpretation impossible. Structuralism came to dominate continental philosophy throughout the 1960s and early '70s, encompassing thinkers as diverse as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes and Jacques Lacan. Post-structuralism came to predominate over the 1970s onwards, including thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and others.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation. Traditional hermeneutics, Biblical hermeneutics, refers to the study of the interpretation of written texts, especially texts in the areas of literature, religion and law. Contemporary, or modern, hermeneutics encompasses not only issues involving the written text, but everything in the interpretative process. This includes verbal and nonverbal forms of communication as well as prior aspects that affect communication, such as presuppositions, pre-understandings, the meaning and philosophy of language, and semiotics. Philosophical hermeneutics refers primarily to Hans-George Gadamer's theory of knowledge as developed in *Truth and Method*, and sometimes to Paul Ricoeur. Hermeneutic consistency refers to analysis of texts for coherent explanation. A hermeneutic (singular) refers to one particular method or strand of interpretation. The terms exegesis and hermeneutics are sometimes used interchangeably because exegesis focuses primarily on the written text. Hermeneutics however is a more widely defined discipline of interpretation theory including the entire framework of the interpretive process and, encompassing all forms of communication and expression; written, verbal, artistic, geo-political, physiological, sociological etc.

Post Modernism

Post modernism is the term that emerged as an area of academic study since 1980's though its beginning could be traced to 1960's. It is hard to define this term because for the following reason. The chronological proximity, its ubiquitous character, plurality of its significance, the uncertainty regarding what is modernity and exactly when its origin can be placed and the confusion in using different terms(postmodernism, post modernity, postmodern etc). But our question here is how can we see it as a philosophical school. As a philosophical school it tries to believe that many, if not all, apparent realities are only social constructs, as they are subject to change inherent to time and place. It emphasizes the role of language, power, relations, and motivations; in particular it attacks the use of sharp classifications such as male versus female, straight versus gay, white versus black, and imperial versus colonial. Rather, it holds realities to be plural and relative, and dependent on who the interested parties are and what their interests consist of. Postmodernism has influenced many cultural fields, including religion, literary criticism, sociology, linguistics, architecture, anthropology, visual arts, and music.

The Characteristics of Postmodernism: 1. No to system building 2. No to totalization and Meta – Narratives and proliferation of Mini- Narratives. 3. Held that meaning is provisional, contingent and there are no final and definitive meanings. 4. Objectivity is put to doubt, i.e., postmodernism, by resisting the monopoly of scientific knowledge as the only form of true knowledge, postmodernism makes room for different forms of knowledge: aesthetic, religious, political, historical and mythical. 5. Ambiguity and Plurality: i.e they believed that contradictions are part and parcel of life and reality. However, in allowing plurality postmodernism did affirm the identity and importance of smaller and hitherto neglected groups in the society.

Check Your Progress IV

1) What is Post Modernism?

.....

2) Explain the features of the Continental school

.....

3) Define Phenomenology

.....

2.7 LET US SUM UP

In short, this unit on the division of western philosophy presents to us philosophy as process of thought evolution, where one thought leading to the other. The emergence of difference schools, their arguments one against the other should not lead one to confusion or contraction but to see the Harmony and unity in the history of western philosophy. We need to understand that

philosophy is not a static enterprise but dynamic. The continuity and discontinuity we see in the thought pattern is a major strength to philosophy as a science. Such a progressive study cannot but make itself relevant to all people at all times.

2.8 KEY WORDS

Maieutic: (mid wifery) – drawing truth out of mind or art of delivering truth.

Meta-Philosophy: the study of the nature, aims, and methods of philosophy.

Absolute idealism: the finite world is a reflection of the mind, which alone is truly real.

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UNIT 3 MAJOR ISSUES OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Issues discussed in various branches of Western philosophy
- 3.3 Methods used in Western philosophy
- 3.4 Metaphysical and Epistemological Issues
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 Key Words
- 3.7 Further Readings and References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The unit aims at dealing with the common problems, methods and different themes faced in various schools throughout the history of Western Philosophy.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the history of human quest, initially the study of all questions and issues formed only one body of knowledge, called philosophy. Philosophizing is a process carried out at various levels of reality and on different aspects. As the body of philosophical knowledge grew, there appeared disciplines of philosophy dealing with specific objects of study such as nature, human, God, morals, knowledge, aesthetics, etc. The discipline of philosophy is generally divided into different branches: Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics, Logic, Anthropology and Aesthetics. The issues arising out of these branches in dealing with the question of reality are spelt out in this unit.

3.2 ISSUES DISCUSSED IN VARIOUS BRANCHES OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

In we take different disciplines in philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology, logic, ethics, aesthetics etc) we can see that these are the different aspects of the same reality. All these disciplines supplement each other to arrive at the ultimate truth regarding God, world and man. Every discipline should ultimately aim at giving meaning to man's life and should help him to lead a successful life. Hence one discipline can be relevant only in relation to another.

Metaphysical Concerns

Metaphysics from its etymological meaning is understood as the study of the nature of things above/after/beyond physics. It is a branch of philosophy, which studies realities beyond physical things. Metaphysics is therefore after physics in so far as it goes beyond the physical nature of things to the being of things. Metaphysics is the heart and the crowning point of philosophy. Metaphysics may be defined as the study of the ultimate cause and of the first and most universal principles of reality. It studies reality, seeking its ultimate causes in an absolute sense precisely in so far as they are, in so far as they exist, in so far as they are real and offers a comprehensive view of all that exist. Metaphysics includes two sections: a) It shows how every being is similar to every other in so far as it participates in being because it *is* and yet as being, it is this *one being* as distinct from *that other being*. b) Metaphysics also shows how every finite being is not

self sufficient or self explanatory. A finite being is not able to give an intelligible account of its own actual existence. Hence it requires a self sufficient First Cause. Since God is the ultimate cause of all things, He is evidently a principal subject matter of metaphysics. Metaphysics is the foundational science which seeks to understand all reality, all beings in terms of the universal properties, laws and ultimate causes of BEING as such. It is the science of being as being; it studies Being which is common to all beings. It investigates Being which underlies, penetrates, transforms and unifies all beings. Metaphysics is the study of being as such. It studies being as being, its properties and its causes. Nothing escapes from the concept of being i.e., something which is. The Greek philosophers began from the nature of things; they studied particular types of beings. But in metaphysics, we study things not just as particular types of beings – moving things, living things – instead, in so far as they are simply being (or being things), in so far as they exist. We are not concerned with *what* they are but *that* they are. Metaphysics studies the whole of reality by focusing on the most common aspect of everything; that everything “is”, that it is “real”. The material object of metaphysics is all being, God, angels, substance, accidents, real being, possible being and rational being. Metaphysics is also concerned with such problems as the relation of mind to matter, the nature of change, the meaning of freedom, etc.

Epistemological Issues

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that deals with the problem of knowledge. It investigates the origin, structure, methods and the validity of knowledge. It answers the question, “How do we know?” This is the philosophy of knowledge concerned with such questions as; is knowledge of anything really possible, is our knowledge certain, how do we get our knowledge? What exactly is knowledge about etc. It is the study of the nature of human knowledge and of how it can be achieved. Human knowledge is a complex process and many activities are involved in it; seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, inquiring, imagining, understanding, conceiving, reflecting, intuiting, judging etc. It is from all these activities taken together, that we acquire knowledge. In fact, human knowing consists of three main activities namely experiencing, understanding, and judging and all these three constitute the structure of human knowing.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics is the science of character, habits of activity or conduct of human being. It is also known as Moral philosophy as it studies the principles or standards of human conduct. Ethics is the science of morals or that branch of philosophy which is concerned with human character and conduct. An action was considered to be morally good or bad if it was in line with or against the customs and traditions of the particular era or society. Ethics is the science of what man ought to do in order to live as he should, in order to be what he ought to be, in order to attain his supreme value, in order to realize in his nature what presents itself as the justification of his existence, that towards which and for which he exists. Ethics is a science in its own right, distinct from all others. Ethics commands that all men, at all times, under all conditions ought to act as men that are faithful to and in conformity with their rational nature. It studies how human acts are directed towards man’s ultimate purpose or end. It not only treats of human activity but it aims at directing it. It does not stop at the contemplation of truth, but applies that learning to human acts, providing the necessary knowledge so that man may act in a morally upright way. Ethics studies human acts from a moral perspective, in so far as they are morally good or bad.

Logical Questions

Logic is the systematic study of the general structures of sound reasoning and valid arguments. It is the study of the methods and principles used to distinguish good (correct) from the bad (incorrect) reasoning. Logic provides us with criteria to correct reasoning with which we can test arguments for their correctness. Logic examines how the mind functions in reaching valid arguments and what are the criteria for validity of these arguments. Logic is either deductive or inductive because one can argue from the universal to the particular (deduction) or from the particular to the universal. (induction). Deduction is pure reasoning while induction has recourse to experience and observation. A deductive argument involves the claim that the premises provide conclusive grounds for its conclusion. An inductive argument is an argument, which claims only that the premises provide some evidences for the conclusion.

Anthropological expressions

The human person became the centre and the focal point of philosophy in modern and contemporary period. We live in an anthropocentric world, where human person is considered as the centre and summit and measure of everything. Anthropology is a reflection on man as he is; his origin, nature, meaning of life and destiny. It studies man and all his actions, what makes him human, his fundamental nature, his essential properties and potentialities in order to arrive at profound convictions about man. Anthropology deals with those vital and significant questions that touch our own very existence – Who am I? Why am I in this world? Where am I going? etc. Man asks questions about his proper nature.

Aesthetical glimpses

Aesthetics deals with beauty or the beautiful, especially in art and with taste and standards of value in judging art. Aesthetics studies work of art, the process of producing and experiencing art and certain aspects of nature. Philosophers of art inquire into the nature and function of art and the nature of art experience. They also deal with the questions of whether such qualities are objectively present in the things or whether they exist only in the mind of the perceiver.

Religious studies

Philosophy of religion is a philosophical thinking or reflection on religion by applying the philosophical method. It takes up basic problems relating to our belief in God. It also speculates about the origin, nature and function of religion. The task of Philosophy of Religion is to explain as best as it can, in its own language and to the rational and intellectual parts of man the beliefs, truths, the experience and the laws of religion. The aim of Philosophy of Religion is to render an important service to religion, analyzing and refining religious beliefs by separating the essential from the accidental elements of faith. It articulates the true idea of God, man and the universe. It liberates religion from religiosity, which is an excessive adherence to the external practices of religion. It makes intelligible the religious faith and enables man to lead a life of selfless love, truthfulness, justice, tolerance and forgiveness.

Scientific notions

Philosophy of nature is that branch of philosophy that studies the nature of the external world, of material reality. The problem of philosophy of nature is this: To what degree, if any, do physical objects match our sensation? One major area of concern for philosophy of nature is the way we come to have knowledge of the structures of the world. This concern is addressed by philosophy of science, which is a reflection on the methods we employ to come to know physical reality. It analyses the methods of science and assesses its limitations and strengths.

3.3 METHODS USED IN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

In ancient Greek the pre-socratic philosophers had been relatively isolated in their speculations. The speculative method of the ancient Greek continued to move toward conceptual thought, critical analysis, reflection, and dialectic. Dialectic method of Socrates and Plato was essentially a method of discussion and debate in which the participants progressed from one point to another, each one disputing the point of the other until they could reach an undisputable point. It consisted in reasoning through rigorous dialogue as a method of intellectual investigation intended to expose false beliefs and elicit truth. The strategy was to take up a sequence of questions with whomever one was in discussion, relentlessly analyzing one by one the implications of the answers in such a way as to bring out the flaws and inconsistencies inherent in a given belief or statement. Attempts to define the essence of something were rejected one after another as being either too wide or too narrow. Dialectic takes a different turn in Hegel. Hegelian dialectic is not merely epistemological, but ontological too. The method of dialectic involves thesis-antithesis-synthesis in which thesis, antithesis and synthesis are only different 'moments' in the movement of thought resulting in both continuity and difference.

Towards the end of the patristic period, St. Augustine tried to answer the problem of certainty with his method of retortion. He held that the skeptics are mistaken in assuming that certainty of knowledge is impossible and that human can achieve only "probable knowledge," i.e., ideas whose validity is highly probable. The scholastic method of Thomas Aquinas further supported the Augustinian view of certainty. Thomas was certain of concepts having their foundation in sense perception. He accepted Abelard's view of the relationship between universals and particulars, including the Aristotelian thesis that Plato's universals can be found only in particular things which thus become actualities detectable in sense experience. For Aquinas too, the universal nature, the essence, of a thing exists immanently in the object itself as part of the real world, but this universal characteristic (this substantial form of an object) is also an idea or concept separated from its object when it is abstracted by the human mind.

Descartes was also bothered by the same question of certainty. He became fascinated by the question of whether there was anything we could know for certain. He distinguished between certainty and truth. For him, certainty is a state of mind, whereas truth is a property of statements which usually relates to the way things are out there in the external world. His fundamental first certainty was 'I think, therefore I am' (*Cogito ergo sum*). The empiricist method of philosophy advocated by Locke, Berkley, and Hume held that *all* essential truths about the world were discoverable only by empirical experience. Thus, reason was substituted by empirical experience. It was above all John Locke who set the tone for empiricist method by affirming the foundational principle of empiricism: 'There is nothing in the intellect that was not previously in the senses' (*Nihil est in intellectu quod non antea fuerit in sensu*). All knowledge of the world must rest finally on human's sense experience.

Kant tried to reconcile the claims of science to certain and genuine knowledge of the world with the claim that experience could never give rise to such knowledge. According to Kant, the human mind does not passively receive sense data, but it actively structures them. Human, therefore, knows objective reality to the extent that reality conforms to the fundamental structures of the mind. All human knowledge of the world is channelled through the mind's own categories. The necessity and certainty of scientific knowledge are embedded in the mind's perception and understanding of the world. The mind does not conform to objects; rather, objects

conform to the mind. Human can attain certain knowledge of the world, not because one has the power to penetrate to and grasp the world in itself, but because the world is saturated with the principles of one's own mental organization. Hence, human could know things only as they appear, not as they are in themselves.

Analytical method refers to various contemporary methods of analysing the language. Pragmatic method is a philosophical method founded by three American philosophers: Charles Sanders Peirce, William James and John Dewey. The main objective of the phenomenological method is the enlarging and deepening of the range of our immediate experience under the watchword 'to the things themselves.' Its common concern is that of giving the phenomena a fuller and fairer hearing than traditional empiricism has accorded them. Phenomenology stands for a kind of rebellion against the trend in modern science which begins with simplifying abstractions and ends with a minimum vocabulary of scientific concepts.

Deconstructive Method: In a deconstructive reading the text in question is shown to harbour contradictory logics which are standardly ignored. Very often it is a matter of locating certain clearly-marked binary opposition and showing that their order of priority is by no means as stable as the text seeks to maintain. This leaves open the possibility that texts may mean something other and more than is allowed for by any straight-forward appeal to the authorial intention. Transcendental method is a way of reflecting upon and interpreting the previous conditions of the possibility of an act of knowledge. The method aims at discovering and explaining the knowledge which is prior and which makes possible every knowledge of objects. This knowledge is not explicitly available before all other kinds of knowledge. It is a pre-knowledge, a basic knowledge, which is implicit in every kind of empirical knowledge, and it can be made explicit only thorough a reflection upon the previous conditions of the possibility of empirical knowledge by both transcendental reduction and transcendental deduction.

Check your progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1. What are concerns of metaphysics and epistemology concerned?

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2. Describe few methods used in Western philosophy.

.....

Substance and Attribute

Substance is the basic, underlying essence of a thing that gives it existence. It is a fundamental concept in metaphysics, meaning the *substratum of reality*. It is the independent, irreducible basis of something which remains unchanged despite any outward changes. It has no qualities or properties itself but it is that in which qualities and properties inhere. Attribute is an ontological concept and refers to the essential characteristics of a substance, without which such a substance cannot exist. For Descartes, the attribute of matter (a substance) is extension, to extend or to occupy a certain place, while the attribute of mind is thinking or an activity of consciousness.

Being

Being is an ontological concept, ambiguously understood since Parmenides. In the one sense, being signifies that which is (*ens, Seiendes*). In this sense, being is synonymous with what is real. On the other hand, being is act of being (*esse, Sein*). Heidegger opines that in the history of Western philosophy (a history of forgetting being, *Sein*), we have dealt with entities instead of being itself. He calls the dealing with the question about being (not entities) as the fundamental ontology. The most familiar entity is the human-being and Heidegger starts with the understanding of being by the human-being, as it is his/her own being.

Category

Category is the most fundamental characteristics of being. Categories are the most universal, most fundamental predicates of all predicates. Categories constitute the basis and conditions of a substance, namely they describe the ways in which a substance is. Logically and epistemologically categories are conditions and the ways of knowing in which the most fundamental truth is asserted. Aristotle enumerated 10 categories, sometimes 8 categories. Using category as an epistemological concept, Kant called the concept of understanding category in distinction from the concept of reason (immortality of the soul, freedom and God). The category is the way in which the subject and the predicate is synthesized in a given proposition. There are four groups, quality, quantity, relation, and modality, and each group has three different categories.

Cause and Causality

Cause is an ontological concept. Aristotle used cause as synonymous with the principle. Change comprises locomotion, generation and corruption and all other metamorphosis. Heracleitus was well known for his insight into the reality the nature of which is constant flux. Causality is considered the most fundamental, necessary relationship between two events in the universe, between the one temporally preceding (a cause), the other temporally following the former (effect), both of which seem to happen necessarily. Besides the Ancient Greek search for the principle of the universe, which Aristotle equated with cause, mechanical cause and effect relationship was universalized in the Middle Ages as evidenced in the statement, "*ex nihilo nihil fit.*" (Nothing comes out of nothing). Hume questioned the objectivity of causal relationship. From Descartes to Hume, the central question of metaphysics had been about substance, while by Hume, causality suddenly appeared the central, crucial metaphysical question. According to Hume, causality may exist independent of our consciousness, and yet it can be unknown to us. It is considered sufficiently explained by contiguity of ideas and psychological association). Kant inherited this spiritual situation and the challenge of re-establishing the objectivity of causality as one of his central philosophical tasks.

Essence and Existence

Essence means the inevitable characteristics which make a certain thing (a substance) that thing. Essence is thus considered as universal characteristic or nature of a thing, while existence in its opposition, is considered as an act of being or existing. Existence means the concrete way of being, thus reality of being. In modern sense, it refers to the existence of the human-being. In the human existence, the human-being is determined by the human essence, namely by what the humankind is, but it is discovered by itself as already existing there. By means of this being there (*Da of Dasein*), the human existence is in the (mundane) world and his being is called the being in the world. In human existence, it is contended that its existence precedes its essence. In other words, a person cannot primarily defined by the humanity as such, but rather is determined how that person actually is. This is the basis of the existentialism. Existentialism refers to many philosophical thoughts of Sartre, Heidegger, Jaspers, Marcel, etc. Post World War II made many talk about the meaningless of human existence. Heidegger made the concept of existence (as the human existence) in his fundamental ontology and initiated this movement. Jaspers followed him. JeanPaul Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Gabriel Marcel and Camus, etc. developed each unique philosophy of existence of their own and has been in contrast to logic, philosophy of science, philosophy of language. Existential philosophy centres in its inquiry the concrete human-being in its existence. It contends that each human-being cannot be understood by its essence. Only by means of one's existence, a human-being can become the theme and the object of genuine understanding. The distinction of authentic and unauthentic was introduced in terms of human existence.

Noumena and Phenomena

For Kant, *phenomena* (sig. *phenomenon*) is the object of empirical knowledge and a noumenon is an object of awareness not produced by sensory experience. We have no faculty of non-sensory intuition. Hence we can have no noumenal knowledge as such. Kant also contrasted the *thing-in-itself* with the phenomenon and identified it with the noumenon. A phenomenon is a thing (a quality, a relation, a state of affairs, an event, etc) *as it appears to us* or as it is perceived. This contrast gives rise to one of the fundamental problems in philosophy whether or how far we can have knowledge of the *way things really are* (things-in-themselves) or the noumena. Phenomenon is only knowable to us, while noumenon is unknown to us. Because the human-being does not possess intellectual intuition, but sensory intuition and formal intuitions which are space and time. The latter is related to senses and yet it is in itself *a priori*, the condition of possibility of sense experience. In the world of thing itself or noumenon, being known to us, this reality is the reality of morality, in which freedom of will is basic.

Truth and Reality

Truth is an epistemological concept; an attribute of knowledge. An information known to consciousness is said true if and only if that information matches "fact." This relationship of matching between information and "fact" is called the correspondence theory of truth. Truth may not be matching with "fact" individually and mutually independently. On the contrary, true knowledge must be true in relationship to the total system and when truth of knowledge is sought in the coherence of its system as a whole, it is called the coherent theory. According to the *pragmatic theory of truth*, truth is something that is judged by its practical consequences; an idea is true if its implementation achieves an intended satisfactory result or if it works or if accepting it bring success. Reality is the concept of ontology or metaphysics. It is the characteristic

(mode?) of being and signifies or exists. It is in opposite to non-existence or unreal. When we have knowledge of something which is real, then our knowledge is said to be true.

Realism, Nominalism and Solipsism

Realism is a philosophical view which maintains that we live in a world that exists independently of us and our thoughts. The implication of realism is that *there is an objective world of which we can have objective knowledge*. This position is known as metaphysical realism. A consequence of realism in this sense is that the entities are there to be discovered and that ignorance and error is possible. Epistemological realism is the view that a mind-independent of world exists in combination with the view that in perception we mentally grasp qualities and objects that are part of that world. Nominalism is the view that the *universals are not real entities* either in the world or in the mind but *names* which refer to groups or classes of individual things. In other words, it is the belief that *only particular things exist*. The reality of the world can therefore be understood only in terms of particulars, that is, the individual beings that inhabit it. In metaphysics solipsism is the view that nothing exists except one's own self and the contents of its consciousness. In epistemology it is the view that nothing can be known except one's own self and the contents of its consciousness. In other words, the individual human mind has no grounds for believing in anything other than itself.

Idealism and Materialism

Idealism is the philosophical position that ideas, not objects are the basis of reality. According to idealism the ultimate reality is mind and the external physical world is a mind-dependent construct. Idealism takes three general forms: that all reality is a product of the mind, that we can have knowledge only of the contents of our minds, and that the material universe is imperfect reflection of an ideal realm beyond the senses. Materialism is a doctrine that matter and only matter exists. In contrast to dualism, which makes a basic distinction between mind and matter, and idealism which sees reality as fundamentally mental or spiritual, the materialist view asserts that mind is reducible to an aspect of matter. Thus materialism is a theory which gives importance to the primacy of material over the spiritual, a belief that only physical things really exist. Materialism immediately implies a denial of the existence of minds, spirits, divine beings, etc. in so far as these are taken to be non-material.

A priori and A Posteriori

What is the origin and nature of knowledge, is the issue dealt in these two concepts. *A priori* in Ancient Greek means knowledge obtained from the cause. Later it characterizes the knowledge which is not only independent of experience but also precedes it in such a way that a priori knowledge is the condition of the possibility of knowledge in general. By implication, *a priori* also means rational knowledge, which is universally and necessary true. The opposite of a priori is *a posteriori*. In the Ancient Greek, a posteriori means knowledge obtained from the effect, and not from the cause. Later, it signifies the knowledge originated from experience, therefore, *a posteriori* knowledge must be confirmed its truth by experience and is not universally and necessary true.

Deduction and Induction

Deduction is a logical procedure in which premises necessarily imply its conclusion. This definition validates indirect proof, namely assuming the negation of the conclusion as one of the premises, it derives a contradiction among the premises and demonstrates the validity of the

original deductive argument. Induction is empirical generalization; a logical procedure to start with a set of statements about individual matter and its characteristics and to obtain the conclusion which asserts a universal relationship between the individual and that characteristics.

Nihilism, Scepticism and Relativism

Nihilism is a philosophical position that there are no standards, that knowledge is impossible or at least worthless, that all action, all thought, all ethical and metaphysical conjecture is baseless and empty. It is often associated with extreme pessimism and radical scepticism. A true nihilist will believe in nothing and have no loyalties and no purpose other than, perhaps an impulse to destroy. The term nihilism has been applied to various negative theses or attitudes. Among the views labelled as nihilistic are those who deny the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, the freedom of the will, the authority of reason, the possibility of knowledge, the objectivity of morals, or the ultimate happy ending of human history. Scepticism is the view that *nothing can be known with certainty*, that at best there can only be some private probable opinion. It implies that human reason has no capacity to come to any conclusions at all and that all knowledge fall short of certainty. Hence it is better to suspend belief than to rely on the dubitable products of reason. Scepticism takes two main forms: the belief that *no position is certain* (including as is frequently noted, this position), and the view that truth exists but that certain knowledge of it may be beyond our grasp.

Relativism is a philosophical doctrine that no truths or values are absolute but are related to our own personal, cultural or historical perspective. Epistemological relativism of Protagoras is that we judge things more by our own individual perceptions and prejudices than by their objective qualities. Ethical relativism holds that value judgments arise not from universal principles but from particular situations. This position implies that all moralities are equally good. Cultural relativism is the view that customs, values, artistic expressions and beliefs must be understood and judged on their own terms, as products of a particular culture not according to outsiders' theoretical preconceptions and classifications.

Objective and Subjective

Objectivism and subjectivism are two epistemological positions in philosophy. They are two opposing approaches to the question of how individuals interact with the external world. Objectivism holds that the *world's inherent qualities determine the observer's experience* and can be accurately perceived. Subjectivism maintains that *one's own perspective* bring more to experience than is inherent in the world and colours one's judgement. The opposition between objectivism and subjectivism is also an *ethical* problem. Is something good because of an inherent quality of goodness or because it is conventionally considered good? This question raises the problems of determining the standards of goodness.

Empiricism and Rationalism

Empiricism is a philosophical position that all knowledge is based on experience or from the direct observation of phenomena through sense perception and from introspection. Rationalism is a philosophical position which claims that reason is a more dependable path to knowledge than experience or observation. According to rationalism *true knowledge springs from the operations of the faculty of reason*, rather than being based on experiences. Empiricism contrasts with rationalism which identifies reason as the source of knowledge. For "hard" empiricism all ideas arise *only* from experience. "Softer" empiricism states that while not all ideas are causally

connected to sense perception, anything we can call knowledge must be *justified* through the test of experience. Strict rationalism, holding that truth can be obtained through reason alone is no longer given much validity. The complementarity of reason and sense experience is reflected in much of the modern thinking, that is, knowledge requires both thought and experience.

Mind and Body

Mind, spirit and soul are often distinguished particularly by Christian theologians, but traditionally in philosophy they have been used synonymously with each other. It has been often considered a substance in distinction from a material substance.

Will and Freedom

Will is an ethical concept and is distinguished as one of the faculty of consciousness, which deliberate, choose and initiate a certain action. Traditionally, will is considered a part of function of reason. Schopenhauer conceived will as an irrational, non-rational drive, which may be found not only in the human-being, but in everything and called the primordial will as the world will. Nietzsche follows this conception of will. In order to exercise will as a human faculty of deliberation, choice and initiating an action, freedom of will as well as freedom of action are presupposed. Voluntarism is a theory in which *will* is the central concept. It is the view that God or the ultimate reality is to be conceived as some form of will. This theory is contrasted with intellectualism which gives primacy to God's reason. Will is often discussed in conjunction with the freedom of will. Freedom is a complex concept referring to the ability of a person for self-determination and personal autonomy and self-direction. Freedom is often considered in terms of free will, the individual's capacity to choose his or her own destiny rather than follow the dictates of determinism.

Utilitarianism is a moral theory according to which an action is right if and only if it conforms to the *principle of utility*. An action conforms to the principle of utility if and only if its performance will be more productive of pleasure or happiness or more preventive of pain or unhappiness, than any alternative. Utilitarianism is generally expressed as "the greatest good for the greatest number". Thus according to utilitarians the morally superior action is the one that would result in the greatest pleasure or happiness and least pain for those to whom it would apply.

Check your progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1. Explain Causality.

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2. How do Nihilism and Scepticism approach reality?

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3.5 LET US SUM UP

The unit was basically an overview of concerns, methods and issues of Western Philosophy. Human beings exist in the world and with the world. They are also capable of asking questions about themselves and the reality, in which and with which they exist. They have been asking the question about the primordial stuff of reality. The basic philosophical question has been “Why there is something rather than nothing?” All questions about reality are also questions about ourselves and the way we interpret our knowledge about reality. All philosophy of every age and place has to return to this primordial or fundamental question. The history of Western Philosophies bears testimony to the fact the questioning capacity and nature of human beings, especially under the basic thrust of Skepticism, Idealism, Rationalism and, positivism. All questions of philosophy, we have seen in the above overview, are also existential questions.

3.6 KEY WORDS

Phenomenon: an object of empirical knowledge; thing-as-it-appears.

Noumenon: an object of awareness not produced by sensory experience; Thing-in- itself

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UNIT 4 MAJOR THINKERS OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Greek Thinkers
- 4.2 Modern Philosophers
- 4.3 Contemporary Thinkers
- 4.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.5 Further Readings and References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit provides the brief view of important philosophical ideas of major thinkers of western thought who enriched the philosophical enterprises. In the history of western philosophy, we may find many philosophers with diverse philosophical streams. But this is confined to a selectively few thinkers as a representative of the prominent philosophical movements. This unit introduces the importance of each philosopher and their contribution to philosophy.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

We have understood that the discipline of philosophy has engaged in a critical evaluation of our beliefs and clarifications of concepts. Historically, it is evident that the idea of philosophy has been changing from time to time with changing social context. As William Levi holds that philosophy is nothing but a social expression. The history of philosophy is constituted by its interrelation between the ideas, agents and social context. To view philosophic achievement as the cognitive correlate of certain cultural 'life style' means to ask questions such as: What sort of society was the author writing for and trying to persuade? What were the conventions of communication and literary forms of discourse current at that time? What was the author's class affiliation, his place in the social hierarchy of his age? What were his moral commitments, the structure of his ideals? It is argued that our intellectual history must focus not upon the abstract ideas but upon the individual philosophers who have created the ideas in response to the challenge of their time and its range of historical problems. However, we may find different styles and methods of philosophy in the intellectual history of western philosophy. We may also notice the continuity of philosophical methods and approaches to certain problems, but also find new philosophical positions and altogether new orientation to the problems.

4.2 GREEK THINKERS

Heraclitus

Heraclitus was a philosopher belongs to pre -Socratic period and active around 500 BCE. He is best known for his doctrines that things are constantly changing (universal flux), that opposites coincide (unity of opposites), and that fire is the basic material of the world. His theory of flux is viewed against the theory of permanence. This theory has influenced even many modern philosophers. According to Heraclitus, every thing flows and nothing stays. A radical thesis of total universal flux, that nothing whatever, neither a substance nor any of its attributes, stays stable long enough to be mentioned correctly by name, or to be said to 'be' rather than to 'flow' or 'become'. He can affirm that everything flows in radical change where no material substance

remains, and yet there is a coherence and unity to the changing world. For Anaximenes everything is a form of air, varying only in its density. For Heraclitus it does not matter if air 'dies' completely and fire is born from its ashes. We can still retain a sense that the world has a continuing identity, like the identity of a river whose constant flow of new water is what makes it a river. Heraclitus most fundamental departure from previous philosophy lies in his emphasis on human affairs. While he continues on many of the physical and cosmological theories of his predecessors, he shifts his focus from the cosmic to the human realm. It is viewed that Heraclitus is material monist who believes that all things are modifications of fire.

Plato

Plato is the well-known Greek Philosopher and student of Socrates. Socrates considered that unexamined life is not worth living and argues that virtue is knowledge. Plato has influenced by Socrates in pursuit of knowledge against sophists. He influenced the western philosophy than any philosopher. Plato's interests were broad, including the study of knowledge, mathematics, ultimate reality, ethics, and politics. He thought that ultimate reality of things was given by their 'forms.' For Plato, the real world is unchanging, eternal, and beyond our senses. We can understand reality through intellectual study. The aim of philosophy is to get away from the world of sense and desire to the higher realm of existence of the Forms. The form of an object is its essence, and is what makes it what it is. Examples of forms include beauty, justice, numbers, and shapes. We can know about ultimate reality (the world of forms) through the use of our intellect. Our senses do not tell us much about ultimate reality. For Plato, mathematics is the paradigm of knowledge, since it is done through intellectual reasoning independent of the apparent world around us, and tells us eternal unchanging truths. In *The Republic* Plato says that the soul has three parts, corresponding to reason, emotion, and desire. He also thinks that the soul (or at least part of it) is immortal, and can be reincarnated. Plato thinks that only those who understand the nature of goodness are fit to rule in society. Most people do not understand goodness. The rulers should try to maximize the happiness of society, by imposing strict censorship of ideas and of artistic expression. He saw no connection between happiness and individual liberty. He wants to show that there is absolute truth, and absolute right and wrong, and that human beings are not the measure of all things.

Aristotle

Aristotle's views were formed largely in reaction to those of the Pre-Socratics, Socrates and Plato. He is far more of a scientist than his predecessors, and compared to Plato's otherworldliness, Aristotle views are down to earth. Aristotle does not use the same kind of appealing images and allegories that makes some of Plato's work so inspiring. Aristotle's method was normally to summarize the views of other thinkers first, and then consider them carefully before explaining his own thoughts. Aristotle's ideas in ethics and politics have been especially important and influential. He is famous for his view in Nichomachean Ethics that 'moral virtue is a mean'. He argued that happiness from fulfilling one's capacities. He notoriously thought (and his view would have been standard in his own time) that different groups of people have characteristic capacities. In politics, he argued that the state should come ahead of family or individuals. For Aristotle, the aim of philosophy and science is to understand this world. This world of physical objects and biological organisms such as octopuses, snails and

eels is good enough, and is not to be despised. For Aristotle, science is the main paradigm of knowledge, and is done through an investigation of the world around us combined with rigorous thinking about it. The senses do lead us to knowledge when guided by the intellect. For Aristotle, human beings are rational animals. The soul is not something distinct from the body, but it is instead the "form" of the body, what makes it the particular sort of body that it is. All creatures have souls in the sense that they have the capacity to metabolize. Having a higher level of soul is simply the capacity to move about, to have desires and to fulfill them, to perceive and to contemplate. Aristotle simply takes it for granted that relativism is wrong. It is obvious to him that scientific reality is independent of us, and that an action is not right simply because it seems to us to be so. Aristotle does not think that we can achieve as much certainty in ethics as we can in mathematics, and we should not ask for more certainty than the subject at hand allows. He believes that an ordinary citizen is able to make good decisions and lead a good life. We achieve fulfillment through developing and exercising our human capacities.

4.3 MODERN PHILOSOPHERS

Rene Descartes

Rene Descartes (1596-1650) is a French mathematician, scientist and philosopher. He is known as father of modern western philosophy. He is a prominent figure of seventeenth century continental rationalism. *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641) is the popular work of Descartes. *Cogito ergo sum* is a famous philosophical statement of Descartes.. He intended to introduce into philosophy the rigor and clarity of mathematics. His writings indicate a spirit of tolerance and an ability to see many viewpoints- an open-mindedness which distinguished him from the fanaticism of midlevel spirit. He represents the age of gentlemen. His philosophy viewed and foundationalism and his method of viewing philosophy are known as Cartesian method. To build solid foundations, he would accept only certain truths, such as those found in geometry and arithmetic. They alone, he felt, are free of any taint of relativism and uncertainty. Descartes method is 'to avoid all prejudice and precipitation in judgment, to accept nothing as true which can not be clearly recognized as such' and 'to divide up each problem into as many parts as possible, a point upon which he attacked scholasticism, which had tried to achieve a generalized view of science.' Descartes method of doubt has a great historical importance to modern philosophy and is evident in the works of almost all modern thinkers. To doubt was not an end in itself; it was a process of purification, of eliminating various false views. He undertook the methodical doubt of all knowledge about which it is possible to be deceived, including knowledge based on authority, the senses, and reason, in order to arrive at something about which he can be absolutely certain; using this point as a foundation, he then sought to construct new and more secure justifications of his belief in the existence and immortality of the soul, the existence of God, and the reality of an external world. This indubitable point is expressed in the dictum *Cogito ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I am"). His metaphysical dualism distinguished radically between mind, the essence of which is thinking, and matter, the essence of which is extension in three dimensions. Though his metaphysics is rationalistic, his physics and physiology are empiricist and mechanistic. In mathematics, he founded analytic geometry and reformed algebraic notation.

David Hume

David Hume (1711-1776) is the Scottish philosopher was the most important and influential of 18th century British empiricists. His philosophical masterpiece *A Treatise of Human Nature* was

published in 1739. He is a skeptic and free thinker in his intellectual outlook. As a skeptic, he defends, from the empiricist premise, the view that the standard claims to knowledge are untenable. As a proponent of natural philosophy of man, he begins from empirical observations about the human mind and concludes that the mind has been wrongly constructed by the metaphysicians. Hume's naturalism is Newtonian. He constructs a science of the mind while making no unfounded assumptions and relying only on observation. He distinguished among the contents of the mind 'impressions' and 'ideas'. The first corresponded to what we should call sensations and perceptions, the second to what we should call concepts, or 'meanings'. For Hume, the difference between these two lies in their respective 'force' or 'liveliness'. The impression is received through senses, and is vivid and forceful during the moment of its reception. The idea is what remains thereafter, when liveliness and force have dwindled. However, Hume also describes ideas as 'copies', 'representations' and 'images' of impressions: they are 'the faint images (of impressions) in thinking and reasoning.' Hume is known for his casual theory. The idea of cause is one of 'necessary connection', according to Hume. His argument points in two directions: first, towards the delimiting of the view that there are necessary connections in reality; secondly, towards an explanation of the fact that we nevertheless have the idea of necessary connection. His contribution to metaphysics is to be found in his systematic attack on the Cartesian idea of an *apriori* science, he also added a new dimension to skepticism of a more traditional form.

Hume was skeptic, but his basic purpose was not destructive, for he wanted to develop a more scientific method in philosophy. His philosophy is a move towards understanding the limits of knowledge against the traditional metaphysics of his own time. His method involved a complete secularization of philosophy. He did away with all references to supernatural sanction and completely undermined unanchored metaphysical concepts. David Hume carried on philosophical war on three fronts. The first was against rationalism, with its doctrine of innate ideas, its faith in ontological reasoning, and its attempt to see the universe as an interconnected whole. He argues that all our ideas are particular, that universals are merely fictions. He tried to show that we can not have an adequate concept of an abstract idea. If we appeal to words for universality, we are creating dangerous fallacy, for words stand only for particular impressions, and the verbal term itself has no subjective validity. Hume's second attack on religion has its own significance. Theology before Hume's times had been based to a large extent upon universal axioms, such as the law of causality, which was to guarantee man's understanding of God and the universe. In contrast to his predecessors, was historical and psychological. After his time, theology underwent a fundamental change and, instead of appealing to reason, now appeals to man's heart to justify the concept of faith. Hume's third attack was against empiricism. He showed the limitations of the empirical method of philosophy. He destroyed the affirmations of Locke and Berkeley. Locke believed in two substances, one spiritual, one material; he was certain the existence of God could be demonstrated. Berkeley believed in the spiritual substance, while denied the existence of a material substratum; to Berkeley, God was the fundamental principle of philosophy. According to Hume, we can accept neither the material nor the spiritual substance; nor we prove the existence of God. He also rejected the concept of indeterminism. Just as nature contains a definite uniformity, he declared, so man is determined in his behavior. Hume believed that reason is overrated and pointed that all scientific findings based on induction must remain conjectural. Induction cannot offer you the certainty that logic can. He dealt with the issue of causation. He claimed that beliefs on causation are based on observation and

induction, but there is no logical certainty. He also claimed that it is not possible to prove moral beliefs – in inductive logic you can't have a valid belief-conclusion that emerges from some fact-premises. He had doubts about the existence of the Self, because of its undetectability. He had conservative personal beliefs, saying that humans could be happy by respecting social traditions. Hume brought to conclusion the empirical tradition of British philosophy. He demanded a reorientation in philosophy, a reorientation which was climaxed by Kant's critique of pure reason. With Hume, the problem of causality has been fundamental in modern philosophical thinking.

Immanuel Kant

Kant is eighteenth century enlightenment philosopher. Kant is the critical mediator between dogmatism and skepticism. Kant revolutionized the philosophy. For Kant the function of philosophy was the critical appraisal of capacities of human reason. In pursuing this new critical function, Kant achieved what he called his Copernican revolution in philosophy. Kant's philosophy consists of an analysis of the powers of human reason, by which he meant 'a critical inquiry into the faculty of reason with reference to all the knowledge which it may strive to attain independently of all experience'. The way of critical philosophy is, therefore, to ask the questions 'what and how much can understanding and reason know, apart from all experience? Critical philosophy for Kant was therefore not the negation of metaphysics but rather a preparation for it. If metaphysics has to do with knowledge that is developed by reason alone, that is, prior to experience, or a priori, the critical question is how is such a priori knowledge possible. Kant affirmed that we possess a faculty that is capable of giving us knowledge without an appeal to experience. Kant solved the problem of synthetic a priori judgment by substituting a new hypothesis concerning the relation between the mind and its objects. It is the objects that conform to the operations of the mind, and not the other way around.

Kant's principal contribution is to show that the choice between empiricism and rationalism is unreal, that each philosophy is equally mistaken, and that the only conceivable metaphysics that could commend itself to a reasonable being must be both empiricist and rationalist at once. His works, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) dealt in a systematic way with the entire field of epistemology and metaphysics, *The Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) concerned with ethics, and *The Critique of Judgment* (1790) concerned largely with aesthetics, and *The Foundation of the Metaphysic of Morals* (1785) is about morality. Kant attempted a systematic critique of human thought and reason. Kant proposes the theory of synthetic *a priori* knowledge. According to him, scientific knowledge is *aposteriori*: it arises from, and is based in, actual experience. Science, therefore, deals not with necessary truths but with matters of contingent fact. However, it rests upon certain universal axioms and principles, which, because their truth is presupposed at the start of any empirical enquiry, cannot themselves be empirically proved. These axioms are therefore, a priori, and while some of them are 'analytic', others are 'synthetic, saying something substantial about the empirical world. Moreover, these synthetic a priori truths, since they can not be established empirically, are justifiable, if at all, through reflection, and reflection will confer on them the only kind of truth that is within its gift: necessary truth. They must be true in any conceivable world. The synthetic *a priori* truths form a proper subject of metaphysics for Kant.

Kant believed that neither the empiricists nor the rationalists could provide coherent theory of knowledge. The empiricists elevate experience over understanding, deprive themselves of the concepts with which experience might be described. The rationalist emphasizes understanding at the expense of experience, deprive themselves of the very subject matter of knowledge. Knowledge is achieved through a synthesis of concept and experience, and Kant called this synthesis 'transcendental', meaning that it could never be observed as a process, but must always be presupposed as a result. Synthetic a priori knowledge is possible because we can establish that experience, if it is to be this synthesis, must conform to the 'categories' of the understanding. These categories are basic forms of thought or a priori concepts, under which all merely empirical concepts are subsumed. Kant agreed with empiricists that the senses are necessary to knowledge of reality, but denied that they are sufficient. The intellect has an essential part to play: not as an alternative and superior mode of access to reality, the task of reason as the rationalists conceived it, but *in conjunction with* the senses as a source of organizing principles which order and arrange the initially chaotic 'manifold sensation' yielded by the senses into a world of persisting substances, casually related to one another.

Kant disagreed with Hume in that knowledge of the world cannot come from observation only. He claimed that humans 'see' causation in the world because they are constituted that way. He was the first to show that neither Empiricists nor Rationalists had got it quite right. He believed that mental structures precede experience. Without them no experience would make sense - he was kind of sophisticated Idealist. He claimed that our every experience must also be encountered through the 'forms of intuition' of space and time. Therefore, to some extent, our experience of the world is our own creation. What we experience is the 'phenomenal' world, which may not be the same as the '*noumenal*' world - only God can see it, as He is unrestricted by Time and Space and the limitations of the human mind. So science and religion are not in conflict, as they deal with different worlds. In a famous phrase Kant described himself as limiting knowledge to make room for faith. Even if theoretical reason is powerless to prove the existence of god and the freedom and immortality of human soul, these attractive beliefs can still be reinstated, if less securely, as presuppositions of our experience of moral obligation.

Hegel

Hegel (170-1831) is a German Philosopher influenced the western thought remarkably through his philosophical method and a philosophy of absolute idealism. Hegel gave more coherent formulation to Absolute idealism. He authored *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), *Philosophy of Right* (1821), *Science of Logic* (1812-1816), *Encyclopedia of philosophic sciences* (1817). It is Hegel's ambition to establish a complete synthesis of philosophical thinking. Aristotle had attempted such a synthesis in Greek civilization, and Aquinas in the summa theological had tried to unify medieval knowledge. Hegel wanted to do the same for 19th century science and philosophy. The synthesis of Hegel was dominated by his insistence that laws of thought correspond with the laws of reality. Logic to Hegel, not only had a formal validity; it had primarily a metaphysical significance. Until Hegel came to the scene, philosophers thought that Aristotle had discovered *logic* and that was that. Hegel claimed that there is another logic, i.e. Dialectical logic. Knowledge has an evolutionary history that is made up of concepts, not isolated facts. History is always a struggle between different dynamic groups, which claim to be an accurate description of reality. But any concept or thesis will give birth to its opposite antithesis and a struggle between them will occur, until a higher, more truthful synthesis is

eventually achieved. This process will go on for long, until finally the 'absolute idea' or 'absolute consciousness' is reached. Hegel was an Idealist like Kant, and agreed with him that we don't experience the world directly through the senses, but always in a way that involves mediation by our consciousness. He also claimed that reality is constituted by the mind and is its creation. There is no '*noumenal*' world. Human consciousness itself is never fixed but continually changing and developing new categories and ideas. These determine how we experience the world therefore knowledge is contextually dependent. Knowledge is a dynamic cultural and historical process, not a timeless product waiting to be discovered 'out there'. But he did believe that this process must culminate in a final stage in which human beings will reach the 'actual knowledge of what is'. He looked upon the world as an organic process. For Hegel, what is truly real is absolute. He described the absolute as a dynamic process, as an organism having parts but nevertheless unified into a complex system. The absolute is therefore not some entity separate from the world but is the world when viewed in a specific way. Hegel believed that the inner essence of absolute could be reached by human reason because the absolute is disclosed in nature as well in the working of the human mind. What connects these three, the absolute, nature and man's mind, is Thought itself.

Kant had argued that metaphysics is impossible, that it is impossible for human mind to achieve theoretical knowledge about all of reality. Hegel, on the other hand, set forth the general proposition that what is rational is real and what is real is rational, and from this concluded that everything that is, is knowable.. He came with a new approach of metaphysics, which provided a new basis for thinking about the very structure of reality and about its manifestations in morality, law, religion, art, history, and above all thought itself. Hegel's philosophy is based on a belief in unity. The universe, he felt, is to be interpreted in monistic terms and is the manifestation of the Absolute. Universe, in short, represents a coherent whole. It is an expression of the organic theory of truth. The famous Hegel's dictum, *the real is rational, and the rational is real*. Reason, in Hegel, has more than epistemological function; it governs all aspects of life and is the key to reality. Fundamental to Hegel's system is the concept of the Absolute, which marks a basic change in modern philosophy. The Absolute is not the thing-in-itself; it is not a transcendent force, nor is it a subjective ego. The Absolute is the world process itself, which can be characterized not by a static condition but by activity. The Absolute represents a process which realizes itself in higher and higher levels and reaches a complete expression in the Hegelian philosophy. Hegel's Absolute is not a principle of negation; on the contrary, it represents the highest and most complete affirmation. In stressing the importance of the mental structure of reality, Hegel differed completely from Marx, who regarded matter as the fundamental principle of being, while Hegel accepted the rational Idea as the primary principle of reality. Dialectical idealism in Hegel is a rational process, concerned with the evolution of the human mind. Marx remarked, later on, that Hegel made philosophy abstruse and that materialism brought it down to earth and made it truly concrete and functional. (357)

Hegel's substantive metaphysics is essentially religious in character. Hegel's philosophy has its culmination in man's knowledge of the absolute. In the process of dialectic, knowledge of the absolute is the synthesis of subjective spirit and objective spirit. Hegel was to the 19th Century, perhaps, what Logical Positivism was to the 20th. Not only were there strong Hegelian movements in Germany but in England and America too. Of course, Hegel is also famous for the

reactions that his thinking spawned; one of the most famous of these was that of Karl Marx who reputedly "turned Hegel's system upside down."

John Dewey

John Dewey (1859-1952) is an American philosopher and educationalist and representing the philosophy of pragmatism. Pragmatism has emerged at the end of 19th century as the most original contribution of American thought to the enterprise of philosophy. Dewey has influenced by other pragmatic thinkers of America such as Peirce and William James. He is an outstanding exponent of philosophical naturalism. It has expressed in differently through its thinkers. Peirce was initially interested in logic and science, William James write about psychology and religion, and Dewey absorbed with the problems of ethics and social thought, which he expressed especially through his philosophy of education. He had profound influence, not only on philosophers, but on students of education, aesthetics and political theory. His book *School and Society* (1899) is an influential book reflects his views on education. His book *Freedom and Culture* (1939) reflects his lifelong dedication to ideas about education, culture, democracy, and freedom. Aside from being inspired by various interpretations of scientific method, Pragmatism was also inspired by the failure of metaphysics (or essentialism) in Western philosophy. Neither the meaning nor the truth of our ideas, even our most fundamental ideas, is believed to descend to us from some untouchable authority or fountainhead. Ideas have meaning insofar as they have application; they have truth insofar as their application is successful. Our physical and social relationships are the testing grounds. In Dewey's Pragmatic analysis, the idea of freedom can only mean something that we experience in our physical and social relations. Democracy is meaningful only by application in our world of experience. As the Pragmatist position holds that, *democracy doesn't happen because we state it, declare it, or found it. Democracy happens because we make it happen each day in the way we live.* The importance of Dewey's work lies in his criticism of the traditional notion of 'truth', which is embodied in the theory that he calls 'instrumentalism'. Truth, as conceived by most professional philosophers, is static and final, perfect and eternal; in religious terminology, it may be identified with God's thought, and with those thoughts which, as rational beings, we share with God. For Dewey, all reality is temporal, and process, though evolutionary, is not, as for Hegel, the unfolding of an eternal idea. Dewey's interests are biological rather than mathematical, and he conceives thought as an evolutionary process. Dewey does not aim at judgments that shall be absolutely 'true', or condemn their contradictories as absolutely 'false'. In his opinion there is a process called 'inquiry', which is one form of mutual adjustment between organism and its environment. Dewey makes an *inquiry* the essence of logic, not truth or knowledge. He defines inquiry as follows: *inquiry is the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole.* He further adds that 'inquiry is concerned with objective transformation of objective subject-matter.'

Dewey's chief quarrel with earlier philosophy was that it had confused the true nature and function of knowledge. As empiricists had assumed that thinking refers to fixed things in nature, that for each idea there is a corresponding something in reality. He called this as spectator theory of knowledge. Thus to see something is to have an idea of it. The rationalists argue that the object of thought exists in reality. In either case, the mind was viewed as an instrument for

considering what is fixed and certain in nature. Nature is one thing and the mind another, and knowing is the relatively simple activity of looking, as a spectator does, at what is there. Dewey considered this view of knowledge, admittedly more intricate than his oversimplification, as too static, for one thing, and too mechanical for another. Influenced by Darwin, Dewey maintains that man can best be understood in relation to his environment. If both man and his environment are dynamic, it is clear that a simple spectator-type theory of knowledge will not work. The mind, or more specifically *intelligence*, is for Dewey not a fixed substance, and knowledge is not a set of static concepts. *Intelligence* is the power man possesses to cope with his environment. Thinking is not an individual act carried on in private, in isolation from practical problems. Dewey's theory of instrumentalism was governed by the presuppositions of science. Like science, education should recognize the intimate connection between action and thought, between experiment and reflection. Dewey believed that apart from 'pooled and cooperative experience' there is no knowledge, wisdom, or guides for collective action.

Karl Marx

Karl Marx (1818-1883) is a revolutionary thinker and influenced the struggles of the oppressed of the world. His philosophy coherently formulates the modern materialism. *The Contributions to Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (1844) Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844) German Ideology, Communist Manifesto(1848) and Capital(1867)* are some of the important writings of Marx. Marx claims his philosophy as scientific, naturalistic and realistic. He opposed to all utopian ideals. He is equally critical about religious philosophies, anarchism, idealism and positivism. The influence of the enlightenment is evident in Marx's view of religion. As an atheist he opposed the arguments that are in support of existence of God. According to Marx, the world is not governed by the divine spirit and was not created out of nothing. The only reality is matter and motion; therefore there is no Beyond, and the heaven and hell are merely products of human imagination. In the realm of philosophy, Marx is critical about all forms of idealism. In Marx's view, the idealists regard nature as a symbol of the divine and speak about teleology, are prescientific and merely guided by superstition. Idealism becomes the opiate of the educated, for it substitutes a subjective notion for objective truth. He has also kept distance with positivism, although he appreciated its scientific foundation. He attacked positivism on the ground that it ends in scientific skepticism, underestimates the influence of society, and reduces knowledge to a mere convenient set of descriptions. While positivism is interested in describing the laws of nature, he said, dialectical materialism is concerned with changing and reinterpreting the process of nature.

Marx developed his philosophy on Dialectical Materialism. Dialectic is a theory of all reality and it depends on contradictions being everywhere. For Marx, dialectic is a key to understand human history. Marx pointed out that man makes religion, religion does not make man. Consequently, religion is a social product and can not be treated as an individual phenomenon. Marx believed that the function of philosophy is to criticize society. He considers that let social institutions be studied instead of the ideals of supernaturalism, and let politics replace theology. Marx viewed philosophy in persuasion of change. As he says, *the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways ; the point is to change it.* Marx is critical about doing philosophy in idealistic and religious way. According to Marx, *'consciousness doesn't determine life, but life determines consciousness.'* The dialectical materialism emphasizes on the

importance of change and accuses idealism for static view of life. It considers substance is material and in a constant state of change. Marx's basic thought in his philosophy of history is that in every epoch the prevailing system of production is fundamental. For Marx, the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political, intellectual life process in general. Marx explained everything from a view of economic determinism. The economic structure as base and the politics, culture, law, religion and ideology as viewed as superstructure. Marx believed that at certain stage of their development, material forces of society came into conflict with the existing relations of production. Then begins social revolution. Marx considers men are makers of history. According to him, the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles. His philosophy aims at bringing classless society through revolution.

4.4 CONTEMPORARY THINKERS

Jean-Paul Sartre

He was a French existentialist philosopher. *Psychology of the Imagination* (1972), *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (1971) *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness* (1957) *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (1958) *Existentialism and Humanism* (1973) are some of the philosophical writings of Sartre. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (1943) is a philosophical treatise of Sartre. Its main purpose was to assert the individual's existence as prior to the individual's essence. *Being and Nothingness was to vindicate the fundamental freedom of the human being, against determinists of all stripes.* Sartre sketches his own theory of consciousness, being and phenomena through criticism of both earlier phenomenologists (most notably Husserl and Heidegger) as well as idealists, rationalists and empiricists. According to him one of the major achievements of modern philosophy has been to free us of the kinds of dualism that set the existent up as having a "hidden" nature as with Kant's *noumenon*; Phenomenology has removed "the illusion of worlds behind the scene." Based on an examination of the nature of phenomena, he describes the nature of two types of being, being-in-itself and being-for-itself. While being-in-itself is something that can only be approximated by human being, being-for-itself is the being of consciousness.

The basis of Sartre's existentialism can be found in *The Transcendence of the Ego* in which he says that the thing-in-itself is infinite and overflowing. Sartre refers to any direct consciousness of the thing-in-itself as a "pre-reflective consciousness." Any attempt to describe, understand, historicize etc. the thing-in-itself, Sartre calls "reflective consciousness." There is no way for the reflective consciousness to subsume the pre-reflective, and so reflection is fated to a form of anxiety, i.e. the human condition. The reflective consciousness in all its forms, (scientific, artistic or otherwise) can only limit the thing-in-itself by virtue of its attempt to understand or describe it. It follows, therefore, that any attempt at self-knowledge (self-consciousness—a reflective consciousness of an overflowing infinite) is a construct that fails no matter how often it is attempted. Consciousness is consciousness of itself insofar as it is consciousness of a transcendent object.

The philosophical career of Jean Paul Sartre primarily focuses upon the construction of a philosophy of existence known as existentialism. Sartre's early works are characterized by a

development of classic phenomenology, but his reflection diverges from Husserl's on methodology, the conception of the self, and an interest in ethics. These points of divergence are the cornerstones of Sartre's existential phenomenology, whose purpose is to understand human existence rather than the world as such. Adopting and adapting the methods of phenomenology, Sartre sets out to develop an ontological account of what it is to be human. The main features of this ontology are the groundlessness and radical freedom which characterize the human condition. These are contrasted with the unproblematic being of the world of things. Sartre's substantial literary output adds dramatic expression to the always unstable co-existence of facts and freedom in an indifferent world. Sartre's ontology is explained in his philosophical work, *Being and Nothingness*, where he defines two types of reality which lie beyond our conscious experience: the being of the object of consciousness and that of consciousness itself. The object of consciousness exists as 'in-itself,' that is, in an independent and non-relational way. However, consciousness is always consciousness 'of something,' so it is defined in relation to something else, and it is not possible to grasp it within a conscious experience: it exists as 'for-itself.' An essential feature of consciousness is its negative power, by which we can experience 'nothingness.' This power is also at work within the self, where it creates an intrinsic lack of self-identity. So the unity of the self is understood as a task for-itself rather than as a given.

Sartre maintained that the concepts of authenticity and individuality have to be earned but not learned. We need to experience death consciousness so as to wake up ourselves as to what is really important; the authentic in our lives which is life experience, not knowledge. *Bad faith* is a philosophical concept used by existentialist philosopher Jean Paul Sartre to describe the phenomenon wherein one denies one's freedom to choose, instead choosing to behave without authenticity. It is closely related to the concepts of self deception and resentment.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Wittgenstein represents the analytical philosophy. The central task of the analytical philosophy is to clarify the meaning of language. In his work *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* (1919), Wittgenstein said the object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts. *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) of Wittgenstein explains that language has 'many' functions besides simply 'picturing' the reality. Language always function in a context and therefore has as many purposes as there are contexts. By recognizing the diversity of the functions of language, Wittgenstein inevitably altered the task of philosophy. Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language. He considers the aim of philosophy was to show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle. He believed that philosophical puzzlement can be removed by a careful description of language as we ordinarily use it. As he put it, the result of philosophy is not a number of philosophical propositions, but to make propositions clear. In *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein argues that from the point of view of logical atomism, propositions could be stated significantly only if they could correspond to an atomic fact or be truth functions of propositions that did. Only atomic or molecular propositions could be stated significantly. He convinced that philosophy must reject the metaphysical elements in logical atomism. The right method of philosophy would be to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. the propositions of science.

Wittgenstein first adopted Russell's atomism, which insists that sentences must be broken down to reveal their logical complexities. He tried to show that meaning derives from atomic logical sentences which form an accurate picture of what he called the 'atomic facts' of the world. 'The limits of my language are the limits of the world': there are limits to the sorts of meaningful thoughts we can have with language. Metaphysical problems only arise because philosophers are trying to 'say what cannot be said.' He later abandoned his first atomist quest to solve the 'problem of meaning' and begun to question all traditional philosophical quests for generality or 'essences'. He claimed that the great 20th century search for the 'meaning of meaning' is futile because it was founded on the misconception that 'meaning' is something 'separate' from language. Language is a series of different kinds of 'games' with many different purposes and goals. Meaning is the result of socially agreed conventions and cannot possibly be established outside of language. Meaning is in the use – it is not to be found anywhere else. He adopted a therapeutic view of philosophical discourse, which he claimed was in a situation of sickness, where language is on holiday, so that one language game becomes confused with another. His later philosophy of mind is also anti-Cartesian. Thought is linguistic. Language is a social product and therefore cannot be 'private'. This means that any phenomenological quest for certainty is misconceived. Descartes claimed that first person experiences are more immediate and certain than other kinds. But to talk or write about mental experiences means using a public language with socially agreed rules that lay down both meanings and references – there can be no such thing as a 'private language' to think with.

Edmund Husserl

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is known as father of phenomenology and his views are influenced Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre. The significant element in Husserl's phenomenology is the act of detachment, of standing back from the realm of experienced existence in order to understand it. The philosophy and crisis of European man is the major philosophical work of Husserl. As he explained the crisis consists of philosophy's departure from its true goal, which is to provide the best possible answers to man's human and human concerns, to deal rigorously with man's quest for the highest values, and in short, to develop the unique broad range capacities of human reason. He described the 'crisis' as the 'seeming collapse of reason' and he set his life time objective as 'saving human reason.' his ultimate objective is to save human reason by developing philosophy into a rigorous science. Husserl believed that natural sciences have over the years developed a faulty attitude in western man regarding what the world is like and how best to know it. He tries to build philosophy and its method that based on to judge only by the evidence without any presuppositions and pre conceived notions. Descartes employed systematic doubt; Husserl simply withheld any judgment about his experience, seeking instead to describe his experience as fully as possible in terms of the evidence of experience itself. Experience obviously revolve around the self, the ego, and for Husserl as well as for Descartes, the source of all knowledge is the ego. Husserl sees the ego simply as the matrix of experience. He puts his emphasis more on experience instead of logic. His concern is to discover and describe the given in experience as it is presented in its pure form and found as the immediate data of consciousness. He believed that more accurate description of experience is expressed *ego cogito cogitatum*. For Husserl, we understand the elements of our experience, phenomena, best by discovering the active role of consciousness in intending and creating phenomena. For Husserl the human experience is not simply the fact of consciousness but rather that

consciousness is always consciousness of something. He believed that the essence of consciousness is intentionality indeed for Husserl, intentionality is the structure of consciousness itself and is also the fundamental category of being. The presence of intentionality is disclosed through the process Husserl calls phenomenological *epoche*. In order to prepare the way for the rigorous foundations of his philosophy, Husserl again and again urged epoch, the bracketing of all presuppositions and especially the presuppositions of the natural sciences. Husserl further argues that the life world is the source from which the sciences must abstract their objects.

Michel Foucault

Michel Foucault (1926–1984) has had wide influence not only in philosophy but also in a wide range of humanistic and social scientific disciplines *The Archeology of Knowledge, Discipline and Punish, Madness and Civilization, History of Sexuality, Order of Things, Birth of Clinic* are prominent writings of Foucault. He introduced concepts such as ‘discursive regime’. or re-invoked those of older philosophers like ‘episteme’ and ‘genealogy’ in order to explain the relationship among meaning, power, and social behavior within social orders. A central terms in Foucault’s work—he was particularly interested in knowledge of human beings and power that acts on human beings. His works reveals that how ‘truths’ have changed over centuries from age to age and from culture to culture. Truth is relative and subjective. Power and knowledge are intrinsically related. In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is "to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality." Discourse is controlled in order to have its transformative potential checked, in order to limit the occurrence of the unexpected, and to limit the substance of discourse as an event in itself. Discourse is controlled externally through the rules of exclusion, which include prohibition. a form of power that circulates in the social field and can attach to strategies of domination as well as those of resistance the ‘discursive field’ - the relationship between language, social institutions, subjectivity and power. His aim is to bring into view the marginalised and submerged discourses. His philosophical method provides a novel way in understanding the social reality by exposing the politics of hegemony, exclusion, and violence of dominant discourses. This provides the space for recognising the social experience of the marginalised and articulating the politics of identity.

4.5 LET US SUM UP

It is clear that philosophical ideas mirror its time. The philosophers from Pre- Socratic to contemporary time, we may find diverse philosophical approaches in understanding the social reality. The problems and priorities of philosophers were changed over the period of time. The philosophical ideas and approaches are ranging from materialism to idealism, religious to scientific, naturalism to supernaturalism, subjectivism to utilitarianism. The philosophers of each age have pre occupied with certain questions. For Plato it is, *How can aristocracy be restored?* For medieval philosophers, *How can the roman church prevail?* For the Cartesian philosophy, *How can science be progressive and certain?* In this unit we took up only certain representative thinkers from different periods in the history of western philosophy. In the following blocks we would deal elaborately on different thinkers of whom some we dealt here and many we skipped for want of space.

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Indira Gandhi National Open University
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MPY – 002

Western Philosophy

Block 2

ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHY

UNIT 1
Pre-Socratic Philosophers

UNIT 2
Socrates

UNIT 3
Plato

UNIT 4
Aristotle

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION GREEK

The western philosophy finds its roots in Greek philosophy of 6th century B.C. Greek philosophy has considered as a starting point for western philosophy. The later philosophy has shaped by this philosophy. In other words, the very definition and nature of philosophy of west has identified, continued and developed further from the Greek philosophy. Others were following Thales with alternative solutions. There are attempts to explain change and permanence. Parmenides, the founder of Eleatic school of philosophy is critical about both Heraclitus and Milesian philosophies that all things emerge out of something else. He rejects very notion of change and considered phenomenon of change is basically an illusion. Ancient Greek philosophy may be divided into the pre-Socratic period, the Socratic period, and the post-Aristotelian period. Important pre-Socratic philosophers include Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Democritus, Parmenides, and Heraclitus. The Socratic period is named in honor of the most recognizable figure in Western philosophy, Socrates, who, along with his pupil Plato, revolutionized philosophy through the use of the Socratic Method, which developed the very general philosophical methods of definition, analysis, and synthesis. Plato's writings are often considered basic texts in philosophy as they defined the fundamental issues of philosophy for future generations. The post-Aristotelian period ushered in such philosophers as Euclid, Epicurus, Chrysippus, Hipparchia the Cynic, Pyrrho, and Sextus Empiricus.

Unit 1 is to familiarize the students with the Pre-Socrates schools and their philosophical ideas and differences among them. The thinkers who are called 'pre-Socrates' is not just for reasons of convenient chronology. Aristotle called the pre-socratics the "physicists" because they reflected so very much on nature. The major issues that drew their attention was: (a) the search for the *archē* –the primordial substance out of which the universe was fashioned; (b) The ever fascinating controversy: being versus becoming or, to use a more precise philosophical vocabulary, the question of the One and the Many. This study unveils different philosophical ideas of different pre-socratic schools and their attempt to understand themselves and the world.

Unit 2 brings home to us Socrates' life and philosophical method. It shows how the logical, epistemological, ethical, educational and political teachings of Socrates stand out as the beginnings of Western philosophy. As an epistemology, it Socratic method is the first of its kind in the history of Western philosophy. This is also the first philosophically formulated ethics in the West. His political and educational ideas had great influence during and after his life. The Socratic method has been made famous by the schools and works of Plato and Aristotle. Socrates remains the father of philosophy in the serious and life-involving meaning of the word.

Unit 3 briefly explains the philosophy of Plato who is one of the most dazzling thinkers in the Western philosophical tradition and one of the most penetrating, wide-ranging, and influential authors in the history of philosophy. The questions he raises are so profound. To study briefly the

great contribution Plato has made to Philosophy and Western thought. Most of the Western philosophers have in some way been influenced by him and in practically every age there have been philosophers who regard themselves Platonists.

Unit 4 analyses the philosophy of Aristotle. It is worth saying a word about Aristotle's approach to philosophy. Aristotle classifies his science into three kinds - theoretical, practical and productive sciences. Physics, according to Aristotle, is the science of Nature. According to him Body and soul form an indivisible unity. In his idea of ethics he deals about - The good life, Moral virtue, Intellectual virtue (Practical Wisdom), and Intellectual virtue (Theoretical Wisdom). The natural community according to Aristotle was the city (*polis*) which functions as a political "community" or "partnership" (*koinonia*). Aristotle's Poetics comprised of two books comedy and tragedy.



UNIT 1 PRE-SOCRATIC PHILOSOPHERS

Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 The ‘Sensualist School’: The Ionians
- 1.3 The ‘Rationalist School’: The Eleatics
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- 1.5 The Pythagorean Brotherhood
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- 1.7 Let us Sum Up
- 1.8 Key Words
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1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall familiarize ourselves with the Pre-Socrates philosophers. You are expected to know the pre-Socratic schools and their philosophical ideas and differences among them. At times you might think that their philosophical ideas are simple to our complex mind but then, you must not forget that they were pioneers, venturing into a new territory. They did not possess the centuries of experience that we have today. You might also be struck by the very freshness and simplicity of their vision and it might teach us a lesson or two: to us who are so accustomed to intricate systems of thought and culture that we tend to lose that fresh, youthful, sense of wonderment when viewing the world which is the foundation of all true philosophy.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The thinkers who are called ‘pre-Socrates’ is not just for reasons of convenient chronology. On the whole, their views ran in another direction than that of Socrates. They were mainly concerned with outer, external world and the problems and issues raised from such an interest except the sophists who focused their attention to the internal world. Aristotle called the pre-socratics the “physicists” because they reflected so very much on nature. The major issues that drew their attention was: (a) the search for the *archē* –the primordial substance out of which the universe was fashioned; (b) The ever fascinating controversy: being versus becoming or, to use a more precise philosophical vocabulary, the question of the One and the Many. Since they viewed the universe as an organic whole, and as a living whole, they are also called hylozoists. We begin our study with the Ionian School who offered ‘sensual’ response to the universe. The Eleatic School attempted to give a rational response to the existence of the universe. The Atomic School is an effort to synthesize both the Ionians and Eleatics, though it might not be a perfect synthesis. We shall also briefly note the philosophical ideas of Pythagorean brotherhood and Sophists who, generally speaking, turn our attention to the ‘internal world.’ This study unveils different philosophical ideas of different pre-socratic schools and their attempt to understand themselves and the world.

1.2 THE SENSUALIST RESPONSE: THE IONIAN SCHOOL

Ionia is a district on the west coast of present-day Turkey. It was colonized by Greek in the 11th century BCE and it was one of the important commercial and literal centres of Ephesus and Miletus. All the eminent Ionian thinkers came from Miletus, except of course Heraclitus who is more celebrated among them. The School is called 'sensualist' because in its attempt to response the being versus becoming question as well as in its effort to discover the primary substance of the universe, they relied rather on the sense knowledge and sense observation and not the reason. Generally speaking, the Ionians tend to hold that becoming alone is real and that being is an illusion. We shall briefly note the ideas of four Ionians: Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes and Heraclitus.

Thales of Miletus

Thales was born in Miletus. The exact date of his birth is unknown. Probably, he must have flourished in the early part of sixth century BCE. He is said of have predicted the eclipse of the sun mentioned by Herodotus. Since, that eclipse occurred on May 28th, 585 BCE, it is one of the reasons to believe that he must have begun his philosophical career in the early part of 6th Century BCE. He is traditionally regarded as the first philosopher. He is said to have played an important role in public and academic life and excelled in politics, mathematics and astronomy. Some other scientific activities are ascribed to Thales such as, the construction of an almanac and the introduction of the Phoenician practice of steering a ship's course by the Little Bear. However, there is little information about his philosophical doctrine since he did not commit his thoughts to writing. Thanks to Aristotle, whatever little we know comes mainly from him. According to Aristotle, Thales taught two fundamental philosophical ideas. They are, one, the water is the first absolute principle and, second, the soul is the principal motor. How did Thales arrive at the conclusion that the water is first absolute principle? Besides the mere fact that he lived in a place virtually surrounded by water, Aristotle supplies the following reason: "Thales got this notion perhaps from seeing that the nutriment of all things is moist, and that heat itself is generated from the moist and kept alive by it (and that from which they come to be is a principle of all things). He got his notion from this fact, and from the fact that the seeds of all things have a moist nature, and that water is the origin of the nature moist things." Though the explanation might look simple to our intellectual minds, his attempt was to give a rational account of the principle of things. Thus, he broke away from myths and poet-theologians. The second philosophical idea of Thales according to Aristotle is the soul as the principle of movement. According to Aristotle, "Thales, too, to judge from what is recorded about him, seems to have held the soul to be a motive force, since he said that the magnet has a soul in it because it moves the iron.... Certain thinkers say that the soul is intermingled in the whole universe, and it is perhaps for this reason that Thales came to the opinion that all things are full of gods." Perhaps, the best way to understand "all things are full of gods" is to say that everything is fundamentally alive. Not only magnetic stones are endowed with souls but everything else, the whole universe is impregnated with life. How does Thales earn his place as the first Greek philosopher? It is from the fact that he conceives the notion of unity in difference. While holding firm the idea of unity, he philosophically accounted for diversity.

Anaximander

Anaximander was born in Miletus around the year 611 BCE and was a disciple of Thales. He was concerned about the scientific pursuits and he is credited with having constructed a map – most probably for the Milesian sailors on the Black Sea. He wrote a book entitled *On Nature*. Like Thales, he showed keen interest in cosmology. However, he differed with his master in his choice of the first principle. For Anaximander, the *archē* is *ápeiron* – ‘the infinite’ or ‘the unlimited.’ What does Anaximander refer to by the *ápeiron*? *Ápeiron* means that which is devoid of limit. In other words, it refers to infinite. Probably it would be a herculean task to figure out what exactly Anaximander meant by infinite, Aristotle understood it to mean unlimited extension in space and qualitative indetermination. For Anaximander, *ápeiron* is not only a material cause of infinite extension but also it is a principle characterized by the absence of any formal determination. It has no positive identity. It is neither water, nor air, nor any one of the known elements. *Ápeiron* can function in two ways: as a material cause and as a divine principle. *Ápeiron* as a material cause is an important discovery of Anaximander, which Aristotle would fully develop later. Unlike the principle of Thales, the *ápeiron* is not one of the elements (in Aristotelian terms, it is not a substance). It is of an indeterminate nature, and therefore, is different from and prior to all other existing substances. *Ápeiron* as a divine cause encompasses and governs all things. It is an immortal and indestructible principle. These qualities must be inherent in it as it is unlimited and unaffected by the limiting factors of earthly realities such as birth and death, growth and decay. Besides this, Anaximander also explains the genesis of all things. For the questions how does the *ápeiron* encompass and govern all things and how it is related to finite things, Anaximander would reply saying that all things proceed necessarily from the *ápeiron* by means of separation of contraries, and return to it in a necessary manner as well. All the same, Anaximander does not explain the process of separation of contraries but one might say that it is caused by the eternal movement of the *ápeiron*. All things are subject to this law of generation and corruption as a punishment. It is the retribution they pay for the commission of an injustice. The injustice is the contraries committed by the *ápeiron* which separate from and oppose one another, each one trying to prevail over the rest. This punishment restores the equality of the different parts with the passing of time. This is achieved by virtue of the imposition of a limit to each contrary that brings to an end the dominion of one over the other. This is the way Anaximander explains the continuity and stability of material changes, the formation of the world and the governing role of the *ápeiron*. To conclude, Anaximander’s *archē* is not confined to one thing but to indeterminate infinite out of which all things come. He also attempts in some way to answer the question how the world developed out of this ultimate element.

Anaximenes

Anaximenes was born at the beginning of the 6th century and was an “associate” of Anaximander. He authored a book, of which a small fragment has survived. At first sight, the doctrine of Anaximenes appears one step back from the stage reached by Anaximander. He summarily abandons the theory of *ápeiron* and assigns a determinate element as the ultimate principle. And that principle, according to Anaximenes, is air. Anaximenes was probably led to this conclusion because all living beings need air for breathing. And since he thought that the entire universe was composed of living beings, it appears logical to choose air as the ultimate principle. Besides this, he observes, “Air undergoes substantial changes through rarefaction and condensation. By rarefaction, it is transformed into fire and wind. On the other hand, if it

thickens, it forms the clouds; and through further condensation, it becomes water, then earth, then the stones. All other things come these substances.” In other words, “All things originate through a certain condensation and rarefaction of air.” When analyzed closely, Anaximenes actually takes a step forward in clarifying the problem of the first principle of all things. The importance of Anaximenes’ contribution is confirmed by Aristotle himself, who says that all later thinkers who thought of some material cause as the *archē*, are indebted somehow to Anaximenes.

Heraclitus

Heraclitus was born in the middle of 6th Century BCE and died around 480 BCE. He came from Ephesus and belonged to an aristocratic family. He was known as a conceited, proud person who looked down upon the rest of humanity because of its blindness to the truth of his teachings. His philosophy is found in a book entitled *On Nature*, quite a few fragments of which have been preserved. Since it was not easy to determine the exact nature of his thought on account of the cryptic and occult nature of his writings, he was also known as “the obscure one” even during his lifetime. This may be reason perhaps why Plato and Aristotle made no special efforts to penetrate his thought but just described it as an exaggerated relativism. Following are a few important philosophical ideas of Heraclitus. First, Heraclitus affirmed that everything is in constant flux, or, “everything changes.” He explains this with an analogy of the river saying, “It is certainly not possible to enter twice into the same river.” This has been also attested by Plato: “Heraclitus says somewhere that all things change and that nothing is at rest.” This is the original contribution of Heraclitus to the history of pre-Socratic thought. For Heraclitus, movement is the central theme and point of departure of his philosophy. All the Milesian philosophers attempted to account for the multiplicity of things and explained that multiplicity by affirming different solutions to the question of the *archē*. Whereas, Heraclitus singled out change as the very essence of what is real. “Everything changes, only becoming remains constant throughout.” This is the widely known thought of Heraclitus. Second, Heraclitus explains the universal process of becoming as a never-ending alternation of contraries. The opposites not only account for the transformation of one substance to another but they constitute the very essence of all things. The permanent opposition of contraries lies at the root of reality and its stability. In other words, for Heraclitus, the only real world is the world of opposites, opposites which are in mutual need of one another. Third, Heraclitus considered fire as the *archē*: “This world, as well as all other worlds, was not made by the gods or by men. It always was, is, and will be, an ever living fire, which is enkindled according to a certain measure and extinguished according to a certain measure.” According to Heraclitus, fire, more than any other *archē*, reflects the constant change and harmony that lies at the root of reality. “The transformations undergone by fire are as follows: first it becomes the sea; then half of the sea becomes land, while the other half becomes burning wind.” Most interpreters of Heraclitus understand fire in the metaphorical sense rather as a material cause. Taking fire metaphorically might cause many difficulties as Heraclitus himself uses the term *logos* to refer to the first principle. Understood as such, it means the principle that governs every transformation; it is the law that is inherent in everything. And for Heraclitus, to know the *logos* means to know the truth. Fourth, Heraclitus identifies the nature of the soul with that of the first principle and the soul is infinite part of human being: “No matter how much you journey, though you travel every road, you will never be able to discern the soul’s limits, so deep as its *logos*.” He also believed in the immortality of the soul. “After death, there are things which await man which he neither hopes for, nor imagines.”

It is indeed interesting to note the gradual maturing and refinement of philosophical speculation and concepts from Thales to Heraclitus. Heraclitus probably is the most accomplished thinker of this school. He has a defining influence on Stoics, especially as regards his doctrine of the logos. Hegel saw in him a predecessor. Hegel says, "If we wish to consider fate so just as always to preserve to posterity what is best, we must at least say of what we have of Heraclitus, that it is worthy of this preservation."

1.3 THE RATIONALISTIC RESPONSE: THE ELEATIC SCHOOL

Elea, a town in Southern Italy, had been founded by Ionian refugees, running away from the Persian invaders in the middle of 6th Century BCE. The philosophers of this school preferred to make use of their reason to respond to the intriguing questions of their time rather than merely rely on the data of their sense. In this sense, they can be called rationalists. They tend to assert that Being alone is real and becoming is illusory. Xenophanes (530 BCE) is said to be the founder of this school. He was known for his attacks on the anthropomorphic Greek deities. He called for a purification and deepening of religious language. We shall briefly note the philosophical ideas of three Eleatics, namely Parmenides, Zeno and Melissus.

Parmenides

Parmenides was born in Elea, probably in the second half of the 6th century BCE. He devoted himself not only to philosophy but also to politics. He wrote a poem in hexameter verse entitled *On Nature*, extensive fragments of which have been still preserved. Parmenides seems to have been a Pythagorean, but later he abandoned that philosophy in favour of his own. We shall briefly note the important philosophical ideas of Parmenides. First, the Being, the One, *is* and that Becoming or change is illusion. Two questions need to be answered to understand the mind of Parmenides: What does he mean by being? Why did he see being as the unifying principle of everything else? Parmenides' concept of being is univocal. It does not refer to any concrete perceptible reality but only to being as such, to the being which everything possesses since all of them exist. This is the being which encompasses everything –the whole reality. Being is apprehended by the intellect alone. The senses grasp the multiplicity of the sensible; but the intelligence sees beyond appearances, and knows what lies behind them, only one reality: being. "Thought and that by which thought is made possible are the same thing; for thought is expressed in being, and hence, without being, there would be no thought." In other words, for Parmenides, being and thought are correlative terms since being only reveals itself to thought and it is this revelation that constitutes the truth. He also describes the characteristics of being in his poem: unbegotten and incorruptible; it cannot come from non-being, because non-being is nothing, and from nothing nothing comes; it cannot come from being because being exists, and what already exists need not be brought into existence. This means that the being has no beginning and no end; it is immutable, perfect, complete, with no need for anything. Things may come to pass but being itself remains one and the same. One can easily notice an obvious difference between Parmenides and other preceding philosophers. The being of Parmenides cannot be the ultimate principle as nothing can proceed from it. For all Ionian philosophers, the *archē* is the origin of all things through the many changes it undergoes. Then how does Parmenides account for the multiplicity of things? To answer this question we must know what Parmenides says about the way of opinion. Second, one can notice in Parmenides' desire in his

poem to uphold the reality of movement which his notion of being seemed to deny. He makes a radical distinction between the way of truth and the way of opinion. To explain the reality of movement he brings in the concept or the way of opinion. "With this I bring to a close the explanation about truth which is worthy of all credence. Now learn for yourself the opinions of mortal men by listening to the deceptive account of my words." In other words, Parmenides places the opinions of human beings, who allow themselves to be guided by their sense and not by their intelligence. While the intelligence (or reason) apprehends the reality as unified reality, the senses perceive them as fleeting and changeable. To be fair to Parmenides, what he says that one reality actually exists, but it can be viewed from different perspectives; of these only one lead to true knowledge and others, give opinion. Therefore, for Parmenides, the perceptible reality is not a product of fantasy; it is something real. What happens is that human being only grasp the external side of reality and take that to be true. This is not absolutely false but can be misleading. This interpretation really does not solve the problem of one and many but it brings the problem to the centre of philosophical inquiry. From now on, the big challenge to philosophy is to vindicate the reality of the many and the reality of change which the 'being' of Parmenides undermined.

Zeno

Zeno of Elea was probably born at the beginning of 5th century BCE. He was an ardent disciple of Parmenides and wrote a book in defense of his master's teachings but surprisingly in a new manner. Zeno adopted a method, which Aristotle would later call it a dialectical method, which consisted in demonstrating a thesis by showing the absurdity of the contradictory propositions. He used many ingenious arguments to prove the impossibility of motion such as the riddle of Achilles and the tortoise, which Aristotle would offer a critique of these arguments in his book *Physics*. Zeno also sought to defend the unicity of being by demonstrating (albeit wrongly) that multiplicity ended up in as many absurdities as the contradicting thesis. Moreover, the philosophical ideas of Zeno transferred the centre of Eleatic speculation from the problem of being and non-being to the problem of one and the many. This approach deflected the ontological character that philosophy had taken with Parmenides. To prove his master right, Zeno had to push Parmenides' thought to its last consequences: he had to summarily deny the reality of the phenomena which Parmenides had tried to explain it through the way of opinion. With Parmenides and Zeno, the Eleatic philosophy was brought to its ultimate conclusion: only being existed, and multiplicity was an illusion.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Give the account of Ancient Greek thinkers' understanding of 'arche'.

2) Briefly explain the understanding of Parmendes on Being.

1.4 AN ATTEMPT AT SYNTHESIS: THE ATOMISTS

Human being, rather than admit defeat, rather than let him/herself remain confounded and despairing over the apparent contradiction, tries to find a way to reconcile conflicting opinions and harmonize with the all the possible data. Such was the case with Atomists. They noted the clash of view between the first two great schools of Greek philosophy, concerning even so elementary a datum of experience as movement and change. In their response, they seem to have saved the Being so beloved of the Eleatics as well as becoming rigorously championed by Ionians. Reality, according to Atomists, is composed of atoms moving in a void. The individualistic atom, itself unchanging, is the element of permanence whereas its incessant motion provides the element of change. We shall briefly note the important philosophical ideas of a few atomists such as Leucippus, Democritus, Empedocles and Anaxagoras.

Leucippus and Democritus

Little is known about Leucippus of Miletus except that he founded the atomist school of philosophy. Probably, he was born around the year 480 BCE and established his school in Abdero, the same place where Democritus was born. He had been a member of the school of Parmenides and was a disciple of Zeno. The absence of information about Leucippus' life and works is due in large measure to the great renown enjoyed by Democritus who compiled all the works of the school, including those of his master, into one single *corpus*. Therefore, it is rather difficult to distinguish between what is due to Leucippus and what is due to Democritus. Therefore, we shall briefly delineate the ideas of both Leucippus and Democritus.

According to Leucippus and Democritus, there are an infinite number of indivisible units called atoms. These are imperceptible; they differ in size and shape and have no quality except that of solidity or impenetrability. They are infinite in number and move in a void, and thereby give rise to the movement and multiplicity of the world of senses. "For some of the older philosophers (the Eleatics) thought that 'what is' must of necessity be 'one' and immovable. The void, they argue, 'is not': but unless there is a void with a separate being of its own, 'what is' cannot be moved –nor again can it be 'many,' since there is nothing to keep things apart....Leucippus, however, thought he had a theory which harmonized with sense-perception and would not abolish either coming-to-be and passing-away or motion and the multiplicity of things." In other words, the diversity of things is caused by the movements of atoms in a void. This void is a reality which exists. When the atoms come together, they bring about generation; when they separate from one another, they bring about corruption. For Leucippus and Democritus, atoms constitute the positive element of reality. This movement, as we have already noted, requires the existence of an empty space or vacuum. The empty space is just real as the atoms are. Every corporeal thing is composed of several atoms separated from one another by an empty space. Moreover, the cause of the movement of atoms is nothing but the very instability of their nature: they are, by nature, in constant motion. Atoms have always been and will forever remain in motion. Aristotle called Leucippus and Democritus as the philosophers of chance since their philosophy implies that the world has come to its present state only by accident. They were called so not because they denied causality because they ignored the final cause: atoms move necessarily but without any finality. But to be fair to Leucippus and Democritus, it must be noted

that more than denying the final cause, they were simply ignorant of it, for no one had as yet discovered it. This defect provided a useful clue to the subsequent philosophers, who realized that a mechanical explanation of the world was insufficient.

Empedocles

Empedocles was born in Agrigento, Sicily, in the beginning of the 5th century BCE. He was the first philosopher to harmonize the being of Parmenides with the testimony of the senses. His ideas are found in two of his works: *On Nature* and *The Purifications*. *On Nature* explains Empedocles' cosmology while the other work contains his ethico-religious teachings. His religious teachings are heavily influenced by the Pythagorean belief in the transmigration of souls. But as a philosopher, he subscribes to the Eleatic principle of the immutability of the real without denying the existence of sensible reality. We shall briefly study his basic ideas. First, Empedocles says that a certain number of substances, ungenerated, incorruptible and always remaining the same, constitute the origin of all things. These four elements are fire, water, air and earth. "From these elements all other beings have proceeded –those that existed in the past, those that exist at present, and those that will exist in the future –trees, men and women, animals, birds, the fish that live in water, and also the gods who live long lives and who enjoy special prerogatives. For only these elements exist; and by combining themselves in different ways, they take on a variety of forms, each particular combination giving rise to a particular kind of change." As we have already noted, the Ionians explained the origin of all things through the qualitative changes undergone by the first principle. But for Empedocles, the four elements never change; they remain always the same, and it is through their different combinations that other beings are brought into existence. We can say that Empedocles is the origin of the notion of an unchangeable material cause, irreducible to no other thing, and capable of uniting and separating itself from other elements. Second, it is love and hate principle which makes four elements unite with or separate themselves from one another. Love brings things together, and therefore, it is at the origin of the generation of things. Hate is divisive and brings about corruption. Love and hate are two principal forces constantly at odds with each other. There is an alternation of the predominance of one force with the predominance of the other, and this gives rise to the cycles of generation and corruption present in the world. Third, the principle of knowledge lies in a material likeness between the sensible object and our senses. Sensible knowledge is the result of the contact between the elements of things and the elements of the senses. According to Empedocles when there is a continuous effusion of elements from things, and when this comes in contact with the sense, sensible knowledge is produced. The intellectual knowledge too, is brought about in a similar way. Leaving aside Empedocles' materialistic understanding of knowledge, his theory contains an important intuition which is later picked up by Aristotle: that the knowing process should be understood as an assimilation.

Anaxagoras

Anaxagoras was born in Clazomenae, near Miletus, around the year 500 BCE. Probably, he was the first one to transfer the center of philosophy to Athens. He remained in Athens teaching for about thirty years, until a charge of impiety forced him to transfer to Lampsacus, where he died around the year 428 BCE. He wrote a book titled *On Nature* and his philosophy closely resembles the philosophy of Empedocles. One might say that Anaxagoras too makes an attempt to reconcile the Eleatic principle with the evidence of multiplicity. The following are the basic

philosophical ideas of Anaxagoras. First, beings are immutable, indestructible and indivisible. They bring about multiplicity of things according to the way they mix and combine with one another. Hence, the first principle of Anaxagoras, according to Aristotle, is a great mixture: an indeterminate mixture composed of an infinite number of substances, each one of them infinitely small in size. Second, to explain the multiplicity of substances, Anaxagoras concludes that the first principle must, in a way, embody all things in itself. He believed that everything must come from something that already exists. Therefore, he affirmed that the first principle was a confused mixture of infinitesimally small elements which are inert, unchangeable, eternal and qualitatively different from one another. They are seeds of all things. Aristotle called them “*homeomerics*,” which means things which remain qualitatively the same even if they are divided into smaller parts. All things are composed of a mixture of *homeomerics*; different mixtures bring about different beings. Since all things come from the first principle, whatever nature things may have, “everything is found in everything:” the qualitative differences of all things are found in everything though some elements may be minimally represented in nature. Third, alongside the *homeomerics*, Anaxagoras adds another principle: the *Nous* or intelligence. He describes it in the following way: “While all other things are composed of a mixture of all things, the intelligence is infinite and independent, not mixed with other things, but is by itself alone.” The *Nous* is the most subtle and pure of beings. It knows everything completely and has maximum power. “The intelligence ordains everything that is brought into being –those things that existed in the past and exist no longer, those that exist at present and those that will exist in the future.” In other words, for Anaxagoras, the *Nous* functions only as the origin of movement. Since the seeds of all things are eternal, the *Nous* merely starts the cosmic movement whereby things begin to differentiate themselves from one another, and take on their particular characteristics. This observation is criticized by Aristotle, who says that Anaxagoras “uses reason as a *dues ex machina* for making of the world, and when he is at a loss to them from what cause something necessarily is, then he drags reason in, but in all other cases ascribes events to anything rather than to reason.” However, Anaxagoras first introduces a spiritual and intellectual principle, though he might have failed to grasp the full import of that difference between that principle and the matter which it forms or sets in motion. Nevertheless, Anaxagoras must be credited with the introduction in the Greek philosophy such a principle that would have defining influence in the future.

1.5 THE PYTHAGOREAN BROTHERHOOD

One must note that Pythagoras did not found a philosophical school, but a kind of religious community. This was nothing unusual in the later half the 6th century BCE. There was a general “two way drift” then, in the Ionian civilization towards skepticism or towards the “mystery religions.” This does happen when a civilization is felt to be on the decline. It happened with the Romans, it was happening with the Greeks and it does happen in our own times. Little is certain about Pythagoras, the founder of the Pythagorean brotherhood. He was born in Samos, in Apollodorus and reached the high point of career in the years 532-531 BCE. The obscurity which envelops the life of Pythagoras is not due to paradoxically to a dearth of information about him, but to the abundance of testimonies that altogether have succeeded in blurring the historical and have converted his life and person into a legend. One must also note that it is rather difficult to separate the views taught by Pythagoras himself from those of others of the brotherhood. They

were a community and it is to this community as a whole that one should ascribe the teachings. We shall briefly focus on the philosophical ideas of the Pythagorean brotherhood and mention just in passing that Pythagoreans taught transmigrations of souls and they were the first one hold, long before Copernicus, the theory of heliocentrism.

The following are the fundamental philosophical ideas of Pythagoreans. First, the *archē* is number, and that things, ultimately, are numbers. Probably, it was their interest in mathematics and music which led them to this conclusion. It was their study of mathematics that made them to reduce all of reality to a series of numerical numbers. They observed different characteristics of phenomena and they saw that these characteristics followed clear mathematical patterns. Musical harmony, for instance, could be reduced to a set of numerical relations. Natural phenomena observed an order which could be measured numerically –the duration of the year, the seasons, the length of the day etc. Hence they were of the opinion that numbers and its elements constituted the principle of all things. In other words, number constituted the essence and substance of all that was real. Moreover, they also observed that the number itself is further divisible into a number of categories: “the elements of number are the even and the odd and of these the latter is limited, and the former unlimited.” This meant that every number can always be divided into even and odd elements. It also does mean that even and odd elements constitute the universal elements of number, and hence, of all things as well. Since the even is identified with the unlimited and the odd with the limited, everything must be composed of this pair of contrasts. The Pythagoreans concluded that the unlimited and the limited constitute the first principles of all numbers, and, therefore, of all things. Prior to Pythagoreans, none had observed that the core of reality is composed of two contrary principles –the unlimited and the limited. This is the original contribution of Pythagoreans. Second, although the *archē* is composed of contrary elements, they do not show externally –either individually or taken as whole. On the contrary, what they show is inner harmony. The Pythagoreans claimed that each thing has its own harmony, and that the universe as a whole is governed by a law that unified all its elements. One can observe the interest of Pythagoreans’ desire to subject all phenomena to the categories of reason (mathematical laws). The world is not ruled by dark or unknown forces: it comprises an order, a harmonious order, which, like the musical scale, can be reduced to numerical relations and rational laws. Probably the greatest tribute we can pay to Pythagoreans, as Fredrick Copleston remarks, is to point out that they were one of the determining influences in the formation of the thought of Plato.

1.6 THE SOPHISTS

The beginning of 5th century saw a change of focus in Greek philosophy. The Greek philosophical speculation began to shift from the world to the human beings; from the macrocosm to the microcosm, or, in the precise philosophical language, from the object to the subject. Probably, the conflicts and contradictions inherent in the philosophical thoughts of Ionians and Eleatics on ultimate nature of reality, might have discouraged further work on that theme. Besides, democracy was introduced into Athens, which was also at the time (492-429 BCE) the commercial, cultural and political centre of Greece. With democracy, the ‘common man’ began to realize that s/he could play an important role in the affairs of the city-state, s/he wanted to equip her/himself with knowledge in practical affairs, especially in rhetoric and the art of persuading. In this, h/she was ably (?) aided by a band of self-appointed itinerant teachers who

were willing to offer him/her the fruit of their expertise, of course for a fee! This practice of dispensing knowledge for a rate was something wholly out of keeping with the Greek wisdom and earned the “Sophists,” as they were called the epithet, “shopkeepers with spiritual wares” from Socrates. As the demand increased for the services of Sophists, not a few charlatans saw in the profession an opportunity to make “a fast buck.” To out-smart other rival teachers, they did not hesitate to clad their speeches with all manner of obscurisms to appear more profound. Moreover, in order to appear more original, they worked out various fine-sounding and specious arguments to attack established norms, which draw enthusiastic support of younger generation and the irk of the elders. Sooner than later, whatever their initial motives and ideals were, sophistry had acquired that connotation of quackery and fraud that it has today. It was the opposition and attacks of Socrates and Plato that gained them this reputation. And the terms still has this implication today. However, one must not forget that no less than Socrates himself could be, historically speaking, classed in this “school,” but with a difference, of course. For in Socrates we can see the nobility and grandeur of what must have been the pristine sophist ideal. Both Socrates and Sophists gave importance to virtue. But the Sophists came to mean gradually the art of acquiring the practical know-how, -worse, are art of convincing and forging ahead at all costs. For Socrates, it concerned the formation and development of the whole person. Be that it may, properly speaking, sophism was more of a philosophical movement than a school of philosophy. There were difference of opinion among sophists themselves and later, between the first sophists and their disciples. The first sophists were respected personages and were esteemed or the new forms of culture they ushered in, the latter were known to have cared little for content and were more for external form. With them, sophism became barren form of debate and empty rhetoric. The unscrupulous men used it to further their political ambitions and undermine duly established laws. We shall briefly note the philosophical ideas of earlier sophists: Protagoras and Gorgias.

Protagoras

Protagoras was born in Abdera around 484 BCE. He taught in several cities, including Athens and he was well received by the people. His most famous books were *On the Truth*, *On the Gods* and *Anthologies* (or *Contradictions*). Philosophically speaking, Protagoras continued the tradition of the pluralists. He rejected the univocity of Parmenides’ being; subscribed to Heraclitean doctrine of continual change. But his doctrine is more than just a new description of the principles of multiplicity like the philosophies of Anaximander and the atomists; it was a philosophy of knowledge, truth and error. If contrary things are present simultaneously in things, it is impossible to have certain scientific knowledge about things as nothing can be known with certainty. Therefore, he argued, that the only alternative left is relativism: human being determines the truth of the object, and s/he determines it according to his/her own knowledge. Knowledge for Protagoras is based squarely on senses which are constantly subject to change like everything else. The famous quote of Protagoras summarized his position well: “Man is the measure of all things –things which exist insofar as they exist, and things which do not exist insofar as they do not exist.” Because of relativism, he taught his students the art of antilogy –to single out the different contradictory sides of a particular argument, gauge which among them was the weakest and present it in such a way that it appears more convincing than the opposite view. Obviously, Protagoras’ philosophy was bereft of truth. Because of this, one might conclude, and rightly, that Protagoras did not believe in wisdom of any kind, and that to speak of wise people was absolutely out of the question in such a context. Wisdom for him meant skillful

rhetoric and identified it with utility and convenience. The relativism and skepticism of Protagoras did undermine objective moral standards and led to agnosticism: “As for the gods, it is impossible for me to affirm whether they exist or not.”

Gorgias

Gorgias, a disciple of Empedocles, was born in Sicily around the year 483 BCE. He too taught in many cities, especially in Athens until his death in 375 BCE. His main philosophical work entitled, *On Nature and Non-Being*. Briefly, the philosophy of Gorgian was the exact opposite of Eleaticism which can be summarized in the following way: “First, nothing exists. Second, if anything existed, it cannot be known by man. Third, if it can be known, it cannot be transmitted and explained to others.” Gorgias proved these three propositions employing the “dialectical” method of Zeno. He rejects both the reality of being and that of non-being on account of contradictory affirmations among the philosophers. In this sense, Gorgias appears more radical than Protagoras. Protagoras at least accepted the notion of a truth relative of each human being. Gorgias does not subscribe to this: truth and falsehood mean nothing to him. Because, we cannot speak of being, neither can we speak of any correspondence between being and thought, or being and truth. In other words, Gorgias not only divorces thought from being, he also severs the link between words and the realities our words are meant to express. For Gorgias, words are independent and autonomous, without any reference to what is real. It is logical, then, for Gorgias to give exclusive importance to rhetoric. Although the words have no meaning or truth content, it can be used to control minds and manipulate people: it is “a great tool for domination; being so small and invisible, it is yet capable of accomplishing feats only the gods can do.” While undermining ethical values, rhetoric was exclusively used to further their political ambitions more by the disciples of Gorgias than he himself.

Though Sophists brought into philosophy certain regrettable attitudes and practices, we must admit that they initiated some other praiseworthy trends in the discipline. First, there was welcome shift of attention from the object to the subject. Second, as regards to method, there was a shift from the deductive to the empirico-deductive approach. Third, the “virtue” they were interested in was of the cheapest pragmatic variety, it was a beginning, all the same. Socrates would do full justice to this and thus would save and immortalize the best and noblest that there ever could have been in the early sophist spirit.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Analyse the concerns of Atomists.

2) What are the philosophical insights of Pythagoras?

1.7 LET US SUM UP

The pre-socratic philosophers looked in amazement the world around them and attempted to describe it in their own way. Through their observations they brought to light the perennial problems of philosophy such as, the fundamental principle of all things and its nature and the problem of the One and the many. Their answers may appear unsatisfactory or, at times unintelligent to our complex mind but they laid foundation for a true philosophy. After studying pre-socratic philosophy, one might wonder and echo the words of Blaise Pascal: “These whom we call ancient were really new in all things.” Or, the words of Francis Bacon: “The antiquity of history is the youth of the world. It is we who are the ancients.” If we look at the world, as did the pre-socratic philosophers, with a sense of wonderment and awe, we too might begin to contribute something to enrich true philosophy.

1.8 KEY WORDS

Ápeiron: That which is devoid of limit; in other words, the infinite. For Anaximander, this is the fundamental principle of all things. It is not only a material principle of infinite extension; it is also a principle characterized by the absence of any formal determination. It has no positive identity; it has no known elements.

Dialectical Method: A method of argument or exposition that systematically weighs contradictory facts or ideas with a view to the resolution of their real or apparent contradictions. Zeno employed this method to defend the philosophical ideas of Parmenides, *his master*.

Homeomerics: It is the “seeds” of all things. *Homeomerics* remains qualitatively the same even if they are divided into smaller and smaller parts. This term was used by Anaxagoras (christened by Aristotle) to explain the reality of change.

Sophism/sophistry: A deliberate and conscious invalid argument demonstrating ingenuity in reasoning, usually to mislead someone. It is also tendency “to deny the absolute and objective character of truth easily leads to the consequences that, instead of trying to *convince* anyone, the sophist/[sophistry] will try to *persuade* him or talk him over.”

Rhetoric: An art of persuading others by undermining logical arguments and emphasizing mere words in the arguments. It is a presentation of a subject than to the subject itself. The later sophists used this method of communication to advance their political ambitions.

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UNIT 2 SOCRATES

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

- To get to know in depth the Socratic Dialectical Method of thinking.
- To learn how the logical, epistemological, ethical, educational and political teachings of Socrates stand out as the beginnings of Western philosophy.
- To view the ideas of Socrates critically, with its merits and demerits.
- To learn from personal application the fact that philosophy requires also ethical commitment to the advancement of wisdom and a life of commitment to the good of others – both of which will make the thinker more useful for the humanity than a professional thinker who gets paid.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Socrates (469-399 B.C.E.) is generally acclaimed as the father of Western philosophy, although, as we know, there have been many thinkers in the Greek world before him. This is mainly because he was the teacher of Plato, who was a very influential thinker, whose many works are extant, and who mentions Socrates' teachings in many of his works and compares his own with those of his teacher. Still another reason for his fame as father of Western philosophy may be that he exhibited the philosophical attitude of distanced and unaffected intellectual reflection, moral courage, spirit of an educationist, etc. His courage before death by drinking poison is the clearest proof.

Secondly, as he was a street thinker not interested in remuneration for his teaching (unlike the Sophists who taught for money), he was recognized by all as someone different. So he could identify the best of minds and the most committed of persons, and attract them to his group of students. Through his students we know that he developed a philosophy of clarity. It won the attention and respect of thinking men everywhere through his own teachings and the teachings of his immediate followers, especially Plato and Aristotle. This clarity attracted the whole of the West through his followers. As the Arabic philosopher Avicenna translated the works of Aristotle into Latin in the middle ages, the Church took notice of the three great Socratic

philosophers (Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle). Again, these three were rediscovered during the Renaissance, and their rational, practical, and scientific ideas influenced the thinking and the governmental, religious, and educational institutions of the entire western world. From this historical point of view, Socrates remains even today the father of Western philosophy.

Thirdly, his Philosophy finds resonances even today. The whole trend of the Medieval and Modern thinkers, and of today's Analytical and Pragmatic philosophies, of seeking clarity in thought, language and morals, is prefigured in the Socratic rudiments. His penchant for logical arguments from experience gave rise to the inductive method. These add to his importance as the father of Western philosophy even today.

Life of Socrates

Almost nothing is known of the childhood or parentage of Socrates but it can be assumed from his later display of learning that he attended the schools of Athens. If so, he should have been from an aristocratic, or at least from a middle class, family. As a pupil of Archelaus during his youth, Socrates showed a great deal of interest in the scientific theories of Anaxagoras. But later he abandoned inquiries into the physical world for a dedicated investigation of the development of moral character.

a. **Military Hero.** Until at the age of eighteen he entered military service, he must have continued studying in the schools. It can be gathered from various sources that he served Athens in the warfare with Sparta, and also participated in the battles of Petidaea, Delium, and Amphipolis. During the battle of Petidaea he is supposed to have saved the life of the Athenian General, Alcibiades. Socrates dabbled in the political turmoil that consumed Athens after the War, then retired from active life to work as a stonemason and to raise his children with his wife, Xanthippe.

b. **Stonecutter.** Socrates worked from time to time as a stonecutter.

c. **Sculptor.** He completed two works of sculpture, "Hermes," the god, and "The Three Graces."

d. **Marriage.** Socrates married Xanthippe. She is said to have resented the fact that he charged no fees for his teaching. Later, in 415 B.C., Craco's Law authorized polygamy for the purpose of increasing the male population of the state. Socrates is believed to have taken a second wife at this time (Socrates 2010).

e. **Philosophical Career.** After inheriting a modest fortune from his father, the sculptor Sophroniscus, Socrates used his marginal financial independence as an opportunity to give full-time attention to inventing the practice of philosophical dialogue.

Trial and Death: The parents of his some of his students were displeased with his influence on their offspring, and his earlier association with opponents of the democratic regime had already made him a controversial political figure. Although the amnesty of 405 forestalled direct prosecution for his political activities, an Athenian jury found other charges: corrupting the youth and interfering with the religion of the city. Upon these was Socrates sentenced to death in 399

B.C.E. Accepting this outcome with remarkable grace, at the age of 70, he drank hemlock and died in the company of his friends and disciples. The trial and the last days and death of Socrates are described by Plato in his dialogues *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*.

His Students: Some of the famous men who studied with Socrates were: 1) Plato, considered one of the greatest philosophers in the history of civilization. 2) Alcibiades, a military genius. 3) Aristippus, founder of the Cyrenaic school of hedonism. 4) Antisthenes, founder of the Cynic school of philosophy. 5) Xenophon, a military leader and historian. 6) Crito, one of the wealthiest men in Athens.

2.2 THE SOCRATIC DIALECTICAL METHOD

As self-styled teacher of the people in the streets and the inquisitive who came in search of him, Socrates devoted most of his adult life to the development of a philosophy teach those followers who attached themselves to his dialogue discussion groups. Socrates was distinctive for:

Ethic of Knowledge: Linking Knowledge to Happiness (From Epistemology to Ethics). This was an attitude which influenced all later Greek philosophers. For Socrates, truthfulness is already based on truth as an ethical virtue. This was an improvement beyond the pre-Socratic thinkers. Socrates' core thesis was that humans do not knowingly act evil. We do what we believe is the best. Improper conduct is the product of ignorance. Lessen ignorance, improve society. He believed therefore that knowledge, or insight, was the foundation of virtue and happiness. In his use of critical reasoning, he showed his unwavering commitment to truth. Commitment to truth is the major virtue humans can have. This virtue, finally, tends us to happiness. The later insistence on morals as leading to happiness is based in Socratic thinking.

Contrast: An opposing view is that a better society must be maintained by punishments. This line of reasoning rests on the assumption that God gave us the free will to choose between good and evil. To restrain the evil; freedom has to be taken away from the guilty by incarceration or by the termination of life. To prevent the evil, freedom must be curtailed by pressures toward the moral rectitude by an elaborate system of rewards and punishments. The core postulates of this system are in the belief in God and in the belief of an afterlife. Thus, this system of rewards and punishments can include promises which fulfillment does not require tangible expenditures and cannot be verified, extended into eternity and intensified by fantasies of bliss in heaven and of suffering in hell. Within this cognitive framework, there is no escape, not even by suicide, which lands you in Hell. However, inflicting death upon others, earns you into paradise plus the seventy one maidens bonus.

Merit and Demerit: In comparison to this view offered for contrast, the Socratic ethic of knowledge has merits and demerits. The merit is that it is free of possible misconceptions in terms of tradition and theology. The demerit is that it has no theoretical foundations, except in the acceptance of dialogue as an effective methodology for eliciting knowledge from pupils.

Paradoxes: Many of the beliefs traditionally attributed to the historical Socrates have been characterized as "paradoxal" because they seem to conflict with common sense. The following

are among the so-called Socratic Paradoxes: (1) No one desires evil. (2) No one errs or does wrong willingly or knowingly. (3) Virtue is knowledge, and all virtue is knowledge. (4) Virtue is sufficient for happiness (Socrates Wiki 2011).

Development of the Inductive Method of Argument in Philosophy: Even today this is the method of scientific reasoning. In Socrates we have the beginning of an epistemology of empirically based thinking in the Western world. He practiced this method insistently, which helped Plato and Aristotle to further develop it from the way he practiced it.

The Dialectical (*Elenchos*) Method - a Method of Interrogation: Free-wheeling interrogation of and discussion with the aristocratic young citizens of Athens, insistently questioning their unwarranted confidence in the truth of popular opinions, led Socrates into his founding the method of dialogue as a method of thinking. It is cross-examination (*elenchos*) with the purpose of refutation. Induction is the exact methodology applied in dialogues. In Greek, *dia* means “between”, and *legein* means “collect, read, speak, etc.” Thus, the dialectical method is an inter-subjective methodology of knowing. Plato turned this method into the universal method of his Academy, for philosophical training and disputation. Aristotle followed him, improved this methodology into “walking dialogues” and found it most useful to reach the premises of any deductive argument. Jaakko Hintikka, one of the most successful logicians of the 20th and 21st centuries, makes use of the method of dialogue and constructs a method of interrogation for epistemology and logic. In his *Socratic Epistemology: Explorations of Knowledge Seeking by Questioning* (p. 35), he comments on the dialectical method of Socrates:

Socrates did not claim that he knew anything. In the manner of a practitioner of my interrogative method, what he did was to ask questions. I suspect that it is only in Plato’s dialogues that he was looking for a definition of knowledge. And Plato put this question (and other questions of definition) into Socrates’s mouth because Plato shared the widespread Greek assumption that the definition of X gives us the “blueprint” that enables us to bring about X. (See Hintikka 1974, ch. 1–2.) This applies both to the generic search for knowledge and to the quest of particular items of knowledge. Thus, insofar as Plato contemplated knowledge-seeking (information-seeking) by questioning in our sense, he would have had to say that we must know what we are looking for there and that it is this knowledge alone that can guide our search. (No wonder he was worried about Meno’s problem.) By the same token, all search for knowledge would have had to be guided by our knowledge of what knowledge is. This shows the importance and applicability of the dialectical method even today.

Rationalism: Socrates believed that man was capable of arriving at truth through the use of reason. He criticized anyone who used rhetoric to convince people. This went against the politicians of the day. This insistence on reason was thus also a contribution to politics.

Notions in the Practice of the Dialectical Method

a. Interrogation: Athens became the classroom of Socrates. He went about asking questions of authorities and of the man in the street in order to arrive at political and ethical truths. He questioned groups of his students as a means of instruction, to compel them to think a problem

through to a logical conclusion. His dialectic method, or method of investigating problems through dialogue discussions, came to be known as the Socratic method. It involved:

b. The Socratic Irony, the Method of Ignorance: Socrates pretended that he knew no answers. He assumed that ignorance and willingness to learn from others were the background for adroit questioning to reveal the truth or expose the error of the answers he received. He is supposed to have said, I know only that I do not know anything!

c. The Concept of Definition: The initial question usually required the definition of the concept. This gives clarity to thinking. Whatever one thinks must be defined as best as one can. The others have always a place to play in the clarity thus achieved.

d. Analysis: Subsequent questions elicited an analysis of the definition in all its implications.

e. Generalizations: After examining all of the particular applications and consequences of the concept, Socrates reasoned, or persuaded his students to reason, from the particular to the general, or by the process of induction, to reach a general conclusion.

According to one general characterization by Vlastos, the practice of the dialectical method has the following steps (Vlastos 1991):

1. Socrates' interlocutor asserts a thesis, for example 'Courage is endurance of the soul', which Socrates considers false and targets for refutation.
2. Socrates secures his interlocutor's agreement to further premises, for example 'Courage is a fine thing' and 'Ignorant endurance is not a fine thing'.
3. Socrates then argues, and the interlocutor agrees, that these further premises imply the contrary of the original thesis, in this case it leads to: 'courage is not endurance of the soul'.
4. Socrates then claims that he has shown that his interlocutor's thesis is false and that its contrary is true.

As with any method, this method too has defects. But as the first full-fledged method of knowledge in the West, the Socratic dialectical method has always its importance.

2.3 SYSTEMATIC DIVISIONS OF SOCRATES' PHILOSOPHY

Since Socrates left no literary legacy of his own, we are dependent upon writers contemporary to him, like Aristophanes and Xenophon, upon the writings of historians and of his students, and especially upon the writings of Plato, for our information about his life and thought. Major ideas in the Socratic philosophy are:

1. Philosophical Anthropology: The Proper Object of Study of Philosophy is Man. Socrates was not concerned with metaphysical questions as such. He believed that philosophy should achieve practical results in the form of greater well-being for man the individual and for mankind as a society. Hence, the proper study of philosophy is man. In pursuit of this study, Socrates' interests were centered in ethics and politics (Socrates 2011).

2. Natural Ethics: Socrates attempted to establish an ethical system based upon human reason rather than upon theological directives of the priests and rulers. He also insisted that knowledge is not for political power. Unlike the professional Sophists of the time, who acted everywhere as teachers, Socrates pointedly declined to accept payment for his work with students. Because of this lofty disdain for material success and the highest moral value of knowledge as virtue, many of his students were fanatically loyal to him. In the Socratic dialogues, his extended conversations with students, statesmen, and friends invariably aim at understanding and achieving virtue (Greek *aretê*) through the careful application of a dialectical method that employs critical inquiry to undermine the plausibility of widely-held doctrines.

3. Knowledge, Self-knowledge and Wisdom: Socrates asserted that the highest good for any human being is happiness. Whatever action a man chooses is motivated by his desire for happiness. Knowledge, virtue, and wisdom are all the same, since man chooses an action according to what he thinks will bring him the greatest happiness. Therefore the more a man knows, the greater his ability to reason out the correct choice and to choose those actions which truly bring happiness to him. The highest knowledge is possessed by that individual who truly knows himself. This knowledge constitutes ultimate wisdom. It enables man to act in a virtuous manner at all times, because he knows what will bring him true happiness (Socrates 2011).

4. Political Philosophy: Socrates did not approve of tyranny or of democracy. He believed that the best form of government was one ruled by an individual possessing the greatest ability, knowledge, and virtue.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Why is Socrates important for philosophy?

.....

2) Describe the dialectical method of Socrates.

.....

3) What is the importance of self-knowledge, according to Socrates?

.....

2.4 THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF SOCRATES

Socrates has tremendously influenced the education of the whole Western culture. The contributions of Socrates to education are as follows:

1. Qualities of the Socratic Teaching Method

The Socratic method offers the following advantages to teaching act:

- a. Problem-centered: The dialectic begins with a problem which must be analyzed, e.g. "What is your opinion about the nature of justice?"
- b. Based on Student Experience: The student or dialogue participant responds on the basis of his own knowledge and experience.
- c. Based on Critical Thinking: The student is held responsible for his statements. The teacher analyzes some of the possible consequences of the student's remarks. The emphasis is upon the thinking processes of the student, who must think for himself and accept the consequences of his logic (Socrates 2011).
- d. Teaching as a Drawing forth rather than a Telling: In the Socratic method the teacher does not tell the student the proper answer. He draws from the student's probable answer. Socrates brings in the following analogy. Knowledge / wisdom is the end result and aim of dialogue. It is the child. The nurse (Greek, *maia*) has a special function at the birth of a child. She helps the mother to bring the child out in a healthy manner. She pulls out the child. The student is the mother of the knowledge. The teacher acts as a *maia*. Hence the Socratic dialogical method of deriving knowledge is called the Maieutic Method. Thus Socrates, for the first time, gave great importance to the student and almost cast the teacher away from the central stage of knowing. A consequence of this is the following. If a teacher remains a student all through one's life, the teacher has some importance in the process of attainment of knowledge / wisdom.
- e. Learning Treated as Discovery: The student learns when he discovers the true generalization through his reasoning processes. Socrates believed that (1) destroying the illusion that we already comprehend the world perfectly and (2) honestly accepting the fact of our own ignorance, vital steps toward our acquisition of genuine knowledge, by discovering universal definitions of the key concepts governing human life. Thus, discovery never ends (SGP 2011).

2. The Purpose of Education

The aims of education as derived from Socratic thought are:

- a. Self-knowledge: The educated man is wise when he knows himself.
- b. Individual Moral Good: The acquisition of knowledge is valuable for man because it makes him virtuous and happy. Socrates repudiated any ornamental theory of knowledge. In similar fashion Socrates deplors also the use of knowledge merely for material success in life. Knowledge is ethically and morally important for all men. Only someone who has been earnest to achieve truth through continuous inquiry and dialogue is virtuous (Socrates 2011).
- c. Skill in Thinking: Each man must develop his skill in critically appraising propositions through the reasoning process.

2.5 LEARNING ABOUT SOCRATES FROM HIS FOLLOWERS

Interacting with an arrogantly confident young man in Euthyphro, for example, Socrates systematically refutes the superficial notion of piety (moral rectitude) as doing whatever is pleasing to the gods. He argued, efforts to define morality by reference to any external authority is inevitably founded in a logical dilemma about the origin of the good (SGP 2011).

Plato's *Apology* is an account of Socrates's (unsuccessful) speech in his own defense before the Athenian jury before his death; it includes a detailed description of the motives of philosophical activity as he practiced it, together with a passionate declaration of its value for life. The *Crito* reports that during Socrates's imprisonment he responded to friendly efforts to secure his escape by seriously debating whether or not it would be right for him to do so. He used even this opportunity to exercise the Maieutic Method. He concludes that an individual citizen, even when the victim of unjust treatment, can never be justified in refusing to obey the laws of the state.

The Socrates in the *Meno* tries to determine whether or not virtue can be taught, and this naturally leads to a careful investigation of the nature of virtue itself. Although his direct answer is that virtue is unteachable, Socrates does propose the doctrine of recollection to explain why we nevertheless are in possession of significant knowledge about such matters. Probably this doctrine is originally from Socrates, or Plato's own, put in the mouth of Socrates, or, ideally, both. Most remarkably, Socrates argues here that knowledge and virtue are so closely related that no human agent ever knowingly does evil. We all invariably do what we believe to be best. Improper conduct, then, can only be a product of our ignorance rather than a symptom of weakness of the will (Greek, *akrasia*). The same view is also defended in the *Protagoras*, along with the belief that all of the virtues must be cultivated together.

2.6 A CRITIQUE OF THE SOCRATIC DIALECTICAL METHOD

According to Jaakko Hintikka (2007 p. 74), the following may be considered to be some of the drawbacks of the dialectical method in general. (Quoting directly, we number the paragraphs.)

It is not clear in general what answers to more complex questions will look like logically, nor is it clear what their presuppositions might be. And even if answers to these questions were available, there apparently are no rules of logical inference that could parallel the relevant complex question–answer steps. This might seem to jeopardize the entire strategic analogy deduction and interrogative inquiry.

Other limitations are likewise conspicuous. Perhaps the most important shortcoming of first-generation epistemic logic confronts us when we begin to emulate Socrates and Aristotle and model all inquiry as a questioning process. Such a model is straightforward to implement as long as the inquirer is given a fixed conclusion that it be established through an interrogative process starting from given initial premises. This may be enough to answer *why*-questions through a questioning process. However, there does not seem to be any way of analyzing similarly the all-important method of answering questions—that is, initial “big” or principal questions, by means of a number of “small” or operative questions. This would be a serious limitation to any application of the logic of questions and answers to epistemology. In view of such applicational shortcomings of first-generation epistemic logic, it might in fact look as if the philosophical

community could be excused when it has so far turned a deaf ear to the interesting and important philosophical vistas suggested by the observations so far described.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What are the qualities of Socrates's teaching method?

.....

2) Give your criticism of Socratic dialectic method.

.....

2.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have studied the importance of Socrates to Western Philosophy. Then we have seen his life and his philosophical method. This was followed by an analysis of his philosophy and finally a critique of his method. The application of the Socratic dialectical method is to be found most famously in the class room, in legal courts and in psychotherapy. As an epistemology, it is the first of its kind in the history of Western philosophy. This is also the first philosophically formulated ethics in the West. His political and educational ideas had great influence during and after his life. The Socratic method has been made famous by the schools and works of Plato and Aristotle. Thus, Socrates remains the father of philosophy in the serious and life-involving meaning of the word.

2.8 KEY WORDS

Arête: (Greek, the goodness or excellence of a thing) The goodness or virtue of a person. In the thought of Plato and Aristotle virtue is connected with goodness.

Dialectical Method: It is the Socratic method (also known as method of elenchus, Socratic irony, or Socratic debate), named after the classical Greek philosopher Socrates, is a form of inquiry and debate between individuals with opposing viewpoints based on asking and answering questions to stimulate critical thinking and to illuminate ideas.

Paradox: A statement or proposition that, despite sound (or apparently sound) reasoning from acceptable premises, leads to a conclusion that seems senseless, logically unacceptable, or self-contradictory.

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UNIT 3 PLATO

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

- To study briefly the great contribution Plato has made to Philosophy and Western thought.
- To appreciate Plato as one of the greatest thinkers of all times.
- To acknowledge some of the mistakes in his vision and still to appreciate Plato's grand ideal.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Plato (429–347 BCE) is one of the most dazzling thinkers in the Western philosophical tradition and one of the most penetrating, wide-ranging, and influential authors in the history of philosophy. An Athenian citizen of high status, he displays in his works his absorption in the political events and intellectual movements of his time. The questions he raises are so profound. The strategies he uses for solving them are suggestive and provocative that educated readers of nearly every period. Most of the Western philosophers have in some way been influenced by him, and in practically every age there have been philosophers who regard themselves Platonists. He was not the first thinker or writer to whom the word “philosopher” should be applied. But he was so self-conscious about how philosophy should be conceived, and what its scope and ambitions properly are, and he so transformed the intellectual currents with which he grappled, that the subject of philosophy (as a rigorous and systematic examination of ethical, political, metaphysical, and epistemological issues, armed with a distinctive method) can be called his invention. Few other authors in the history of philosophy approximate him in depth and range: perhaps only Aristotle (who studied with him), Aquinas, and Kant would be generally agreed to be of the same rank (Kraut 2009).

3.2 INTRODUCTION TO HIS THOUGHTS

After the death of Socrates, Plato, the most famous of his pupils, carried on much of his former teacher's work and eventually founded his own school, the Academy, in 385 BCE. The Academy

would become in its time the most famous school in the classical world. The Academy lasted over nine hundred years and is often thought of as the first university. Its most famous pupil was Aristotle (Hooker 1996).

We know quite a lot about Plato's teachings, because he wrote dialogues between Socrates and others that would explore philosophical issues. These dialogues would be used in his school as starting points for discussion; these discussions and Plato's final word on the dialogues have all been lost to us. The Platonic dialogues consist of Socrates asking questions of another and proving, through these questions, that the other person has the wrong idea on the subject. Initially, Plato seems to have carried on the philosophy of Socrates, concentrating on the dialectical examination of basic ethical issues: What is friendship? What is virtue? Can virtue be taught? In these early Platonic dialogues, Socrates questions another person and proves, through these questions, that the other person has the wrong idea on the subject. These dialogues never answer the questions they begin with.

In the course of time, Plato later began to develop his own philosophy and the Socrates of the later dialogues does more teaching than questioning. The fundamental aspect of Plato's thought is the theory of "ideas" or "forms." Plato, like so many other Greek philosophers, was puzzled by the question of change in the physical world. Earlier Heraclitus had said that there is nothing certain or stable except the fact that things change, and Parmenides and the Eleatic philosophers claimed that all change, motion, and time was an illusion. Where was the truth? How can these two opposite positions be reconciled? Plato ingeniously combined the two; a discussion of Plato's theory of forms is below (Hooker 1996).

The most famous of Plato's dialogues is an immense dialogue called *The Republic*, is one of the single most influential works in Western philosophy (besides his account of Socrates's trial, *The Apology*). Essentially *The Republic* deals with the central problem of how to live a good life; this inquiry is shaped into the parallel questions (a) what is justice in the State, or what would an ideal State be like, and (b) what is a just individual? Naturally these questions also encompass many others, such as how the citizens of a state should be educated, what kinds of arts should be encouraged, what form its government should take, who should do the governing and for what rewards, what is the nature of the soul, and finally what (if any) divine sanctions and afterlife should be thought to exist. The dialogue, then, covers just about every aspect of Plato's thought. There are several central aspects to the dialogue that sum up Platonic thought extremely well: a.) what the nature of justice is; b.) the nature of an ideal republic; and c.) the allegory of the cave and the divided line, both of which explain Plato's theory of forms (Hooker 1996).

Plato wrote more than twenty dialogues covering a number of philosophical topics. Plato's writings are divided into three periods.

Early Period: *Apology*, *Charmides*, *Crito*, *Euthydemus*, *Euthyphro*, *Gorgias*, *Hippias Minor*, *Hippias Major*, *Ion*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Menexenus*, and *Protagoras*

Middle Period: *Cratylus*, *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, *Symposium* and *Theatetus*

Late Period: *Parmenides*, *Critias*, *Law*, *Philebus*, *Politicus*, *Timaeus* and *Sophist*

3.3 MAIN THOUGHTS

Following Richard Hooker (1996) we give the main notions of Plato which have influenced the whole Western philosophical world significantly.

The Nature of Justice: The question which opens this immense dialogue is: what is justice? Several inadequate definitions are put forward, but the most emphatically presented definition is given by a young Sophist, Thrasymachus. He defines justice as whatever the strongest decide it is, and that the strong decide that whatever is in their best interest is just. Socrates dismisses this argument by proving that the strong rarely figure out what is in their best interest, and this can't be just since justice is a good thing.

The Analogy of the Ideal Republic: After Thrasymachus leaves in a royal huff, Socrates starts the question all over again. If one could decide what a just state is like, one could use that as an analogy for a just person. Plato then embarks on a long exposition about how a state might embody the four great virtues: courage, wisdom, temperance, and justice. The remainder of the dialogue is a long exposition of what justice in a state is; this section is considered one of the first major, systematic expositions of abstract political theory. This type of thinking, that is, speculating about an ideal state or republic, is called "utopian" thinking (utopia is a Greek word which means "no-place").

Plato (speaking on behalf of Socrates) divides human beings up based on their innate intelligence, strength, and courage. Those who are not overly bright, or strong, or brave, are suited to various productive professions: farming, smithing, building, etc. Those who are somewhat bright, strong, and especially courageous are suited to defensive and policing professions. Those who are extraordinarily intelligent, virtuous, and brave, are suited to run the state itself; that is, Plato's ideal state is an aristocracy, a Greek word which means "rule by the best." The lower end of human society, which, as far as Plato is concerned, consists of an overwhelming majority of people in a state, he calls the "producers," since they are most suited for productive work. The middle section of society, a smaller but still large number of people, make up the army and the police and are called "Auxiliaries." The best and the brightest, a very small and rarefied group, are those who are in complete control of the state permanently; Plato calls these people "Guardians." In the ideal state, "courage" characterizes the Auxiliaries; "wisdom" displays itself in the lives and government of the Guardians. A state may be said to have "temperance" if the Auxiliaries obey the Guardians in all things and the Producers obey the Auxiliaries and Guardians in all things. A state may be said to be intemperate if any of the lower groups do not obey one of the higher groups. A state may be said to be just if the Auxiliaries do not simply obey the Guardians, but enjoy doing so, that is, they don't grumble about the authority being exercised over them; a just state would require that the Producers not only obey the Auxiliaries and Guardians, but that they do so willingly (Hooker 1996).

When the analogy is extended to the individual human being, Plato identifies the intellect with the Guardians, the spirit or emotions with the Auxiliaries, and the bodily appetites with the Producers, something similar to the caste-system in India. Therefore, an individual is courageous if his or her spirit is courageous and an individual is wise if his or her intellect is wise. Temperance occurs when the emotions are ruled over by the intellect, and the bodily appetites are ruled over by the emotions and especially the intellect. An individual may be said to be just when the bodily appetites and emotions are not only ruled over by the intellect, but do so willingly and without coercion.

The Allegory of the Cave: Far and away the most influential passage in Western philosophy ever written is Plato's discussion of the prisoners of the cave and his abstract presentation of the divided line. For Plato, human beings live in a world of visible and intelligible things. The visible world is what surrounds us: what we see, what we hear, what we experience; this visible world is a world of change and uncertainty. The intelligible world is made up of the unchanging

products of human reason: anything arising from reason alone, such as abstract definitions or mathematics, makes up this intelligible world, which is the world of reality. The intelligible world contains the eternal "Forms" (in Greek, idea) of things; the visible world is the imperfect and changing manifestation in this world of these unchanging forms. For example, the "Form" or "Idea" of a horse is intelligible, abstract, and applies to all horses; this Form never changes, even though horses vary wildly among themselves—the Form of a horse would never change even if every horse in the world were to vanish. An individual horse is a physical, changing object that can easily cease to be a horse (if, for instance, it's dropped out of a fifty story building); the Form of a horse, or "horseness," never changes. As a physical object, a horse only makes sense in that it can be referred to the "Form" or "Idea" of horseness (Hooker 1996).

Plato imagines these two worlds, the sensible world and the intelligible world, as existing on a line that can be divided in the middle: the lower part of the line consists of the visible world and the upper part of the line makes up the intelligible world. Each half of the line relates to a certain type of knowledge: of the visible world, we can only have opinion (in Greek: doxa); of the intelligible world we achieve "knowledge" (in Greek, episteme). Each of these divisions can also be divided in two. The visible or changing world can be divided into a lower region, "illusion," which is made up of shadows, reflections, paintings, poetry, etc., and an upper region, "belief," which refers to any kind of knowledge of things that change, such as individual horses. "Belief" may be true some or most of the time but occasionally is wrong (since things in the visible world change); belief is practical and may serve as a relatively reliable guide to life but doesn't really involve thinking things out to the point of certainty. The upper region can be divided into, on the lower end, "reason," which is knowledge of things like mathematics but which require that some postulates be accepted without question, and "intelligence," which is the knowledge of the highest and most abstract categories of things, an understanding of the ultimate good (Hooker 1996).

Plato's creative story combines nicely his metaphysics, epistemology and some of his ethical ideas. The story's setting involves human beings living in a cave that have been bound in chains since childhood. As the story develops, we find that one person is released from the chains by another. This story is very rich in symbolism. Plato uses the cave as a symbol for the realm of existence of the senses. When the person that is released comes out of the cave and into the world above the cave, he or she has moved symbolically into another realm of existence. Above the cave is symbolic for the world of the Forms. This is a drastic oversimplifying of the allegory of the cave to focus our attention on the metaphysical implications. The more important issues of enlightenment will be discussed in the presentation on epistemology. When the person that is chained finally escapes from the cave and becomes enlightened he realizes that he must go back and try to help the others. This responsibility focuses on the correct use of wisdom from an ethical standpoint.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What do the Platonic dialogues consist of?

.....

.....

2) Briefly describe Plato's understanding on the Nature of Justice.

.....

.....

3.4 PLATO'S DUALISM

Things and Forms: To understand Plato's worldview, we can think of two different realms of existence: the world of the senses and the world of forms. The physical world, the world of the senses, is always changing, while the world of the forms remains constant.

It is important for us to understand the distinction that he makes between sensible "things" and "forms." Sensible things are those aspects of reality which we perceive through our senses: a tree, a car, a table, chair, a beautiful model, etc. Everything that we experience in the world of sensation is constantly changing (the table will start to get worn down, the beautiful model will age with time), imperfect and often fleeting. This is the realm of appearances, and we all know that appearances can be deceptive (Russo 2000).

Whereas things change, decay, and ultimately fade away, the Forms (the Greek term is Eidos which is sometimes translated as Ideas) are eternal and unchanging. This is the realm of perfect concepts and is grasped, not by the senses, but by the reason.

The Two World Theory: The realm of the senses and the realm of the forms are two most fundamental levels of reality. These two realms can be contrasted in the following way:

Sensible World	World of the Forms
appearance (seems real)	reality (is real)
immanent (within space and time)	transcendent (beyond space and time)
becoming (ever changing)	being (eternal and unchanging)
particular and imperfect	absolute and perfect
many instances (copy; imitation)	one essence (archetype)
perceived by senses	known by reason
subjective (dependent upon my perception)	objective (exist independently of my mind)
e.g., a table, a just act, a beautiful model, a circle	e.g., Table, Justice, Beauty, Circle, Human Being.

For Plato it is the world of the Forms (the realm of being) that is "really real" world; the world that we perceive with our senses (the realm of becoming) is little more than an imitation of this ultimate reality. He believes that for particular and imperfect thing that exists in the sensible realm (a table, a just act, a beautiful model, a circle) there is a corresponding absolute and perfect Form (Table, Justice, Beauty, a Circle).

In order to explain how sensible things come into being, Plato relies on the idea of participation. A table comes into being, he believes, because it participates in the form of Tableness. In the *Phaedo* Plato uses the metaphor of participation to explain the existence of particular beautiful things: "It seems to me that whatever else is beautiful apart from absolute beauty is beautiful because it partakes of that absolute beauty, and for no other reason. Do you accept this kind of causality? Yes, I do.

Well, now, that is as far as my mind goes; I cannot understand these other ingenious theories of causation. If someone tells me that the reason why a given object is beautiful is that it has a gorgeous color or shape or any other such attribute, I disregard all these other explanations---I find them all confusing---and I cling simply and straightforwardly and no doubt foolishly to the explanation that the one thing that makes the object beautiful is the presence in it or association

with it, in whatever way the relation comes about, of absolute beauty. I do not go so far as to insist upon the precise details---only upon the fact that it is by beauty that beautiful things are beautiful. This, I feel, is the safest answer for me or anyone else to give, and I believe that while I hold fast to this I cannot fall; it is safe for me or for anyone else to answer that it is by beauty that beautiful things are beautiful. Don't you agree?" (Plato, *Phaedo* 100CE)

Significance of the Two World Theory

But why did Plato need to devise such an elaborate metaphysical system to ground his ethics? The answer seems to be that he trying to respond to the relativism of the Sophists, who were persuasively arguing that true and false, good and bad, were simply matters of opinion. Plato clearly recognized that if this kind of relativism was accepted that it would lead to the death of philosophy and all legitimate attempts at moral discourse. To save the philosophical enterprise, Plato had to devise an idea of truth and goodness that was independent of individual perceptions of truth and goodness. Thus he needed to anchor these concepts in a transcendent realm---the world of the forms. While the Sophists, then, would maintain that there potentially could be as many legitimate ideas of justice or beauty as there are individuals, for Plato there is Justice and Beauty---objective and transcendent realities that have nothing to do with my individual perceptions or opinions (Russo 2000).

3.5 SEEKING GOODNESS AND TRUTH

Many people associate Plato with a few central doctrines that are advocated in his writings: The world that appears to our senses is in some way defective and filled with error, but there is a more real and perfect realm, populated by entities (called "forms" or "ideas") that are eternal, changeless, and in some sense paradigmatic for the structure and character of our world. Among the most important of these abstract objects (as they are now called, because they are not located in space or time) are goodness, beauty, equality, bigness, likeness, unity, being, sameness, difference, change, and changelessness. (These terms — "goodness", "beauty", and so on — are often capitalized by those who write about Plato, in order to call attention to their exalted status; similarly for "Forms" and "Ideas.") The most fundamental distinction in Plato's philosophy is between the many observable objects that appear beautiful (good, just, unified, equal, big) and the one object that is what beauty (goodness, justice, unity) really is, from which those many beautiful (good, just, unified, equal, big) things receive their names and their corresponding characteristics. Nearly every major work of Plato is, in some way, devoted to or dependent on this distinction. Many of them explore the ethical and practical consequences of conceiving of reality in this dualistic way.

Plato invites us to transform our values by taking to heart the greater reality of the forms and the defectiveness of the corporeal world. We must recognize that the soul is a different sort of object from the body — so much so that it does not depend on the existence of the body for its functioning, and can in fact grasp the nature of the forms far more easily when it is not encumbered by its attachment to anything corporeal. In a few of Plato's works, we are told that the soul always retains the ability to recollect what it once grasped of the forms, when it was disembodied (see especially *Meno*), and that the lives we lead are to some extent a punishment or reward for choices we made in a previous existence (see especially the final pages of *Republic*). But in many of Plato's writings, it is asserted or assumed that true philosophers — those who recognize how important it is to distinguish the one (the one thing that goodness is, or virtue is, or courage is) from the many (the many things that are called good or virtuous or

courageous) — are in a position to become ethically superior to unenlightened human beings, because of the greater degree of insight they can acquire. To understand which things are good and why they are good (and if we are not interested in such questions, how can we become good?), we must investigate the form of Goodness (Kraut 2009) and that of Truth. Thus Plato urges us not to get stuck with the mundane and ordinary, but to lift our eyes to the eternal, to the absolute Truth and Goodness.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Briefly state the two world theory of Plato.

.....

2) How is Plato's Philosophy related to our search for Goodness and Truth?

.....

3.6 PLATO ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PHILOSOPHY

For Plato “the man who is ready to taste every form of knowledge, is glad to learn and never satisfied - he's the man who deserves to be called a philosopher”. In other words, philosophers are “Those whose passion is to see the truth.”

Plato, as it is to be expected, thinks highly of the philosophers. They are best suited to rule the world and to solve its problems. “The society we have described can never grow into a reality or see the light of day, and there will be no end to the troubles of states, or indeed, my dear Glaucon, of humanity itself, till philosophers are kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands, while the many natures now content to follow either to the exclusion of the other are forcibly debarred from doing so. This is what I have hesitated to say so long, knowing what a paradox it would sound; for it is not easy to see that there is no other road to happiness, either for society or the individual.” He adds further: “there are some who are naturally fitted for philosophy and political leadership, while the rest should follow their lead and let philosophy alone.”

He criticises the society that does not give due respect to philosophers. Let us follow Plato with his long quote: 'Suppose the following to be the state of affairs on board a ship or ships. The captain is larger and stronger than any of the crew, but a bit deaf and short-sighted, and doesn't know much about navigation. The crew are quarrelling with each other about how to navigate the ship, each thinking he ought to be at the helm; they know no navigation and cannot say that anyone ever taught it them, or that they spent any time studying it; indeed they say it can't be taught and are ready to murder any one who says it can. They spend all their time milling around the captain and trying to get him to give them the wheel. If one faction is more successful than another, their rivals may kill them and throw them overboard, lay out the honest captain with drugs and drink, take control of the ship, help themselves to what's on board, and behave as if they were on a drunken pleasure-cruise. Finally, they reserve their admiration for the man who knows how to lend a hand in controlling the captain by force or fraud; they praise his seamanship

and navigation and knowledge of the sea and condemn everyone else as useless. They have no idea that the true navigator must study the seasons of the year, the sky, the stars, the winds and other professional subjects, if he is really fit to control a ship; and they think that it's quite impossible to acquire professional skill in navigation (quite apart from whether they want it exercised) and that there is no such thing as an art of navigation. In these circumstances aren't the sailors on any ship bound to regard the true navigator as a gossip and a star-gazer, of no use to them at all?

'Yes, they are,' Adeimantus agreed

'I think you probably understand, without any explanation, that my illustration is intended to show the present attitude of society towards the true philosopher'

He holds clearly that philosophers are necessary for the society. "And tell him it's quite true that the best of the philosophers are of no use to their fellows; but that he should blame, not the philosophers, but those who fail to make use of them." (Plato)

3.7 CRITICISM AND COMMENT

There are several ideas of Pythagoras that can be seen to have a marked influence on Plato's Middle and Later period writings:

- The Dualism of Body and Soul
- Women would be allowed in this body
- The division of human kind being divided into three basic types: Tradesman –lowest type; Persons that have an ambitious and/or Competitive spirit –next highest type; Persons who prefer Contemplation –Highest type
- Knowledge and a philosophic life are necessary for salvation of the soul
- The organization of a political body that would be a salvation for its members
- This society would hold all possessions in common
- The Transmigration of Souls

In short we can say that Plato has brought in the dualism of body and soul, world and spirit or material and spiritual. In this way, he has exalted the spiritual and demeaned the material. So even today many of us see the body as evil, the world as bad and the material as illusory. From this it follows that women are inferior and contemplation is better. Every system today has been influenced by Plato. That is why Paul Ricoeur holds that Christianity has moved away from its original vision and has become today "Platonism for the masses." This is a negative contribution of Plato.

On the positive side, we must acknowledge the tremendous philosophical contribution he has made to Western thought. He has influenced every intellectual field of the Western civilization. In fact the great British Mathematician and Philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, has said it simply: "All Western Philosophy consists of footnotes to Plato."

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Who are philosophers, according to Plato?

.....

2) What is "Platonism for the masses?"

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

3.8 LET US SUM UP

We have taken up, in this unit, some of the key notions of Plato and its impact on us. Plato has been one of the greatest thinkers of Western Philosophy.

3.9 KEY WORDS

Dualism: The division of dualism into two opposed or contrasted aspects, the spiritual and the material. There is no relationship between the two.

Forms: Forms (*Eidos*) is the philosophical concept of Plato regarding the perfect and imperfect objects of this world. The perfect belongs to the World of Forms and the Imperfect belongs to our world. The Imperfect are simply copies of the perfect that exists in the World of *Eidos*. As we see in the Allegory of the cave, the Perfect world belongs to the world with sunlight where the free man (Socrates of Athens) is blinded by the highest luminosity of the sun which is the truth. The Imperfect world is in the cave where the prisoners sees the shadows as the reality of their lives.

Utopia: An ideally perfect place, especially in its social, political, and moral aspects.

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UNIT 4 ARISTOTLE

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to analyse the philosophy of the great Greek philosopher Aristotle. It is worth saying a word about Aristotle's approach to philosophy. His very name suggests to some people the idea of a dogmatic system of rigid doctrines. This is a misleading idea. Aristotle's manner is far from dogmatic: he is always reopening questions and admitting difficulties. Nor is his method dogmatic. He does not argue arrogantly from premises laid down by him as self-evident. He considers carefully what his predecessors have said and what ordinary men say, he assumes that their divergent views will all have some element of truth in them, and he seeks to elicit reasonable solutions to problems by clarifying the issues and qualifying or refining the various inconsistent solutions that have been offered. This unit introduces basic ideas of Aristotle. Throughout this unit we are to analyse the universality of his ideas, which were later taken up and grown up by so many great philosophers in the Western tradition.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Among the pioneers of human knowledge Aristotle was undoubtedly, the greatest. Aristotle was a master of dialectic. He was a great observer, a various reader and specialist both in natural sciences as well as in philosophy. His philosophy included almost all the sciences and humanities such as logic, mathematics, physics, biology and psychology, metaphysics and ethics, politics and aesthetics. His range was encyclopaedic, original as well as creative. His position in the history of Philosophy is unique. From the criteria of breadth, originality and influence Aristotle was undoubtedly, "master of those who know."

Life

Aristotle, (384-322 B.C.) was the son of a doctor of Stagira in northern Greece. For twenty years, from 367, he was a member of Plato's Academy. When Plato died and Speusippus became head of the Academy, Aristotle left Athens and went first to Assos (on the coast of Asia Minor) and then to Lesbos. About 342 he was invited by King Philip of Macedonia to go there to supervise the education of the King's son, Alexander. A few years later he returned to Athens to found a new school, which became known as the Lyceum or Peripatos. The school flourished; but in 323 Aristotle left Athens for political reasons and retired to Euboea. There he died in 322.

Works

It has been said that Aristotle wrote as many as 400 books. The important works are as follows:-

Logic: Aristotle's views concerning logic are available in his work *Organon*. This work includes categories, rules of interpretations, analytic and fallacies etc. This great work is divided into different books on these different topics.

Metaphysics: '*On Metaphysics*' includes as many as 14 books of Aristotle.

Ethics: Aristotle's famous work *Nicomachean ethics* consists of 10 books on different topics concerning ethics. Another important work on ethics is *Eudemian Ethics*.

Politics: Aristotle's famous book *Politics* consists of 8 books. Besides this important work he also wrote another book entitled '*On the Constitution of Athens*.'

Psychology: Aristotle's famous work '*On the Soul*' consists of 8 books different topics concerning human psychology. Besides, he also wrote small independent treatises on memory, dream etc.

Natural Sciences: *Physics* (eight books of which book VII is an interpolation); *Astronomy* (four books); *Origin and Decay* (two books); *Meteorology* (four books); *Cosmology* (spurious); *Botany* (spurious); *History of Animals* (ten books, Book X spurious); *On the parts of Animals* (four books); *On the Progression of Animals* (not genuine, according to some); *On the Origin of Animal* (five books); *On the Locomotion of Animals* (spurious).

4.2 CATEGORIES

The initial book in Aristotle's collected logical works is *The Categories*, an analysis of predication generally. It begins with a distinction among three ways in which the meaning of different uses of a predicate may be related to each other: *homonymy*, *synonymy*, and *paronymy* (in some translations, "equivocal," "univocal," and "derivative"). *Homonymous* uses of a predicate have entirely different explanations, as in "With all that money, she's really loaded," and "After all she had to drink, she's really loaded." *Synonymous* uses have exactly the same account, as in "Cows are mammals," and "Dolphins are mammals." *Paronymous* attributions have distinct but related senses, as in "He is healthy," and "His complexion is healthy." It is important in every case to understand how this use of a predicate compares with its other uses.

So long as we are clear about the sort of use we are making in each instance, Aristotle proposed that we develop descriptions of individual things that attribute to each predicates (or categories) of ten different sorts. Substance is the most crucial among these ten, since it describes the thing in terms of what it most truly is. For Aristotle, primary substance is just the individual thing itself, which cannot be predicated of anything else. But secondary substances are predicable, since they include the species and genera to which the individual thing belongs. Thus, the attribution of substance in this secondary sense establishes the essence of each particular thing.

The other nine categories—quantity, quality, relative, where, when, being in a position, having, acting on, and being affected by—describe the features which distinguish this individual

substance from others of the same kind; they admit of degrees and their contraries may belong to the same thing. Used in combination, the ten kinds of predicate can provide a comprehensive account of what any individual thing is.

4.3 METAPHYSICS

Aristotle expresses two views about "first philosophy" (the name "metaphysics" was given by an editor to the treatise on first philosophy because it came after - *meta* - the Physics in his edition). One view, already mentioned, is that it is the study of changeless, separable substance, that is, theology. The other is that it is not a departmental science dealing with a particular kind of being, but that it studies being as such, together with concepts (for example, unity, identity) and principles (for example, the law of contradiction) which are common to all departmental sciences. Aristotle is not very successful in reconciling these two views.

Form and Matter

A table is wood and glue put together in a certain way. Aristotle distinguishes as separate aspects of the table its matter (the wood and glue) and its form (how it is put together, its structure). Many of his central ideas - and of his puzzles - are connected with this distinction. **(a) Form is immanent:** the form of table exists only as the form of this table or that table, that is, as the form of certain matter. **(b) Form or structure** is normally determined by function. It is because of what it has to do that a table has a flat top and four legs. **(c) Matter** is "for the sake of" form, not vice versa. If you want an axe - something for cutting down trees - you must of course use iron to make it; but there can be iron without there being an axe. So to state the form or function of something explains it far more than stating what it is made of; the form implies the appropriate matter in a way in which the matter does not imply the form. **(d) Wood and glue**, the matter of a table, are not matter in an absolute sense. In a piece of wood we can again draw a distinction between form and matter, since wood, like everything else, is made of earth, air, fire and water (or of some of these) combined in a certain way. Nor are these four elements pure matter. They can change into one another. This implies a persistent underlying stuff capable of receiving the form of earth, air, etc. but in itself without any form or definite character. This is what Aristotle calls first (or "prime") matter, a characterless substrate which never actually exists on its own but only in the form of earth, air etc. **(e) Besides** pressing the distinction of matter and form to the extreme concept of prime matter, Aristotle also uses it by analogy in quite different problems. Thus in the definition of a species he treats the genus as the matter and the differentia as the form: the genus is relatively indeterminate, the differentia gives its definite character to the species. This is typical of Aristotle's way of extending the application of key concepts, - which adds a certain unity to his thought at the cost of some obscurity. **(f) So far** form has been the correlative of matter, the form of some matter. Aristotle raises the question whether there can be form without matter and says that there can. But his form without-matter is very different from a Platonic Form. God is form without matter.

Actuality and Potentiality

Referring to 'Potentiality,' this is what a thing is capable of doing or being acted upon, if the conditions are right and it is not prevented by something else. For example, the seed of a plant in the soil is potentially (*dynamei*) plant, and if is not prevented by something, it will become a plant. Potentially beings can either 'act' (*poiein*) or 'be acted upon' (*paschein*), which can be either innate or learned. For example, the eyes possess the potentiality of sight (innate – being

acted upon), while the capability of playing the flute can be possessed by learning (exercise – acting).

Actuality is the fulfilment of the end of the potentiality. Because the end (telos) is the principle of every change and for the sake of the end exists potentiality, therefore actuality is the end. Referring then to our previous example, we could say that an actuality is when a plant does one of the activities that plants do.

In summary, the matter used to make a house has potentiality to be a house and both the activity of building and the form of the final house are actualities, which is also a final cause or end. Then Aristotle proceeds and concludes that the actuality is prior to potentiality in formula, in time and in substantiality.

The Four ‘Causes’

Aristotle proposed in Physics II, 3 that we employ four very different kinds of explanatory principle to the question of why a thing is, the four causes:

- **The material cause** is the basic stuff out of which the thing is made. The material cause of a house, for example, would include the wood, metal, glass, and other building materials used in its construction. All of these things belong in an explanation of the house because it could not exist unless they were present in its composition.
- **The formal cause** is the pattern or essence in conformity with which these materials are assembled. Thus, the formal cause of our exemplary house would be the sort of thing that is represented on a blueprint of its design. This, too, is part of the explanation of the house, since its materials would be only a pile of rubble (or a different house) if they were not put together in this way.
- **The efficient cause** is the agent or force immediately responsible for bringing this matter and that form together in the production of the thing. Thus, the efficient cause of the house would include the carpenters, masons, plumbers, and other workers who used these materials to build the house in accordance with the blueprint for its construction. Clearly the house would not be what it is without their contribution.
- Lastly, **the final cause** is the end or purpose for which a thing exists, so the final cause of our house would be to provide shelter for human beings. This is part of the explanation of the house's existence because it would never have been built unless someone needed it as a place to live.

Causes of all four sorts are necessary elements in any adequate account of the existence and nature of the thing, Aristotle believed, since the absence or modification of any one of them would result in the existence of a thing of some different sort. Moreover, an explanation that includes all four causes completely captures the significance and reality of the thing itself.

4.4 CLASSIFICATION OF SCIENCES

A survey of Aristotle's work in special fields can conveniently be prefaced by an account of how he classifies the various branches of inquiry, a classification of considerable historical importance. His basic division is into **theoretical**, **practical** and **productive** sciences. Theoretical science studies "what cannot be otherwise" and aims simply at truth. The Theoretical sciences, which are concerned with pure, abstract knowledge. The Theoretical sciences enumerated by Aristotle are: mathematics, physics, biology and psychology, and first philosophy

or what is known as metaphysics. Practical sciences are to do with "what can be otherwise" and are ultimately aimed at action; the most important practical sciences are ethics and politics. Productive sciences, in which knowledge is subordinated to the creation of beauty. Productive sciences are concerned with making things.

4.5 LOGIC

Logic is regarded by Aristotle not as a substantive part of philosophy but as ancillary to all parts. For it studies forms of reasoning and expression common to various subject-matters, and a grasp of it is pre-requisite for the student of any topic. This view of logic is reflected in the traditional name of Aristotle's logical works - the "*Organon*" (that is, tool or instrument).

The *Prior Analytics* contains Aristotle's great contribution to formal logic, his theory of the syllogism. This is a purely formal system of remarkable rigour but limited scope. The limitations are that it handles only certain kinds of statement and that the inferences it studies are all inferences from two such statements to a third. The statements in a categorical syllogism all have one of the following forms: all A is B, no A is B, some A is not B. Modal syllogisms bring in such forms as "all A may be B" and all A must be B". Aristotle works out all possible combinations of premises and conclusions, determines which syllogisms are valid, and investigates some of the logical relations between different syllogisms.

The *Posterior Analytics* contains Aristotle's "logic of science." His account of the form a completed science should take is much influenced by the model of geometry and rests on the view that there are in nature "real kinds" whose essence we can know. A given branch of science is about some limited - objects. It starts from principles and axioms common to all sciences, some peculiar to this one - and from definitions of the objects being studied. It then demonstrates by syllogisms that properties necessarily belong to the objects in question. This seems remote from what scientists do, and indeed from what Aristotle does in his scientific works; but it must be remembered that it expresses an ideal for the exposition of a completed science rather than a programme for investigators.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What are the categories in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*?

2) Explain Aristotle's understanding of causality.

4.6 THEOLOGY - NATURE OF GOD

Aristotle's metaphysics culminates in theology. God according to him, is an eternal unmoved mover, that which causes all motion but which is not moved himself. Thus, He is the first cause

of motion in the world. He is pure form, unadulterated by matter. He is complete actuality. He is substance per excellence. It is thought-thinking-thought. In the words of Aristotle "He must be itself that thought thinks; and its thinking is thinking on thinking". Thus God's thought is intuitive. It is reflective thought.

Following are the features of God according to Aristotle:

- **God is the Prime mover** - The actualization of the world becomes possible through the dynamism and motion released in the matter. Matter in motion takes on various forms and the diversity of objects of the world is due to different ratio proportion of matter and form in various objects. However, the initial push or motion provided to matter is by Pure Form, that is, God. Accordingly, God is the prime mover of this world.
- **God is the Apex of World process**- This world is a becoming and evolution in which the lower forms are superseded the higher. Now God comes at the pinnacle of this process. Therefore, God is the highest manifestation of the world processes.
- **God is the Formal Cause of the World**-Since matter is indefinite and undifferentiated which is made definite and particular: by imposition of forms, God which is Form of all forms is the formal cause of the world.
- **God is the Efficient Cause of the World**-Since it is through the agency of God that the process of world is initiated and maintained. God is also the efficient cause of the world.
- **God is the Final Cause of the World**-Since God is the apex of world evolution and since God is the Highest manifestation of world process, God is also the final cause or the aim of the world.
- **God is not a person**-Aristotle denies personality to God, because, according to him, God is pure form and is lacking in particularity. Therefore, it cannot be a person. Secondly, in order to be a person God must admit in itself the materialness and this will contradict Aristotle's conception of God.

4.7 PHYSICS

The study of physics, or nature, includes the study of living things, but it will be convenient to treat Aristotle's biology and psychology separately from his more general physical works. The Physics and connected works contain discussion and analysis of such concepts as nature, change, chance, time, place, continuity, infinity, growth; proofs that movement is eternal and that there is an eternal Prime Mover; and much doctrine as to the actual constitution and workings of the universe. Physics, according to Aristotle, is the science of Nature. He rejects the old concept of matter formed out of Atoms. He was against both Atomism and mechanism. Matter, according to him, is more dynamic. Motion includes all kinds of change. Matter is the vehicle of motion. Motion is, "the realisation of the possible." Motion is of four kinds:

- Substantial motion or the motion of origin and decay.
- Quantitative motion or the motion involved in change by addition and subtraction.
- Qualitative motion or the motion involved in transformation of one thing into another.
- Locomotion or change of place.

Qualities of thing, according to Aristotle, are not merely subjective; they are real qualities of the things in themselves. Change, therefore, cannot be explained mechanically, there are absolute qualitative changes in matter. Nature is dynamic rather than static, teleological and not mechanical, qualitative rather than quantitative. The universe is eternal, without origin or destruction. Earth is the centre of universe. Then come, the celestial spheres which are followed

by sphere of stars. God encompasses the outermost sphere of fixed stars and causes them to move.

4.8 BIOLOGY - BODY AND SOUL

Aristotle is known as the founder of systematic and comparative zoology. His biology is opposed to quantitative and mechanical conception of nature. According to him it is qualitative, dynamic and teleological. The body is an Organon or instrument of the soul. It is meant for the use of the soul. Soul moves body and determines the principle of life. Thus, Aristotle's biology has been termed as vitalism. Body and soul form an indivisible unity. In this unity the soul is the controlling guiding principle. The whole is prior to the parts and the parts realised the purpose of the whole.

Thus the body is the instrument for the realization of the purposes of the soul. Where there is life, there is soul. Thus, corresponding to different forms of life, there are different grades or degrees of soul. As soul and body constitute one unit, neither there can be a body without soul nor a soul without body. Again, since every being has a different body and therefore a different soul, a human soul cannot enter the body of a horse. In this series of souls there is a gradual ascending order from lowest to the highest. This series starts from the plant soul and rises to the human soul. In man the plant soul governs the functions of nutrition, growth and reproduction while the human soul governs higher powers.

4.9 PSYCHOLOGY

The word "*psyche*", commonly translated "soul", really has a wider meaning; plants as well as animals have psyche, they are living. Living things can be ordered according to complexity of their powers. Some (plants) have only the power of nutrition and reproduction others have also the power of perception, desire and movement; men have in addition the power of thought. Aristotle's main discussion of these various psychical functions is in the *De Anima*, which also contains his general account Mind-Body Dualism

In the field of psychology Aristotle has discovered ideas concerning sensations, perception, imagination, feelings, memory, emotions, thinking and almost all other psychological processes. The soul of man, according to him, resembles the plant soul so far as it controls the lower vital functions. The animal soul in man works through the faculties of perception. Sense perception is change produced in the soul by the perceived thing. The soul is informed about the qualities of things through the sense organs. Heart is the organ of common sense. It is the meeting place of all the sensations which are then combined to form total picture of an object. Heart again, gives an idea concerning number, size, shape, motion and rest etc. The feelings of pleasure and pain are connected with perception. When functions are furthered we feel pleasure and we feel pain. Feelings again, arouse desire and Desire is the result of perception of desirable object. It is accompanied by deliberation or rational will. Reason, again, is the characteristic of human soul. It is the faculty of conceptual thought. It is initially potential and is actualised in thinking. Aristotle has distinguished between active and passive reason. Active reason is creative, pure actuality like the pure soul of Plato.

While, Passive reason is the matter, active reason is the form of thought and concepts are the result of the combination of both. Thus, Aristotle's dualism of form and matter continues in his psychology. The same dualism is found in body mind relationship. Perception, imagination and

memory are connected with the body. The Active or Creative reason, however, is connected with the soul. It is immaterial, imperishable and therefore, immortal. It is the spark of divine in human soul. It does not arise with man nor perish with him. It is not individual reason but the universal in man.

4.10 ETHICS

The *Nicomachean Ethics* is certainly one of the best books ever written on the subject. It is rich in analysis of moral and psychological concepts, and in ingenious arguments. The following account will indicate the main lines of the work:

(i) **The good life.** "Good" is not, Aristotle argues, the name of a single quality. Different kinds of thing are called good for different reasons: an axe is a good one if it cuts efficiently; eyes are good if they see well. To decide what is the best life for man one must ask what are the proper functions of a man (as cutting is the function of an axe); a good man will be one who performs those functions excellently, and his will be the good life. Man is distinguished from other animals by his power of thought. So the functions of a man - the effective performance of which will make him a good man - are those of his activities which involve thought and which therefore he does not share with other animals. Man's possession of reason shows itself not only in his ability to think, but also in his ability to control by thought and principle his desires and conduct; so the virtues of the good man will be not only intellectual but also moral or ethical (that is, virtues of character, ethos).

(ii) **Moral virtue.** Moral virtues, like skills, are acquired by practice. A man becomes generous by being trained or habituated to do the things a generous man would do. He has himself become generous when he has acquired a settled disposition of character so that he now does such things regularly, gladly and without ulterior motive. The "gladly" is important; it helps Aristotle to argue that the virtuous life is pleasant. His ideal is the man who always does what he ought because he wants to; "the presence of a moral struggle, the need to conquer desires - these are signs of imperfection

Moral virtue is concerned with feelings and actions, and in these there can be too much, too little, or the right amount, "the mean". Virtue is a matter of striking the mean between opposite vices: generosity lies between meanness and prodigality. The mean involved is not an arithmetical average, it is the mean "relative to us", that is, it is what is appropriate to a man. There are no simple rules for deciding what is appropriate; it is the possession of phronesis ("practical wisdom") which enables a man to hit the mean. This doctrine of the mean is more famous than it deserves to be. Aristotle admits to difficulty in bringing all virtues and vices into his scheme. The doctrine of the mean, in fact, contains little positive moral teaching and is inadequate if considered as simply analysis of vice-virtue concepts.

(iii) **Intellectual virtue:** It is a practical wisdom. This intellectual virtue enables a man to get the right answers to practical questions of conduct. It involves skill in deliberation but also presupposes the possession of moral virtue. For to have the right aims is a matter of moral virtue - character determines ends. Moral goodness and practical wisdom are in fact inseparable, each involving the other in its definition.

(iv) **Intellectual virtue:** it is a theoretical wisdom. This intellectual virtue is wisdom about "what cannot be otherwise". It involves intuitive knowledge of unprovable starting-points (concepts and truth and demonstrative knowledge of what follows from them. This virtue, Aristotle argues, is the highest that man can have: it is to do with the highest objects and it is the

virtue of the divine part of man's soul (for no activity but that of pure thought can be attributed to God). The life of theoretical philosophy is the best and happiest a man can lead. Few men are capable of it (and they only intermittently). For the rest there is a second best way of life, that of moral virtue and practical wisdom.

It is striking how Aristotle, starting from the question what is man's nature and his function as a man, ends by finding his highest and most proper activity in the imitation of God through the exercise of pure reason, the spark of divinity in him.

4.11 POLITICS

In addition to his works on ethics, which address the individual, Aristotle addressed the city in his work titled Politics. Aristotle considered the city to be a natural community. Moreover, he considered the city to be prior in importance to the family which in turn is prior to the individual, "for the whole must of necessity be prior to the part". He is also famous for his statement that "man is by nature a political animal." Aristotle conceived of politics as being like an organism rather than like a machine, and as a collection of parts none of which can exist without the others. Aristotle's conception of the city is organic, and he is considered one of the first to conceive of the city in this manner.

The common modern understanding of a political community as a modern state is quite different to Aristotle's understanding. Although he was aware of the existence and potential of larger empires, the natural community according to Aristotle was the city (*polis*) which functions as a political "community" or "partnership" (*koinōnia*). The aim of the city is not just to avoid injustice or for economic stability, but rather to allow at least some citizens the possibility to live a good life and to perform beautiful acts: "The political partnership must be regarded, therefore, as being for the sake of noble actions, not for the sake of living together." This is distinguished from modern approaches, beginning with social contract theory; according to which individuals leave the state of nature because of "fear of violent death" or its "inconveniences."

4.12 POETICS

Aristotle considered epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambic poetry and music to be imitative, each varying in imitation by medium, object, and manner. For example, music imitates with the media of rhythm and harmony, whereas dance imitates with rhythm alone, and poetry with language. The forms also differ in their object of imitation. Comedy, for instance, is a dramatic imitation of men worse than average; whereas tragedy imitates men slightly better than average. Lastly, the forms differ in their manner of imitation – through narrative or character, through change or no change, and through drama or no drama. Aristotle believed that imitation is natural to mankind and constitutes one of mankind's advantages over animals.

While it is believed that Aristotle's Poetics comprised two books – one on comedy and one on tragedy – only the portion that focuses on tragedy has survived. Aristotle taught that tragedy is composed of six elements: plot-structure, character, style, spectacle, and lyric poetry. The characters in a tragedy are merely a means of driving the story; and the plot, not the characters, is the chief focus of tragedy. Tragedy is the imitation of action arousing pity and fear, and is meant to effect the catharsis of those same emotions. Aristotle concludes Poetics with a discussion on which, if either, is superior: epic or tragic mimesis. He suggests that because tragedy possesses all the attributes of an epic, possibly possesses additional attributes such as spectacle and music,

is more unified, and achieves the aim of its mimesis in shorter scope; it can be considered superior to epic.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Give the account of Aristotle on question of God.

2) What are the ethical teachings of Aristotle?

4.13 LET US SUM UP

Aristotle speaks about the following twelve categories in which the first three are very important: equivocal, univocal, derivative, quantity, quality, relative, where, when, being in a position, having, acting on, and being affected by. Aristotle expresses two views about his "first philosophy"(metaphysics):1.Theology (the study of changeless, separable substance). 2. The study of being as such together with concepts and principles that includes Form and Matter, Actuality and Potentiality, and The Four "Causes". Aristotle classifies his science into three kinds - theoretical, practical and productive sciences. Aristotle's Logic is not as a substantive part of philosophy but as ancillary to all parts, which studies forms of reasoning and expression common to various subject-matters, and a grasp of it is pre-requisite for the student of any topic. It includes two kinds of analytical methods - The Prior Analytics and The Posterior Analytics. Aristotle's idea of God consists the following features: 1. God is the Prime mover, 2. God is the Apex of World process, 3. God is the Formal Cause of the World, 4. God is the Efficient Cause of the World, 5. God is the Final Cause of the World, 6. God is not a person. Physics, according to Aristotle, is the science of Nature. His biology is qualitative, dynamic and teleological and it is called "vitalism". According to him Body and soul form an indivisible unity. In the field of psychology Aristotle has discovered ideas concerning sensations, perception, imagination, feelings, and memory, emotions, thinking and almost all other psychological processes. In his idea of ethics he deals about - The good life, Moral virtue, Intellectual virtue (Practical Wisdom), and Intellectual virtue (Theoretical Wisdom). The natural community according to Aristotle was the city (polis) which functions as a political "community" or "partnership" (*koinōnia*). Aristotle's Poetics comprised of two books comedy and tragedy.

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

MPY – 002

Western Philosophy



Block 3

MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

UNIT 1
Augustine



UNIT 2
Aquinas



UNIT 3
Dun Scotus

UNIT 4
Jewish and Islamic Philosophers



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BLOCK INTRODUCTION MEDIEVAL

The medieval period of philosophy came with the collapse of Roman civilization and the dawn of Christianity, Islam, and rabbinic Judaism. The medieval period brought Christian scholastic philosophy, with writers such as Augustine of Hippo, Boethius, Anselm, Robert Grosseteste, Albertus Magnus, Roger Bacon, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, Nicholas of Cusa, and Francisco Suárez. The philosophy of this period is characterized by analysis of the nature and properties of God; the metaphysics involving substance, essences and accidents. Medieval philosophy had been concerned primarily with argument from authority, and the analysis of ancient texts using Aristotelian logic. The philosophy of medieval age was an attempt to construct religious thought with reasoned account of its various doctrines. The doctrines of Plato and Aristotle were reinterpreted to fulfill their religious demands. In medieval age to a large extent the speculative theories of Aristotle combined with theological presuppositions in the Bible.

Unit 1 gives the account of the beginning of medieval scholastic thinking as it concretely established from the Augustinian philosophy onwards. Neo-platonism has the basic foundation for the medieval thought. Augustine is a fourth century philosopher who infused his Christian religious doctrine with Plato and Neo-Platonism. He is also famous for his contributions to Western philosophy along with Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas.

Unit 2 analyses the philosophical thoughts of Thomas Aquinas. As true to his scholastic medieval tendency of being influenced by Divine revelation, Thomas Aquinas brought reason and faith in dialogue. According to Aquinas “man always perceives to be good.” The ultimate good that makes man happy is contemplation of truth. He further speaks about eternal law, human law, natural law, and divine law. The rational soul is created directly by God. The goal of human existence is union and eternal fellowship with God.

Unit 3 introduces the life and work of John Duns Scotus who was one of the most important and influential philosopher-theologians of the High Middle Ages. It then offers an overview of some of his key positions in four main areas of philosophy: natural theology, metaphysics, the theory of knowledge, and ethics and moral psychology. Through his sharp intellect and rigorous reasoning, Scotus has been able to give a new understanding of philosophy. Moving slightly away from the Thomistic tradition, he has given new proofs for God’s existence and speaks of the unicity of God.

Unit 4 surveys the contribution of Jewish and Arabic philosophers. Jewish philosophy sprung up due to the encounter between Hebrew religious thought and Greek philosophical thought in the first century B.C.E., a synthesis of both traditions developing concepts for future Hellenistic interpretation of messianic Hebrew thought, especially by Clement of Alexandria, Christian Apologists like Athenagoras, Theophilus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and by Origen. Arab philosopher was Al-Kindi (796–ca. 866). Al-Kindi’s philosophic thought is directly connected with Greek philosophical doctrines transmitted to him through translations and with the rationalist theological movement of the Mutazilites.

UNIT 1 AUGUSTINE

Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
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1.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit tries to give the account of the beginning of medieval scholastic thinking as it concretely established from the Augustinean philosophy onwards. Neo-platonism has the basic foundation for the medieval thought. We shall attempt to capture the fundamental teachings of Augustine from his Platonic bent of mind, although interpreted from the religious perspective of his time.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Augustine is a fourth century philosopher who infused his Christian religious doctrine with Plato and Neo-Platonism. He is also famous for his contributions to Western philosophy along with Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas. Augustine's doctrine stood between the extremes of Pelagianism and Manichaeism. Against Pelagian doctrine, he held that human spiritual disobedience had resulted in a state of sin that human nature was powerless to change. For him, human beings are dependent on divine grace; against Manichaeism he vigorously defended the place of free will in cooperation with grace.

Life

Augustine, also known as Aurelius Augustine was born at Thagaste in North Africa. He was one of the key figures in the transition from classical antiquity to the middle Ages. He lived nearly eighty years of the social transformation, political upheavals, and military disasters that are often referred to as the “decline of the Roman Empire.” Augustine was a confirmed Manichaean during his early years as a student and teacher of rhetoric at Carthage and Rome. But in Milan, during his early thirties, he began to study Neo-Platonic Philosophy under the guidance of Ambrose. An account of his early life and conversion, together with a reasoned defence of his Neo-platonic principles, may be found in the *confessiones* (confessions). He was named the Bishop of Hippo (Annaba, Algeria) in 396, and devoted the remaining decades of his life to the formation of an ascetic religious community.

1.2 EPISTEMOLOGY

Augustine time and again attacks the sceptic thesis that a high degree of probability is the most that the human mind can attain. In other words man cannot attain certain knowledge. He refutes this thesis in his book *Contra Academicos* saying that a man can attain certain knowledge. In his reply to the question of scepticism “how do you know that this world (even) exists, if the senses are mistaken?” He answers, “even if he is asleep and dreaming, he can refer to the world, so understood, and say, without chance of error, that either it is one or it is not. By which he means, even if it were true that I am mistaken about nearly everything that I suppose to be true, he argued, one inescapable truth will remain: “*Si fallor, sum*” (“If I am mistaken, I exist”). His answer certainly suggests the Cartesian “*cogito, ergo sum.*” What is to be remembered here is that for Descartes it is the argument of thinking being but whereas for Augustine it is indirect refutation of the principle of scepticism that certain knowledge is not possible and not a direct demonstration of the existence of the thinking subject.

Conditions of Intellectual Knowledge

After having established knowledge is certain and it is attainable he moves on to the conditions of intellectual knowledge. There are two ways by which man can arrive at knowledge of intelligible objects viz., 1. By rising from the data of sense to an understanding of the hidden causes of things, and, ultimately to a knowledge of Him who is the Highest Cause. 2. The truth is indwelling in us and the most excellent means of attaining higher intellectual knowledge is the contemplation and study of our own intellectual life. It is of introspection, for which purity of heart and the practice of virtue are necessary. When the heart is more pure the soul is also freer from all the defilement and by which the mind can mirror Him, who is the source of all the truth. Augustine following the Platonist tradition says knowledge is not derived from sense perception or experience, but they are some have impressed upon our minds *a priori*. Here Augustine rejects the Platonic doctrine of *anamnesis* as an explanation of the presence in the human mind of knowledge that is not derived from sense-experience. Knowledge is recollection, an exercise of the memory but in the sense that when I know I actualize what is learned in my mind, eliciting truths by a process of concentration. This sounds Platonian, but it is combined with a reluctance to believe in the pre-existence of the soul. Nor is the human mind able to realize knowledge unaided. Augustine believes that divine illumination is required to achieve this. Thus we attain knowledge by the illumination of God.

Theory of Divine Illumination

For Augustine, it is in the light of God, by which the mind is said to be able to discern the objects of intellectual vision. Some thinkers/readers have supposed that it is only *a priori* truths that Augustine thinks, are made intellectually visible by divine illumination. But it is not correct. When he teaches that we know the essences of things in *rationibus aeternis*, he is careful to point out that we rise from the data of sense or from a study of our own intellectual life to knowledge of these essences. His meaning is that the essence of things could neither be, nor be known by us, unless they first existed and were known in the mind of God. For example in the *De Magistro* Augustine shows that ostensive learning is chronically and unavoidably plagued with ambiguity. Whether we are pointing to something to show what “blue” means, or showing someone a blue colour sample to illustrate what the word signifies, any given effort at ostensive teaching is open to misunderstanding. How can one know whether what is being pointed out is

the colour blue, a particular shade of blue, a hue, a coloured object, its shape, or something quite different? In the walking case, is what is being demonstrated walking, hurrying, running away, taking so and so many steps, or what? If we manage to grasp what it is, it must be through the inner illumination of the divine light. Augustine says we consult “not the speaker who makes a noise outside us, but the Truth that presides over the mind within”.

Perhaps Augustine’s idea of divine illumination is meant to invoke supernatural aid in dealing with the problem of ambiguity. Thus the Divine, the teacher, can, through special powers, illuminate blue without illuminating anything more general, such as colour, or anything more specific, such as powder blue. Again, the inner Teacher, can perhaps, non-naturally, point to walking without pointing to hurrying, or to taking so and so many steps. If that is right, the learner who is intelligent enough will be precisely the one who is able to profit from this ambiguity free inner ostension that only the Divine, the Teacher can perform.

1.3 CONCEPT OF MAN

Man is the calumination of God’s creation. He says man has soul using a mortal and earthly body as one unitary entity. For him, man is “rational soul which has a body.” It does not mean that the soul which has a body has two persons. His identification of soul to human being reinforces the platonic tendency to identify the person with the mind or soul. He places human being beneath God and above bodies. In his hierarchy of being the human soul is more excellent than all things known by the sense. Among the things it is nobler than sensible things which God created. “There is something inferior and something equal; something inferior such as the soul of an animal, and something equal such as that of an angel, but there is nothing better”. There is nothing closer to God than the rational soul. The soul is not what God is, but a creature made by God, made not out of God, but out of nothing. Though the human soul is immortal because it does not cease to live, it is in some sense mortal. For in every changeable nature the change itself is a death, because it causes something which was in it to exist no more. Elsewhere he says God is absolutely unchangeable, while bodies are changeable in both space and time and souls are changeable only in time. Everything changeable is, Augustine adds, a creature, while that which is unchangeable is the creator. The soul as changeable in time, but not in place, holds the mid-rank position below the highest and above the lowest.

Origin and Destiny of Soul

From the above paragraph it is very clear that God created the soul, it would mean that the soul of Man is created by God, now the question is that what about the subsequent souls of human being. It posed the problem for Augustine. To answer he listed four hypotheses concerning the origin of souls with a view of defending the justice of God, no matter which one would be correct one. There are as follows;

- a. One soul was created and from it the souls of those who are now born are drawn.
- b. Souls are individually created in each child who is born.
- c. Souls already existing in some secret place are sent by God to animate and rule the bodies of individuals who are born.
- d. Finally, the souls existing elsewhere are not sent by God, but “come of their own accord to inhabit bodies.

To sum up this view souls come from propagation, created new in each individual; they exist elsewhere and are sent into the bodies of the newborn; or they exist elsewhere and fall of their own accord in these bodies. From this one can conclude that Augustine assumed the soul’s pre-

existence. At the same time he accepts that he does not know whether souls come to be in the body from the one soul of Adam or are individually created. It is nonetheless, quite possible that he once thought that he knew the answer to the question about the soul, namely the souls existed before their embodiment and fell through sin into bodies or at least into these mortal bodies. He accepts the immortality of the soul and it is created by God. The problem of the origin of human souls other than Adam's discussed at large in *De Genesis ad Litteram libri duodecim*. Here only three hypotheses regarding the origin of souls subsequent to Adam are present;

- a. All souls were created in the soul of Adam on the first day.
- b. All subsequent souls come from the soul of Adam by propagation.
- c. The new individual souls are created in the course of time.

The first two theories fit best with Genesis 2:2 which teaches that creation was completed on the sixth day, and with Sirach 18:1 which affirms that everything was created simultaneously. While traducianism seems most easily to explain the common inherited of original sin and the need for infant baptism, it seems to endanger the incorporeality of the soul insofar as it thinks of souls as propagated in a bodily fashion, as Tertullian had done, while creationism is thoroughly compatible with the incorporeality of the soul made to the image of God, it makes it more difficult to understand how a soul could be created by god with the guilt of Adam's sine. Hence the first hypothesis seems least problematic as representing Augustine's view at this point.

1.3 CONCEPT OF GOD

His understanding of God is influenced by Christian understanding of God, Platonism, and Manichaeism. Christian understanding: God is eternal, transcendent being, all powerful, created the world out of nothing, etc. Platonism: it provided him with important strategic and methodological principles for his thinking about the divine. They admonished him to look within his own soul rather than to the external material world and to look with the eye of the mind rather than which the bodily senses. Manichaeism: God to be a luminous amass extended infinitely through space; God is subject to attack, corruption, violation at the hands of rival power; again he believed that there were two independent divine substances in conflict with one another; his vision own allows him to see that the true God is being itself, the one source of everything exists, and He is true God Who is incorporeal and infinite without extension.

Augustine also believes God is incorruptible, inviolable, and immutable. But the interesting is that his ground of argument i.e. the supremacy of God. God is supreme, and since incorruptibility is better than corruptibility, God must therefore be incorruptible. The same pattern of reasoning, *mutatis mutandis*, yields the divine inviolable and immutability. Thus his arguments provide the attributes of God. Regarding the nature of God, Augustine assumes a position opposed to all the errors of Platonism. For Augustine, God is immutable, eternal, all-powerful, and all-knowing, absolutely devoid of potentiality or composition, a pure spirit, a personal, intelligent being. The mystery of the Trinity of God induces Augustine to consider God as being, knowledge, and love; and since the world has been created by God, it reveals a reflection of these three attributes of God: every creature should consist essentially of being, knowledge, and volition. Thus he presents his discovery that God is that which truly *is* as the climax of his intellectual ascent to God, as the philosophical articulation of the scriptural divine name, and as the final remedy to the long standing ignorance that plagued his search of wisdom. For these reasons we should expect the conception of God as true being to be fundamental to Augustine's mature thinking about God.

Proof for God's Existence

Augustine proves God's existence from *a priori* and *a posteriori* and point of view basing on the existence of reason. Because the essentially true character of the concepts of reason is the chief of the many witness to the existence of God. It is also attested by the necessity of a first cause, the rational character of the universe and the universal belief in his existence.

***A priori* Argument**

Augustine began by proving that human reason exists, something with which no one could argue. He begins to prove that God exists by proving that there is something higher than reason—appears to rely on the assumption that what is higher than reason must be God. Here Augustine proves not merely that there is something higher than reason but that there is something than which nothing is higher (*quo est nullus superior*)

***A Posteriori* Argument**

In order to prove anything, we must first start with a foundation that is accepted as truth. Augustine begins with the platform that we exist. We cannot argue this because if we do, it is proving ourselves wrong. The mere fact that we can argue is a proof of our existence. Next he asks us if we are alive. We must also agree to this because in order to agree or to not agree we must be alive. Now he asks us if we understand these two steps to be true. If we do, then he has proven his next step, we have reason. For without reason, we could not understand these two basic concepts.

1.5 THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

In order to maintain God's omnipotence, benevolent, omniscient and his goodness to man Augustine is driven to the position that is God is the cause of everything at the same time either he has to exclude the evil or explain it away. Evil is a fact of life, physical and moral. Physical evil can be allowed under the seminal good but what about the moral evil? As a metaphysician how can one explain it. The whole of creation is out of god's goodness and his love. He was not bound and compelled but rather his love inclined him to create. In other words creation is free act of God. Therefore existence if of every kind is good; one should judge its value in relation to the divine will, not from the point of view of human utility. He has willed everything for the best interest of His creature, and so even the evil must be good in its way. In other words evil is necessary for the enhancement of the greater good, in the same manner in which the shadow in the moon enhances the beauty of the full moon. Though Augustine was largely a Platonist, yet he could not have accepted matter as the reason of evil, which was suggested by Plato. The reason is that for Augustine even matter was created by God. Hence if matter be the cause of evil, then God will directly become the cause of evil. Secondly, God is omnipotent and so he could not be imagined to be limited by pre-existing matter. Evil is not good, but it is good that evil is. Firstly, what appears as evil is not really evil. It is only to enhance the excellence of good. For example, in explaining the birth of a man born blind, Jesus said that this man was born blind so that the glory of God may be made manifest. Secondly evil is conceived as a defect, as a privation of essence (*privatio substantiae*), as an omission of the good; for example, there is the evil of blindness; it is simply an absence of the power of vision; in due course this vision (or good) can be restored. According to the privation theory of evil, evil is the negation or the privation of good., good is possible without evil, but evil is not possible without the good; for everything is good, at least in so far as it has any being at all. Privation of good is evil because it means an

absence of something nature ought to have. All kinds of evil including moral evil, are brought under the concept of privation. Moral evil cannot mar the beauty of universal creation, since it springs from the will of man or the fallen angels; it is the result of an evil or defective will, which is nothing positive, but merely represents a privation of good (*privatio boni*). The worst evil is privation *Dei*, the turning away from God, or the highest good to the perishable world.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Give the account of Augustine on question of God.

2) How does Augustine understand human nature?

1.6 COSMOLOGY

In his account of the origin of the universe, Augustine maintains a doctrine which was not developed by the pagan thinkers that is God created the world out of nothing by his free act/will. This concept has to be distinguished from Neo-Platonist theory of emanation. According to Neo-Platonist theory, the world emanates from God as the overflow from His abundance without becoming in any way diminished or altered in Him which means to say that God did not act freely (since such activity would, he thought, postulate have in God) but rather necessitate *naturae*, the Good necessarily diffusing itself. Again creator God is different from an architect God. An architect God creates the world out of pre-existing matter or chaos or an architect God creates the world out of pre-existing matter or chaos or any such material. A creator God creates everything from His own self. So there is no matter independent of God even in attenuation form, as in Plato and Aristotle.

If there is matter, then Augustine holds that either it is absolutely formless or matter which is formless only in comparison with completely formed. If the former, then you are speaking of what is equivalent to nothingness, "That out of which God has created all things is what possesses neither species nor form; and this is nothing other than nothing." If, however, you are speaking of the latter, of matter which has no completed form, but which has inchoate form, in the sense of possessing the capacity to receive form, Then such matter is not altogether nothing in deed, but, as something, it has what being it has only from some formless matter, this very matter was created from something which was wholly nothing. So God is the creator of matter with the potentiality of having form or germinal potentiality. Thus God is the absolute creator of all things, even of matter.

The world as the creation of God depends on God, but the world and God are not one and the same, as is held in pantheism. God transcends the world, and from the world as the effect, one cannot fully know God. All that one can say that he apprehends god, but cannot comprehend Him. Together with matter all things else were created at the beginning. Creation was the act of an instant and so it is senseless to say that god created the world at any point of time since time

and space were two among many other creation of the world. The Mosaic account of the six days of creation being merely a description of the six orders or grades of perfection in which things were created. Not all things, however, were created in the full possession of what came to be called their specific perfection. Augustine distinctly admits a process of development, as when in the treatise entitled *De Genesi ad Litteram*, he says: “*in semine, ergo, illa omnia fuerunt permitus, non mole corporeae magnitudinis sed vi potentiaque causali*” here he is alluding to the *seminariae rationes*. Seminal or germinal potentiality is not absolutely passive, but tends to self-development when the requisite conditions ripen in due course. St Augustine’s theory of germinal potentiality was brought forward to reconcile the exegetic problem concerning the two contrasted statements in the Biblical books of Genesis and Ecclesiastes. This doctrine of germinal potentiality is more Aristotelian than platonic.

1.7 ETHICS

Augustine describes ethics as an enquiry into the supreme good and how one can attain it. He appropriates the eudemonist ethics of ancient philosophy. Happiness is a universal human desire, the goal of human endeavour. It is the supreme good. He does not equate happiness with pleasure or enjoyment, any more than Aristotle or the stoics do, but with the eternal contemplation and love of god, by this he was thinking, not of a purely philosophic and theoretic contemplation of God, but of a loving union with a possession of God, and indeed of the supernatural union with God held up to the Christian as the term of his grace-aided endeavour: one cannot well separate out in Augustine’s thought a natural and a supernatural ethic, since he deals with man in the concrete, and man in the concrete has a supernatural vocation: he regarded the Neo-Platonists as discerning something of that which was revealed by Christ, Neo-Platonism as an inadequate and partial realisation of the truth. The ethic of Augustine primarily is an ethic of love. It is common in Augustine that what I do depends upon what I love, not merely in the sense of what I value, but above all in the sense that I act in accordance with a settled inclination. Acting in accordance with a settled inclination is, for him, acting voluntarily in the strict sense. Loving something is a necessary condition of willing it: sometimes Augustine suggests that it is tantamount to willing it. Loving the right things for the right reasons is a pre-condition of acting well. Loving the wrong things, or the right things for the wrong reasons, leads to evil actions.

If love determines action and is a symptom of character, self-love is the source of sin: more specifically, the source is pride, understood as a refusal to accept subordination to God, to acquiesce in one’s place in the hierarchy of beings. In Platonist terms, this is a ‘turning away’ from god to self-absorption, a failure to understand the relationship between God and humans. Adam’s fall results from the delusion that he is an autonomous being. His sin is a ‘perverse imitation of God’. Therefore man should love God above all things; he should love himself with a rational love, seeking what is best and doing what is best for himself in the light of his eternal destiny; he should love his fellow man, desiring what is best for him and aiding him to attain it.

Virtue is defined in terms of order, in the early *de beata viat*, Augustine understands the virtues to possess a kind of measure that is without either excess or defect. In that work he suggests that the attainment of wisdom by the sage entails possession of the virtues, in his later writings he is less sanguine about the perfectibility of human nature in this life, life is a continuing struggle with vices; virtue is not a stable, attainable state, the virtues control but do not extirpate emotions. Augustine recognizes the traditional four cardinal virtues. Virtue is a form of love, primarily of God, but also of other humans. Justice is ‘giving God His due’ as well as loving

one's neighbour. The practice of the virtues expresses the inherently social nature of humans: we are naturally members of societies. Augustine subscribes to the natural law theory; our awareness of the natural law derives from self love, or the instinct for self preservation and it extends to a realization of the need for justly regulated relations with others. Primarily, this realization is a form of the Golden Rule in its negative version 'Do not do to others what you would not have others do to you'. Augustine gives the natural, or, as he often calls it, eternal law the status of a Platonic Form inasmuch as he says of it, as he says of the forms, that it is 'stamped on our minds'. Strictly speaking, the laws of human societies should be framed in accordance with divine eternal law, but it is political authority, rather than strict conformity to natural law, that gives validity to positive law. Only those human laws that are explicit contraventions of divine commands may be disobeyed, and Augustine's understanding of what constitute divine commands is specific: they are commands directly revealed in scripture, such as the prohibition of idolatry. Augustine is otherwise reluctant to assert as a principle that individuals may decide for themselves whether an individual temporal law is just or unjust, even if promulgated by an unjust ruler or without reference to the natural law.

1.8 POLITICAL THOUGHT

In the theology of Augustine, God becomes the creator of the saved and the sinner at least because of His decree. They belong to either of two cities. The elect, the saved belong to the kingdom of God and the sinner and the damned belong to the kingdom of Satan or Devil. The elect are the chosen people for living in communion with Him, and, the sinner is left to be condemned to the hell-torment forever. On this earth there is nothing to distinguish the one from the other, but internally in their inner spiritual constitution. They are two kinds of people far apart, the community of the elect does not belong to this earth. Thus the kingdom of god and that of devil are sharply divided. To the kingdom of god belong the faithful angels and the elect chosen to be so by His Grace. To the kingdom of Devil belong the devils and the damned, not predestined to redemption. The community of the elect has no home on this earth, but they remain united through his Grace, giving fight against the kingdom of the devil. In contrast, the damned people keep on fighting amongst themselves. For Augustine, the human world belongs to this worldly history is born the saviour of the world called Jesus. Again, on this earth stands the church, which may be called the semblance of the heavenly kingdom on this earth.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Give the account of Aristotle on question of God.

2) What are the Political ideologies of Augustine?

1.9 LET US SUM UP

According to Augustine knowledge is certain and attainable. One should believe in order that one may understand. God is the source of all truth. It is he who illumines our mind to attain knowledge. God created the world out of nothing by His free will. His existence is essential condition of the moral and intellect life. Speaking of evil he says God is not the author of evil but he permits in order that good may take place. The goal of man should be supreme good/ God. It is lasting and the rest are temporary.

1.10 KEY WORDS

Divine Illumination: For Augustine, it is in the light of God, by which the mind is said to be able to discern the objects of intellectual vision.

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UNIT 2 THOMAS AQUINAS

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2.0. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit is to analyse the philosophical thoughts of Thomas Aquinas. As true to his scholastic medieval tendency of being influenced by Divine revelation, Thomas Aquinas brought reason and faith in dialogue. As Augustine followed the Platonic thinking Aquinas was the medieval voice of Aristotle. His rational attempt to prove God's existence has been very influential in Western tradition. His voluminous writing deserves appreciation. It is said "what is written is the poem but what is not written is the poem" – in the way what he has written is not what exactly he owns or knows but what he realized and felt and is what expresses his intelligence. That's why it is said that it's not that the death that took the pen from his hand but the realization that what he wrote is nothing before the wisdom of God.

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Thomistic Philosophy is inspired by the philosophical methods and principles used by Thomas Aquinas (1224/5-1274). Aquinas, who is most renowned for his Five Ways of proving the existence of God, believed that both faith and reason discover truth, a conflict between them being impossible since they both originate in God. Believing that reason can, in principle, lead the mind to God, Aquinas defended reason's legitimacy, especially in the works of Aristotle. The philosophy of Aquinas continues to offer insights into many lingering problems in Epistemology, Cosmology and Ethics. He was a masterfully skilled philosopher. Much of his work bears upon philosophical topics. Thomas' philosophical thought has exerted enormous influence on subsequent medieval scholastic period of Western culture and thought. Thomas stands as a vehicle and modifier of Aristotelianism, Augustinian Neoplatonism.

2.2 THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge, when we reflect upon it as a fact of psychic life, presents itself to us as an extension of the knower. The knower possesses both his own nature and the nature of the thing he knows.

Knowledge liberates and extends the self, so that it possesses the other. Knowledge in its very actuality is liberation from the confines of matter. Knowledge is a spiritual act uniting the knower with the thing known.

Thomas Aquinas holds the Aristotelian doctrine that knowing entails some similarities between knower and the known; a human's corporeal nature therefore requires that knowledge starts with sense perception. The same limitation does not apply to beings further up the chain of being, such as angels. Though he laid the proofs of God's existence he recognises that there are doctrines such as that of the incarnation and the nature of the trinity known only through revelation. God's essence is identified with his existence as pure actuality. God is simple containing no potentiality.

The Thomistic theory of knowledge is realistic. Men obtain their knowledge of reality from the initial data of sense experience, apart from supernatural experiences that some mystics may have. Agreeing with Aristotle, Thomas limited human cognition to "sense perception" and "intellectual understanding" of it, which are intimately related to one another. He distinguishes the sources of knowledge; the first one is the sense experiences or empiricism, the second one is the intellectual or the rational knowledge. The two cognitive faculties, sense and intellect, are naturally capable of acquiring knowledge of their proper object, since both are in potency - the sense, toward the individual form; and the intellect, toward the form of the universal.

- Sense experience is acquired through the sense organs. Sense organs are stimulated by the coloured, audible, odours, gustatory and tactile qualities of extra mental bodies; and sensation is the vital response through man's five external sense powers to such stimulation.
- Aquinas assumed that man's cognitive is aware of red flowers, noisy animals, and cold air and so on. Internal sensation works to perceive, retain, associate, and judge the various impressions (the phantasm) through which things are directly known. Man's higher cognitive functions, those of understanding, judging and reasoning have as their objects the universal meanings that arise out of sense experience.

According to Thomas Aquinas, this is just what happens through the action of a special power of the intellect, i.e., the power by which the phantasm (sense image) is illuminated. Under the influence of this illumination, the form loses its materiality; that is, it becomes the essence or intelligible species. Thomas calls this faculty the *intellectus agens* (agent intellect), and it is to be noted that for Thomas the "*intellectus agens*" is not, as the Averroists held, a separate intellect which is common to all men.

For Aquinas all the data of sense knowledge and all intelligible things are essentially true. Truth consists in the equality of the intellect with its object, and such concordance is always found, both in sensitive cognition and in the idea. Error may exist in the judgment, since it can happen that a predicate may be attributed to a subject to which it does not really belong.

Besides the faculty of judgment, Aquinas also admits the faculty of discursive reasoning, which consists in the derivation of the knowledge of particulars from the universal. Deductive, syllogistic demonstration must be carried out according to the logical relationships which exist between two judgments. This process consists the science which the human intellect can

construct by itself, without recourse either to innate ideas or to any particular illumination. Even then Thomas believed "for the knowledge of any truth whatsoever, man needs divine help, that the intellect may be moved by God to its act." However, he believed that human beings have the natural capacity to know many things without special Divine Revelation, even though such revelation occurs from time to time, "especially in regard to [topics of] a faith."

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is the difference between Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle with regard to the theory of knowledge?

.....

2) Reflect on the importance of the study of Knowledge.

.....

2.3 PHILOSOPHY OF THE WORLD

In determining or defining the relationship of God with the world, Aquinas departs not only from the doctrine of the Averroist Aristotelians, but also from the teaching of Aristotle himself. For Aristotle matter was uncreated and co-eternal with God, limiting the divinity itself (Greek dualism). Aquinas denies this dualism. According to Aquinas "The world was produced by God through His creative act, i.e., the world was produced from nothing." Besides, all becoming in matter is connected with God, since He is the uncaused Cause and the immovable Mover of all that takes place in created nature. God has created the world from nothingness through a free act of His will; hence any necessity in the nature of God is excluded.

Again, we know that Aristotle did not admit providence: "the world was in motion toward God, as toward a point of attraction; but God did not know of this process of change, nor was He its ordinator." For Aquinas, on the contrary, "God is providence: creation was a knowing act of His will; God, the cause and mover of all the perfections of beings, is also the intelligent ordinator of them all that happens in the world finds its counterpart in the wisdom of God." Now, how the providence and the wisdom of God are to be reconciled with the liberty of man is a problem which surpasses our understanding. It is not an absurdity, however, if we keep in mind that the action of Divine Providence is absolutely distinct and can be reconciled with the liberty of man without diminishing or minimizing this latter.

2.4 ETHICS

The ethics of Aquinas is a fusion of Aristotelian and Christian elements. Their underlying assumption is that God made everything for a purpose – for the purpose of revealing his goodness in creation – that the nature of everything points in the direction of this purpose, and that every creature will realize the divine idea and reveal the goodness of God by realizing its true being. Objectively considered, the highest good, therefore is God; subjectively considered, the good for creatures is their greatest possible perfection, or likeness to God. Aquinas dealt with the theoretical analysis of ethical activities in a long series of works. Most of his works take the approach of moral theology, viewing moral good and in terms of accord or discord with divine law, which is revealed in scriptures and developed and interpreted in Christian tradition. Thomas Aquinas follows Aristotle in asserting, “Man is by his nature a social animal,” and “Human society is the flowering of human nature.” He accepted Aristotle’s position that human’s ethical behaviour is based upon the nature of human as a social animal.

Thomas' ethics are based on the concept of "first principles of action." In his *Summa Theologica*, he wrote: “Virtue denotes a certain perfection of a power. Now a thing's perfection is considered chiefly in regard to its end. But the end of power is act. Therefore power is said to be perfect, according as it is determinate to its act.” According to Aquinas “man always perceives to be good.” The ultimate good that makes man happy is contemplation of truth. And the ultimate truth, for Aquinas, is God himself. Thus, man’s ultimate end, which brings him total happiness, lies in the contemplation, in the vision of God.

Thomas defined the four cardinal virtues as prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude. The cardinal virtues are natural and revealed in nature, and they are binding on everyone. There are, however, three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. These are supernatural and are distinct from other virtues in their object, namely, God. In his *Summa Theologica*, he wrote: “Now the object of the theological virtues is God Himself, Who is the last end of all, as surpassing the knowledge of our reason. On the other hand, the object of the intellectual and moral virtues is something comprehensible to human reason. Therefore the theological virtues are specifically distinct from the moral and intellectual virtues.” He says that no virtue is inborn; all virtues may be acquired by the performance of virtuous acts. Such acquired virtues lead to imperfect or incomplete happiness, which is possible in this life. To have a life of blessedness, we need to have the virtues implanted by God; as mere acquired virtues they are of no avail in this regard. According to Aquinas love is the highest of the infused virtues, the perfect form of all the virtues

Furthermore, Thomas distinguished four kinds of law: eternal, natural, human, and divine. Eternal law is the decree of God that governs all creation. Human law is positive Law; the natural law applied by governments to societies. Divine law is the specially revealed law in the scriptures. Natural Law is the human "participation" in the eternal law and is discovered by reason. Natural law, of course, is based on "first principles" “... This is the first precept of the law that good is to be done and promoted, and evil is to be avoided. All other precepts of the natural law are based on this . . .” he further says “The morality of an act depends upon its conformity to the law of conscience and hence to the eternal law; nonconformity brings about moral evil, sin.”

Thomas denied that human beings have any duty of charity to animals because they are not persons. Otherwise, it would be unlawful to use them for food. But this does not give us license

to be cruel to them, for "cruel habits might carry over into our treatment of human beings." The desires to live and to procreate are counted by Thomas among those basic (natural) human values on which all human values are based. However, Thomas was vehemently opposed to non-procreative sexual activity. This led him to view masturbation, oral sex and even coitus interruptus, as being worse than incest and rape when the act itself is considered (apart from the abuse suffered by the violated party). He also objected to sexual positions other than the missionary position, on the assumption that they made conception more difficult.

Thomas contributed to the economic thought as an aspect of ethics and justice. He dealt with the concept of a just price, normally its market price or a regulated price sufficient to cover seller costs of production. He argued it was immoral for sellers to raise their prices simply because buyers were in pressing need for a product.

2.5 PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN SOUL AND GOAL OF HUMAN LIFE

Besides God, the spiritual substances are the angels and human souls. Angels are not destined to inform any matter; the human soul, on the contrary, is ordered to be the form of the body. Hence the question arises as to the nature of the soul and its relations with the body. A human being is an animated body in which the psychic principle (*anima*) is distinctive of the species and determines that the material is known. In other words, man's soul is his substantial form. Some of man's activities are obviously very like to those of brutes, but the intellectual and volitional functions transcend materiality by virtue of their universal and abstracted character.

The soul is a real part of man and, it is spiritual. The intellect and the will are the faculties of the soul, the means through which it operates. The intellect has for its object the knowledge of the universe, and operates by judging and reasoning. The will is free; that is, it is not determined by any particular good, but it determines itself.

From an analysis of the intellect and the will, Aquinas proves the spirituality, the simplicity, and the immortality of the soul. The intellect has, in fact, for its proportionate object the universal, the understanding of which is a simple and spiritual act. Hence the soul from which the act of understanding proceeds is itself simple and spiritual. Since it is simple and spiritual, it is by nature also immortal. The will also is free, i.e., not determined by any cause outside itself. In the physical world everything is determined by causal necessity, and hence there is no liberty. The faculty which is not determined by causal motives declares its independence of these causes and hence is an immaterial faculty. The soul upon which such a faculty depends must be of the same nature as the faculty; that is, the soul must be immaterial.

The human soul since it is immaterial and performs acts which are not absolutely dependent upon the bodily organs, does not perish with the body -- although, as Aquinas says, the soul separated from the body is not entirely complete but has an inclination to the body as the necessary instrument for its complete and full activity.

The doctrine of Aquinas concerning the soul in general and the human soul in particular, may be summed as follows: When the form in matter is the origin of immanent actions, it gives origin to life and as such is more particularly called the "soul." There is a vegetative soul, such as the

principle of plants, whose activity is fulfilled in nutrition, growth, and reproduction. Superior to the vegetative is the sensitive soul, which is present in animals; besides the processes of nutrition, growth and reproduction the sensitive soul is capable of sensitive knowledge and appetite. Superior still to the sensitive soul is the rational soul.

The rational soul is created directly by God; it is distinct for each man; it is the true form of the body. The human soul performs the functions of the vegetative and sensitive life, but besides these functions it has activities which do not depend upon the body, i.e., understanding and volition.

Goal of human life

In Thomas's thought, the goal of human existence is union and eternal fellowship with God. Specifically, this goal is achieved through the beatific vision, an event in which a person experiences perfect, unending happiness by seeing the very essence of God. This vision, which occurs after death, is a gift from God given to those who have experienced salvation and redemption through Christ while living on earth.

This ultimate goal carries implications for one's present life on earth. Thomas stated that an individual's will must be ordered toward right things, such as charity, peace, and holiness. He sees this as the way to happiness. Thomas orders his treatment of the moral life around the idea of happiness. The relationship between will and goal is antecedent in nature "because rectitude of the will consists in being duly ordered to the last end [that is, the beatific vision]." Those who truly seek to understand and see God will necessarily love what God loves. Such love requires morality and bears fruit in everyday human choices.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Do you accept the immortality of soul? Why?

.....

2) Reflect on the ethics and goal of your life.

.....

2.6 PHILOSOPHY OF GOD

The proofs for the existence of God are also means of knowing something of God's essence. This knowledge, however, remains always essentially inadequate and incomplete. One way of knowing God is the way of negative theology, that is, by removing from the concept of God all that implies imperfection, potentiality, and materiality. In other words, by this method we arrive at the knowledge of God through considering what He is not.

A second method is that of analogy. God is the cause of the world. Now every object reflects some perfection of the cause from which it proceeds. Hence it is possible for the human mind to rise to the perfections of God from the consideration of the perfection it finds in creatures. This it does, naturally, by removing all imperfection and potentiality from the creatures considered. The resultant idea of the nature of God is thus had through analogy with the perfections of the created universe.

But, according to Aquinas, any natural intuitive knowledge of God is precluded to man. For us, only the visible world, which is capable of impressing our senses, is the object of natural intuitive knowledge. Thus any argument a priori for the existence of God is devoid of validity. For him, the existence of God needs to be demonstrated, and demonstration must start from the sensible world without any prejudice. Such demonstrations are possible and are accommodated to anyone who is simply capable of reflecting.

There are five ways in which the human intellect can prove the existence of God. All have a common point of resemblance. The starting point is a consideration of the sensible world known by immediate experience. Such a consideration of the sensible world would remain incomprehensible unless it was related to God as author of the world. All his proofs for the existence of God bring two distinct elements into play:

1. The existence of a sensible reality whose existence requires a cause;
2. The demonstration of the fact that its existence requires a finite series of causes and consequently a prime cause, which is what we call God.

The Five Ways to prove the Existence of God

- **Movement:** Movement is any transit, any change from one state of being to another. According to Aristotle “Movement is a passage from potency to act.” According to Aquinas “whatever is moved is moved by another (*quidquid movetur ab alio movetur*”). Thus, if there is a movement ultimately there should be a mover; as we know there is a movement. Therefore, there is an ultimate mover whom we call God.
- **Causality:** A cause is anything that contributes to the producing of a thing. That which is produced by cause is effect. God alone can be attributed as creator because He creates everything out of nothing. Thus, if there is an effect, there should be a cause and ultimately the First Cause; as we know already, the creation of the world itself is an effect. Therefore, there is a cause, ultimately the First Cause whom we call God.
- **Contingency:** Contingency means dependency. Our existence is not of our own. We have received it from the one who has existence on his own; He is God alone. So we are contingent (dependent) beings. But God is self sufficient; such self sufficient being is necessary. If there are contingent beings, there should be a necessary being; as we know there are contingent beings. Therefore, there should be a necessary being whom we call God.
- **Grades of perfection:** We see in the life on the world some things are more perfect, better; at the same time some are not like that; thus the grades of perfection (e.g. stone, vegetation, animal kingdom, human kingdom, and god). If there are grades of perfection,

there should be a higher perfection; as we know there exists grades of perfection. Therefore, there exists the higher perfection whom we call God.

- **Teleological (order and purpose):** This is an argument from the design. William Paley (1743-1805) in his “*Natural Theology: or Evidence of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity Collected from the Appearance of the Nature*” (1802) talks about the order and purpose of the created world. Paley argues that the natural world is as complex a mechanism, and as manifestly designed as any watch. The rotation of the planets in the solar system and, on earth, the regular procession of the seasons and the complex structure and mutual adaptation of the parts of a living organism, all suggest design. In a human brain, for example, thousands of millions of cells functions together in a coordinated system. The eye is a superb movie camera, with self-adjusting lenses, a high degree of accuracy, colour sensitivity, and the capacity to operate continuously for many hours at a time. Thus according to him nothing is created by chance but well planned and with a purpose.

Is there an order in the created universe? Yes. If there is an order, there is an intelligent/wise organiser; as we know through the words of Paley, there is an order. Therefore, there is an intelligent organiser who is called God.

2.7 FAITH AND REASON

From the beginning Thomistic philosophy we can notice a steady exploration of the relation between faith and reason, with systematic and complete analysis of this relation. He filled his writings with reason, especially in his *Summa Theologica*. He had no fear about appealing to Greek and Arab philosophers, despite the resistance of so many of his contemporaries. His vision about the relation between faith and reason can be summarized under three points.

Faith and reason are two different modes of knowing. Reason accepts a truth as known by the light of reason. Faith accepts a truth as known by the light of divine revelation. Therefore, there are two types of wisdom, philosophical and theological distinction between philosophical wisdom and theological wisdom and with the implicit affirmation of the autonomy of philosophy with respect to theology, Thomas Aquinas paved the way for the secularization of human wisdom.

The distinction between theology and philosophy does not consist in the fact that theology treats of God, for philosophy also treats of God and divine truths. The distinction consists rather in this, that theology views truth in the light of divine revelation, while philosophy views truth in the light of human reason. Thus faith (*fides*) and scientific knowledge (*scientia*) are sharply distinguished nor by object but by method.

Faith and reason do not contradict. They have their respective juridical boundaries. Truths of faith and truths of reason derive from the same origin, god who is the Truth. They are related like the gifts of nature and grace. Grace does not do away with the light of reason, but it reveals truth beyond the reach of reason itself.

God is the source of all truth. He communicates it to us directly by revelation and indirectly by

giving us the power by which we acquire it. Science acquired in the former manner would be divine and it is through experience and reason is human. It is impossible that there should exist a contradiction between truths of natural order and truths of the supernatural order.

Faith and reason are complementary. Faith renders valuable service to reason by elevating the mind on its natural functioning. Reason, in turn renders a valuable service to faith by the role it plays in theology. Reason can come to the aid of faith in various ways. For example, it can establish certain preambles of faith, such as the existence and unity of God, and it can prove many truths about creatures which faith presupposes. Reason can also use philosophy to refute doctrines contrary to the faith.

For Aquinas, philosophy helps theology in as much as it enables the theologian to deduce scientific conclusions from articles of faith. Theology serves philosophy in as much as it acts as a guide or as a light upon that of the philosopher showing him fields of research and making him convinced of the limitations of his powers. He insisted that reason and faith are not contrary but are two distinct sources of knowledge, both ultimately from God. Some Truth comes through man's reason, some through God's revelation.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is the difference between faith and reason?

.....

2) How do you feel the presence of God in your life?

.....

2.8 LET US SUM UP

The two cognitive faculties, sense and intellect, are naturally capable of acquiring knowledge of their proper object. Sense experience is acquired through the sense organs. Man's cognitive is aware of red flowers, noisy animals, and cold air and so on. Internal sensation works to perceive, retain, associate, and judge the various impressions (the phantasm) through which things are directly known. God has created the world from nothingness through a free act of His will. God is providence to the world and all creation was a knowing act of God's will. God made everything for a purpose – for the purpose of revealing his goodness in creation. According to Aquinas “man always perceives to be good.” The ultimate good that makes man happy is contemplation of truth. He further speaks about eternal law, human law, natural law, and divine law. The soul is a real part of man and, it is spiritual. The *intellect* and the *will* are the faculties of

the soul, the means through which it operates. The rational soul is created directly by God. The goal of human existence is union and eternal fellowship with God.

Aquinas derives five ways to affirm the existence of God from statements of facts about ordinary experiences.

1. From the fact of motion to Prime Mover
2. From efficient cause to a First Cause
3. From contingent beings to a Necessary Being
4. From degrees of value to an Absolute Value
5. From evidences of purposiveness in nature to a Divine Designer.

Philosophy, according to Thomas Aquinas, passes from facts to God; theology from God to facts. Dogmas, which are not the objects of philosophy, but matters of faith, revealed truths, are beyond reason, but not contrary to reason. Reason and faith are not contrary but are two distinct sources of knowledge, both ultimately from God. Some Truth comes through man's reason, some through God's revelation.

2.9 KEY WORDS

Potentiality - a power or a quality that exists and is capable of being developed.

Revelation – something that is considered to be sign or message from God.

Determinate - fixed and definite.

Teleology – the theory that events and developments are meant to achieve a purpose and happen because of that.

Cognition – the process by which knowledge and understanding is developed in the mind.

Concordance – the state of being similar to something or consistent with it.

Preambles – an introduction to something.

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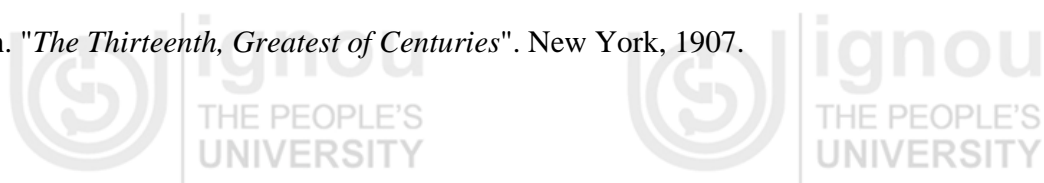
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UNIT 3 DUNS SCOTUS

Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Life History
- 3.3 His Main Works
- 3.4 Proofs for the Existence of God
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3.0 OBJECTIVES

- To introduce the students to the life and work of John Duns Scotus in general.
- To enable the students appreciate some of the nuances of this great philosopher and theologian.
- To focus on the metaphysical orientation of Scotus.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

John Duns Scotus (1265/66-1308) was one of the most important and influential philosopher-theologians of the High Middle Ages. His brilliantly complex and nuanced thought, which earned him the nickname "the Subtle Doctor," left a mark on discussions of such disparate topics as the semantics of religious language, the problem of universals, divine illumination, and the nature of human freedom. This unit first lays out what is known about Scotus' life and the dating of his works. It then offers an overview of some of his key positions in four main areas of philosophy: natural theology, metaphysics, the theory of knowledge, and ethics and moral psychology (Williams 2009).

3.2 LIFE HISTORY

We do not know precisely when John Duns was born, but we are fairly certain he came from the eponymous town of Duns near the Scottish border with England. He, like many other of his compatriots, was called "Scotus," or "the Scot," from the country of his birth. He was ordained a priest on 17 March 1291. Because his bishop had just ordained another group at the end of 1290, we can place Scotus' birth in the first quarter of 1266, if he was ordained as early as canon law permitted. When he was a boy he joined the Franciscans, who sent him to study at Oxford, probably in 1288. He was still at Oxford in 1300, for he took part in a disputation there at some

point in 1300 or 1301, once he had finished lecturing on the *Sentences*. Moreover, when the English provincial presented 22 names to Bishop Dalderby on 26 July 1300 for licenses to hear confessions at Oxford, Scotus' was among them. He probably completed his Oxford studies in 1301. He was not, however, appointed as a master at Oxford, for his provincial sent him to the more prestigious University of Paris, where he would lecture on the *Sentences* a second time.

The longstanding rift between Pope Boniface VIII and King Philip the Fair of France would soon shake the University of Paris and interrupt Scotus' studies. In June of 1301, Philip's emissaries examined each Franciscan at the Parisian convent, separating the royalists from the papists. Supporters of the Pope, a slight majority that included Scotus, were given three days to leave France. Scotus returned to Paris by the fall of 1304, after Boniface had died and the new Pope, Benedict XI, had made his peace with Philip. We are not sure where Scotus spent his exile, but it seems probable that he returned to work at Oxford. Scotus also lectured at Cambridge sometime after he completed his studies at Oxford, but scholars are uncertain about exactly when.

Scotus completed his Parisian studies and was incepted as a master, probably in early 1305. As regent master, he held a set of *quodlibetal* questions (his only set) within two years of his inception. His Order transferred him to the Franciscan house of studies at Cologne, where we know he served as lector in 1307. He died the next year; the date traditionally given is 8 November. Pope John Paul II proclaimed his beatification in 1993 (Hause 2007).

3.3 HIS MAIN WORKS

Scholars have made considerable progress in determining which of the works attributed to Scotus are genuine. Moreover, many key texts now exist in critical editions: the philosophical works in the St. Bonaventure edition, and the theological works in the Vatican edition. However, others have not yet been edited critically. The Wadding *Opera omnia* is not a critical edition, and the reliability of the texts varies considerably. Despite its title, Wadding's *Opera omnia* does not contain quite all of Scotus' works. Most importantly, what Wadding includes as the Paris *Reportatio* on Book 1 of the *Sentences* is actually Book 1 of the *Additiones magna*, William of Alnwick's compilation of Scotus' thought based largely but not exclusively on his Parisian teaching. The Parisian *Reportatio* exists in several versions, but most of it only in manuscript. Scholars are still uncertain about the exact chronology of the works.

Early in his career, Scotus wrote a number of logical works: questions on Porphyry's *Isagoge* and on Aristotle's *Categories*, *On Interpretation*, and *Sophistical Refutations*. His Oxford lectures on the *Sentences* are recorded in his *Lectura*, and his disputations at Oxford are recorded in the first set of his *Collations*. Scotus probably began his *Questions on the Metaphysics* in the early stages of his career as well, but recent scholarship suggests that Scotus composed parts of this work, in particular on Books VII-IX, after he left England for Paris, and perhaps late in his career. Scotus also wrote an *Expositio* on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and a set of questions on Aristotle's *On the Soul*, but more study is needed to determine their relationship with the rest of Scotus' corpus (Hause 2007).

While still at Oxford, Scotus began reworking the *Lectura* into his *Ordinatio*, a fuller, more sophisticated commentary on the *Sentences*. Then he departed for Paris, where he continued his

work on the *Ordinatio*, incorporating into later sections material from his Parisian lectures on the *Sentences*. These Parisian lectures exist only in various versions of student reports. Scotus' early disputations at Paris are recorded in the second set of his *Collations*.

Scotus died just a few years later, leaving behind a mass of works he had intended to complete or polish for publication. Nevertheless, he soon exercised as great an influence as any other thinker from the High Scholastic Period, including Bonaventure and Aquinas. Despite fierce opposition from many quarters, and in particular from Scotus' admiring confrere William Ockham, the Scotist school flourished well into the seventeenth century, where his influence can be seen in such writers as Descartes and Bramhall. Interest in Scotus' philosophy dwindled in the eighteenth century, and when nineteenth century philosophers and theologians again grew interested in scholastic thought, they generally turned to Aquinas and his followers, not to Scotus. However, the Franciscans continuously attested to Scotus' importance, and in the twentieth century their efforts sparked a revival of interest in Scotus, which has engendered many studies of high quality as well as a critical edition of Scotus' writing, eleven volumes of which are now in print. It remains to be seen whether Scotus' thought will have as great an impact on contemporary philosophy as Aquinas's or Anselm's (Hause 2007).

In the following section, we will only take up some of the main themes of this subtle doctor, in rather simplified style. We first deal with his idea on God, including his proof for God's existence. Then we take up his notion of simplicity, metaphysics and relation between philosophy and theology.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What are some of the main works of Duns Scotus?

.....

2) Why is Scotus called the "subtle doctor"?

.....

3.4 PROOF FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Scotus' argument for the existence of God is rightly regarded as one of the most outstanding contributions ever made to natural theology. The argument is enormously complex, with several sub-arguments for almost every important conclusion which we can only briefly sketch here as shown in *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Williams 2009).

Scotus begins by arguing that there is a first agent (a being that is first in efficient causality). Consider first the distinction between essentially ordered causes and accidentally ordered causes. In an accidentally ordered series, the fact that a given member of that series is itself caused is accidental to that member's own causal activity. For example, Grandpa A generates a son, Dad B, who in turn generates a son of his own, Grandson C. B's generating C in no way depends on A

— A could be long dead by the time B starts having children. The fact that B was caused by A is irrelevant to B's own causal activity. That's how an accidentally ordered series of causes works.

In an essentially ordered series, by contrast, the causal activity of later members of the series depends essentially on the causal activity of earlier members. For example, my shoulders move my arms, which in turn move my golf club. My arms are capable of moving the golf club only because they are being moved by my shoulders.

With that distinction in mind, we can examine Scotus' argument for the existence of a first efficient cause (Williams 2009):

- (1) No effect can produce itself.
- (2) No effect can be produced by just nothing at all.
- (3) A circle of causes is impossible.
- (4) Therefore, an effect must be produced by something else. (from 1, 2, and 3)
- (5) There is no infinite regress in an essentially ordered series of causes.
 - (5a) It is not necessarily the case that a being possessing a causal power C possesses C in an imperfect way.
 - (5b) Therefore, it is possible that C is possessed without imperfection by some item.
 - (5c) If it is not possible for any item to possess C without dependence on some prior item, then it is not possible that there is any item that possesses C without imperfection (since dependence is a kind of imperfection).
 - (5d) Therefore, it is possible that some item possesses C without dependence on some prior item. (from 5b and 5c by *modus tollens*)
 - (5e) Any item possessing C without dependence on some prior item is a first agent (i.e., an agent that is not subsequent to any prior causes in an essentially ordered series).
 - (5f) Therefore, it is possible that something is a first agent. (from 5d and 5e)
 - (5g) If it is possible that something is a first agent, something is a first agent. (For, by definition, if there were no first agent, there would be no cause that could bring it about, so it would not in fact be possible for there to be a first agent.)
 - (5h) Therefore, something is a first agent (i.e., an agent that is not subsequent to any prior causes in an essentially ordered series — Scotus still has to prove that there is an agent that is not subsequent to any prior causes in an accidentally ordered series either. That's what he does in step (6) below). (from 5f and 5g)

(6) It is not possible for there to be an accidentally ordered series of causes unless there is an essentially ordered series.

(6a) In an accidentally ordered series, each member of the series (except the first, if there is a first) comes into existence as a result of the causal activity of a prior member of the series.

(6b) That causal activity is exercised in virtue of a certain form.

(6c) Therefore, each member of the series depends on that form for its causal activity.

(6d) The form is not itself a member of the series.

(6e) Therefore, the accidentally ordered series is essentially dependent on a higher-order cause.

(7) Therefore, there is a first agent. (from 4, 5, and 6)

Scotus then goes on to argue that there is an ultimate goal of activity (a being that is first in final causality), and a maximally excellent being (a being that is first in what Scotus calls "pre-eminence").

Thus he has proved what he calls the "triple primacy": there is a being that is first in efficient causality, in final causality, and in pre-eminence. Scotus next proves that the three primacies are coextensive: that is, any being that is first in one of these three ways will also be first in the other two ways. Scotus then argues that a being enjoying the triple primacy is endowed with intellect and will, and that any such being is infinite. Finally, he argues that there can be only one such being (Williams 2009).

3.5 THE UNICITY OF GOD

Don Scotus further elaborates on the unicity or oneness of God. God is, if you will, a kind of "highest good", not just for humans but for everything; yet we assert that there is but one God. Why? Can there not be multiple Gods, all of whom serve as "highest goods" in some theological scheme? In short, why is polytheism impossible? I say "impossible" because, according to Scotus, it is not merely a matter of faith or dogma that there is only one God: it is a matter of logical necessity (Carson 2007).

Scotus begins with the assumption that any will that is infinite wills things in the way that they should be willed. This he takes to imply a principle that we may call the principle of natural will: a correct will loves what is lovable to the extent that it is lovable and to the extent that the will is capable of loving, hence an infinite will will love whatever is lovable to the extent that it is lovable without exception. Suppose, then, that we posit two such infinite wills, that is, two Gods, calling one A and the other B. Both A and B, then, will love whatever is lovable to the extent that it is lovable and without exception; since both A and B are infinitely lovable, then each will love the other infinitely. Here Scotus introduces an assumption that must be unpacked. He says that everything loves its own being more than any other, just so long as it is neither a part nor an

effect of this other. We may call this the principle of natural love: fundamentally it means that, given a particular nature (e.g., human, dog, divine), the conscious awareness and will of any being with that nature will be most intimately familiar with its own being rather than that of any other particular nature and, hence, most naturally able to will and to do what is best for that particular nature (here "to love" means something along the lines of "having what is best for X at heart and in one's will").

In the case of our two Gods, A and B, we find that each of them is infinitely lovable, hence B is to be infinitely loved by A. And yet A must naturally love itself more than anything else, including B. But if A loves itself more than it loves B, then it does not love B infinitely, even though B is deserving of infinite love from A. If A does not love B infinitely, A is not acting in accordance with its own nature and, hence, cannot be infinite. So either A loves B as much as it loves itself and, hence, violates the principle of nature love; or A loves B less than A loves itself and violates the principle of the natural will. Both are conceptual impossibilities, hence the actual existence of more than one God is conceptually impossible.

The principle of the natural will and of natural love are, I think, unfamiliar to us and yet perfectly acceptable. If they seem strange, though, Scotus offers an ancillary argument based on this one. He remarks that there are two ways in which A may love B. Either A may love B for its own sake, or it may simply use B. If it merely uses B, the love is inordinate. If it loves B for its own sake because of B's nature, then, having the same nature as B, A will love itself for its own sake as well. But this means that A is beatified by two distinct objects, both A and B, neither of which depends upon the other, for A is made happy by itself just as much as it is by B. But it is conceptually impossible to find perfect beatitude in two distinct objects, because either one may be destroyed without any loss of beatitude, hence complete beatitude is not dependent upon either object.

It seems to be something like this latter argument that Aristotle must have in mind in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: humans have only one final good because the very notion of a "final good" seems to entail that there could only be one such thing. Scotus' arguments, in other words, have that logical flavour that so characterizes Scholastic argument generally (Carson 2007).

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Briefly give the proof for God's existence, according to Scotus.

.....

2) How does Scotus show the unicity of God?

.....

3.6 SCOTUS ON SIMPLICITY

In *De primo principio*, Scotus proposes one very simple argument for [God's lack of essential properties]: if God were composed of essential parts, each one would either be finite or infinite. If finite, then God would be finite. According to Scotus' definition of infinite the infinite exceeds the finite by a non-finite measure. Thus, no matter how many the parts, they do not add up to

infinite. If infinite, then – absurdly – the parts would not be less than the (infinite) whole. Further, Scotus appeals to the fact that composition of matter and form requires a causal explanation (an efficient cause), and the causal interrelation of the parts themselves, are considered as potency and act (PF).

As taken from Richard Cross (2005) the argument can be simplified as thus:

1. If God is composed of parts, then each part must be finite or infinite
2. If any given part is finite, then God is finite, which is absurd
3. If any given part is infinite, then it is equal to the whole, which is absurd
4. Therefore, no parts in God are finite or infinite
5. Therefore, there are no parts in God.

Now, given this, (2) would need to be defended. Scotus, does it by arguing that any finite part of God would be necessarily exceeded by Him infinitely; but that would imply an infinite number of parts would be required to exceed the finite part, and since you can never add up to infinite, the entire notion is absurd. Thus Scotus concludes that God is not composed of parts and so is simple.

3.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF METAPHYSICS

Metaphysics, according to Scotus, is the "real theoretical science": it is real in that it treats things rather than concepts, theoretical in that it is pursued for its own sake rather than as a guide for doing or making things, and a science in that it proceeds from self-evident principles to conclusions that follow deductively from them. The various real theoretical sciences are distinguished by their subject matter, and Scotus devotes considerable attention to determining what the distinctive subject matter of metaphysics is. His conclusion is that metaphysics concerns "*being qua being*". That is, the metaphysician studies being simply as such, rather than studying, say, material being as material (Williams 2009).

The study of being *qua* being includes, first of all, the study of the transcendentals, so called because they transcend the division of being into finite and infinite, and the further division of finite being into the ten Aristotelian categories. Being itself is a transcendental, and so are the "proper attributes" of being — one, true, and good — which are coextensive with being. Scotus also identifies an indefinite number of disjunctions that are coextensive with being and therefore count as transcendentals, such as infinite-or-finite and necessary-or-contingent. Finally, all the pure perfections (see above) are transcendentals, since they transcend the division of being into finite and infinite. Unlike the proper attributes of being and the disjunctive transcendentals, however, they are not coextensive with being. For God is wise and Socrates is wise, but earthworms — though they are certainly beings — are not wise.

The study of the Aristotelian categories also belongs to metaphysics insofar as the categories, or the things falling under them, are studied as beings. (If they are studied as concepts, they belong instead to the logician.) There are exactly ten categories, Scotus argues. The first and most important is the category of substance. Substances are beings in the most robust sense, since they have an independent existence: that is, they do not exist *in* something else. Beings in any of the

other nine categories, called accidents, exist in substances. The nine categories of accidents are quantity, quality, relation, action, passion, place, time, position, and state.

3.8 RELATION BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY

Scotus does not hold that science and faith can contradict each other, or that a proposition may be true in philosophy and false in theology and vice versa. Incorrect, also, is the statement that he attaches little importance to showing the harmony between scientific knowledge and faith and that he has no regard for speculative theology. Quite the contrary, he proves the dogmas of faith not only from authority but, as far as possible, from reason also. Theology presupposes philosophy as its basis. Facts which have God for their author and yet can be known by our natural powers especially miracles and prophecies, are criteria of the truth of Revelation, religion, and the Church. Scotus strives to gain as thorough an insight as possible into the truths of faith, to disclose them to the human mind, to establish truth upon truth, and from dogma to prove or to reject many a philosophical proposition. There is just as little warrant for the statement that his chief concern is humble subjection to the authority of God and of the Church, or that his tendency a priori is to depreciate scientific knowledge and to resolve speculative theology into doubts. Scotus simply believes that many philosophical and theological proofs of other scholars are not conclusive; in their stead he adduces other arguments (Minges 1909).

He also thinks that many philosophical and theological propositions can be proved which other Scholastics consider incapable of demonstration. He indeed lays great stress on the authority of Scripture, the Fathers, and the Church but he also attaches much importance to natural knowledge and the intellectual capacity of the mind of angels and of men, both in this world and in the other. He is inclined to widen rather than narrow the range of attainable knowledge. He sets great value upon mathematics and the natural sciences and especially upon metaphysics. He rejects every unnecessary recourse to Divine or angelic intervention or to miracles, and demands that the supernatural and miraculous be limited as far as possible even in matters of faith. Dogmas he holds are to be explained in a somewhat softened and more easily intelligible sense, so far as this may be done without diminution of their substantial meaning, dignity, and depth.

In Scripture the literal sense is to be taken, and freedom of opinion is to be granted so far as it is not opposed to Christian Faith or the authority of the Church. Scotus was much given to the study of mathematics, and for this reason he insists on demonstrative proofs in philosophy and theology; but he is no real sceptic. He grants that our senses, our internal and external experience, and authority together with reason, can furnish us with absolute certainty and evidence. The difficulty which many truths present lies not so much in ourselves as in the objects. In itself everything knowable is the object of our knowledge. Reason can of its own powers recognize the existence of God and many of His attributes, the creation of the world out of nothing, the conservation of the world by God, the spirituality, individuality, substantiality, and unity of the soul, as well as its free will. In many of his writings he asserts that mere reason can come to know the immortality and the creation of the soul; in others he asserts the direct opposite; but he never denies the so-called moral evidence for these truths (Minges 1909).

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) How is simplicity applied to God?

.....

2) What is the significance of metaphysics for Dun Scotus?

.....

3.9 LET US SUM UP

Through his sharp intellect and rigorous reasoning, Scotus has been able to give a new understanding of philosophy. Moving slightly away from the Thomistic tradition, he has given new proofs for God's existence and speaks of the unicity of God. He is primarily a metaphysician, who does not think that his rational exercise (philosophy) does not contradict his spiritual quest (theology).

3.10 KEY WORDS

Modus tollens: The rule of logic stating that if a conditional statement ("if p then q") is accepted, and the consequent does not hold (not-q), then the negation of the antecedent (not-p) can be inferred (See Logic Notes).

Simplicity: the state, quality, or an instance of being simple. It is freedom from complexity, intricacy, or division into parts:

Transcendentals: Proper attributes of being that goes beyond the division of being into finite and infinite. The scholastic transcendentals are "one", "truth," "beauty," etc (See Metaphysics Notes).

Unicity: The condition of being united; quality of the unique.

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UNIT 4 JEWISH AND ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHERS

Contents

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Characteristics of Medieval Jewish Philosophy
- 4.3 Medieval Jewish Philosophers
- 4.4 The Origins of Islamic Philosophy
- 4.5 Medieval Islamic Philosophers
- 4.6 Western Arab Philosophers
- 4.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8 Key Words
- 4.9 Further Readings and References

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The origins of Jewish philosophy are considered to be in Alexandria by the introduction of Hellenistic culture during the reign of Ptolemy Philometor. The attempt to apply Greek philosophical concepts to Jewish doctrines was made by Philo of Alexandria, also called Philo Judaeus (20 BCE - 40 CE), a prominent member of the Jewish community at Alexandria, and a figure that spans two cultures, the Greek and the Hebrew. Jewish philosophy sprung up due to the encounter between Hebrew religious thought and Greek philosophical thought in the first century B.C.E. Philo developed speculative and philosophical justification for Judaism in terms of Greek philosophy and thus he produced a synthesis of both traditions developing concepts for future Hellenistic interpretation of messianic Hebrew thought, especially by Clement of Alexandria, Christian Apologists like Athenagoras, Theophilus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and by Origen.

Jewish philosophical growth and contribution were considerably regressed during the early centuries of the Christian era. This was because the Jews became absorbed in their political struggles that followed the destruction of Jerusalem; this situation continued until the second caliphate of the Abbassides who began their reign in 754. Even though, there were no outstanding philosophers between Philo (first century) and ninth century, during the reign of the second caliphate of the Abbassides, one of the main Jewish thinkers in the Academy of Babylon founded a school that denied the authority of Talmud and the traditional Jewish laws, and instead proclaimed the right of reason to freely interpret scriptural texts. The followers of that school were called Karaitas; the oldest writings available from the first Karaitas date back to the tenth-century. The Karaitas had an adversary, Rabbi SAADIA ben Joseph (891-942), one of the last and most famous Gaonim, a great Talmudic scholar, Jewish philosopher and inspiring leader, who was born in a small village near Fayyum, in Egypt. He fought against the beliefs and customs of the Karaites with his scholarly and logical arguments. Soon after Saadia's death, the works of Arab philosophers were introduced into the Iberian Peninsula; it was also the period when Jewish philosophy reached the Caliphate of Cordoba.

4.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF MEDIEVAL JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

In the middle ages, the two sources of knowledge or truth were religious opinions as embodied in revealed documents on the one hand, and philosophical and scientific judgments and arguments, the results of independent rational reflection, on the other hand. Thus, Revelation and Reason, Religion and Philosophy, Faith and Knowledge are the various expressions for the dualism in medieval thought. For the medieval Jewish thinkers, reason and philosophy were represented by Plato, Aristotle and the neo-Platonists, while faith was represented by the Old Testament and the Talmud.

Beyond that of establishing a harmonic relation between philosophy and Revelation, there were also other motivations for a medieval Jewish philosopher to take recourse to philosophy. They are the necessity to integrate Bible discourse wherever it was vague or incomplete and the need to elaborate a systematic framework for all the truths contained in the Bible and the Talmud. In order to make clear the relations between Revelation and Reason or Religion and Philosophy, the medieval Jewish philosophers were recourse not only to the teachings of Christian philosophers from the Patristic period and the Islamic philosophers, but also to the thoughts of their own philosopher, Philo of Alexandria, who had given at the beginning of Patristic period a positive solution to reconcile Revelation and philosophy.

4.3 MEDIEVAL JEWISH PHILOSOPHERS

Medieval Jewish philosophers receive their knowledge on Greek philosophy not directly from Greek sources, but through the work of the Arab philosophers. Their religious philosophy was different from that of Philo, because, if Philo used mostly Plato and the Stoics in his attempt to synthesize Hellenism and Judaism, the Jewish medieval philosophers made the most use of the neo-Platonists and Aristotle. Among the highly competent and qualified medieval Jewish thinkers, we limit ourselves to studying two philosophers such as IBN GABIROL, known by the Latin scholastics as AVICEBRON, and MAIMONIDES.

IBN GABRIOL or AVICEBRON (1022-1058)

Salmon Ibn Gabriol or Avicebron was born in Malaga around 1022, educated in Saragossa, and died in Valencia in 1058. He possessed extraordinary intellectual gifts and excelled as a poet and philosopher. He wrote a grammar book on Hebrew in verse, several poems, and the *Fons Vitae* (The Fountain of Life, or *yanbû' al-hayâh* in Arabic), a work that provoked great reaction from his Jewish compatriots. *Fons Vitae* is of great importance for the History of Philosophy. It was originally written in Arabic, and was known in the western Latin world through a translation done by John of Spain (Johannes Hispanus) and Dominicus Gundissalinus in the first half of the twelfth-century.

The original Arabic text is lost to us, though we do have some extant fragments in the form of citations of the original Arabic version in the Arabic language texts of other Jewish medieval philosophers. Because the Arabic fragments are sparse, the main version of the text is the Latin 12th century translation—it is considered more true to the original than the later 13th century Hebrew translation both because it is an earlier translation, but also because unlike the Hebrew

summary translation, the Latin edition is (ostensibly) a complete translation, maintaining the original dialogue format of Ibn Gabirol's original text.

Fons Vitae is a fictitious dialogue between a teacher and his pupil. It is considered as a book on neo-Platonism, containing the most special characteristics of this philosophy. The book is a philosophical study of matter and form, and it is devoid of any direct reference to biblical or rabbinic texts or doctrines. The main thesis of the work is that everything in God's universe has matter as well as form. Fons Vitae is divided into five treatises. The first is a general introduction of the topic of matter and form and their relation to physical substances. The second deals with the substance or matter that underlies the corporeality of the sublunar world. The third is a proof of the existence of simple substances, which function in Ibn Gabirol's ontology as intermediaries between God and the physical world. The fourth is a proof that these simple or spiritual substances are composed of form and matter, and the fifth treatise is an account of the universal form and universal matter that underlie everything in the universe except God.

Ibn Gabirol's most celebrated doctrine was that on universal hylomorphism. According to him, all beings, angels and human souls included, are gifted with (incorporeal) matter. In his opinion, matter is the prime substance which sustains the nine fundamental accidents, and matter is the first creature of God. Fundamentally the same in all creatures, it nevertheless presents very different grades of perfection according to a well defined hierarchy, which extends from a maximum of imperfection in the heaviest bodies to a maximum of perfection in the lightest Intelligences. Next to universal matter he places a universal soul or universal form, which is the soul of the entire created cosmos. The universal soul sustains the entire corporeal world, represents and knows everything that is in this world, just as our individual souls sustain our bodies, as they sustain and see everything that is in our bodies.

His teachings became influential in thirteenth-century University of Paris. They were considered seriously and criticized by St. Albert the Great and, above all, by St. Thomas Aquinas who dedicated four long chapters of his *opusculum De Substantiis Separatis*. The mark left by Avicenna in medieval Augustinism gave rise to a new philosophical trend which can be called Augustinian-Avicennian, that easily shows itself in great thinkers like St. Bonaventure.

MAIMONIDES (1135-1204)

Moses ben Maimon, commonly known as Maimonides, a Spanish-Jewish philosopher, was born in Cordoba in 1135 and died in Cairo in 1204. His family had sought refuge in Morocco and later in Cairo when Cordoba was conquered by the Almohads, who were strictly religious Muslims intolerant of other religions. He was one of the authorities most cited by the Scholastic authors, among them St. Thomas Aquinas; he was known to them as "Rabbi Moses". He wrote various exegetical books, including the monumental Comment of the Talmud. In 1190 he completed in Arabic his principal work, the *Moreh Nebukim* (The Guide for the Perplexed), a sort of theological treatise that prefigured the glory of the Christian Summas of the thirteenth-century.

The *Guide for the Perplexed* has three parts. The first part is a discussion on God, His attributes and His essence, according to Scriptures, '*Kalam*' (Islamic theology) and philosophers (especially Aristotle and Avicenna). In the second part, after a long prologue on God's existence

and the proofs used in favour of this agreement, the author confronts the problem of the creation of the world “*ex nihilo*”, according to the opinions of philosophers (Aristotle) and the teaching of Scripture. The third part is on the study of man, his nature (soul and body), faculties, virtues and duties. He also examines the question of Providence, the Law, miracles, rewards and punishments.

In contrast to Avicenna's doctrine, Maimonides taught that the purely intellectual substances are totally devoid of matter. From Arab philosophy he received the thesis on the single agent intellect. He proved the existence of God as the Prime Mover, First Cause, and Necessary Being. He resolved the question on the hypothetical created eternity of the world by arguing that the rational proofs in its favour – following the explanation of Aristotle – are not conclusive, although neither could it be demonstrated that they are erroneous. Lastly, he flatly denied the possibility of assigning positive attributes to God, of whom only negative ones could be validly said: “God is one from all aspects, there is neither multiplicity in Him nor anything attached to his essence, such that the various attributes with their own meanings that are used in Sacred Scriptures to designate God refer to the variety of his actions, not to the multiplicity of his essence” (The Guide for the Perplexed, Ch. 52).

4.4 THE ORIGINS OF ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

Prophet Mohammed, born in Mecca around 570, is the founder of Islam and the author of Quran. The main essence of the Quranic revelation can be summed up in five basic beliefs: in God, in angels, in revealed books, in God's messengers (Mohammed as the last and greatest of the prophets) and in the Last Day when human beings will be judged. Along with the beliefs, Islam has also religious practices that can be summed up in the so-called Five Pillars. There is no god but God and Mohammed is his messenger; in praying five times daily; in paying the alms tax, in fasting during the holy month of Ramadan; and if financially possible, in going on the great pilgrimage to Mecca. After the death of the Prophet (632), the Arab followers spread Islam through military conquests to the entire Middle East as far as Turkey to the north, India to the east, and northern Africa and Spain to the west. The conquests paved the way for Islam to profit of all pagan and Christian culture, thus coming in contact with the sources of Greek thought. With their contact with Christianity and Greek philosophy, the Arab philosophers began to apply the philosophical method to the exposition of their sacred texts and were making a rational reflection on various questions. Hence, the so-called “Arab scholastic theology” was born, generally known as the *halam* or *kalam* (i.e., method of reasoning or art of discourse). It was initiated in Damascus and developed later on in Baghdad and Basra.

HALAM (ARAB SCHOLASTIC THEOLOGY)

In early Islamic thought (dated between 8th and 12th centuries), two main currents could be distinguished. The first is *halam* or *kalam* and the other is *falsafa*. While *halam* dealt mainly with Islamic theological questions, *falsafa* with interpretations of Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism. In a later period, the important Islamic philosopher-theologians who attempted to harmonize these two currents were Ibn Sina (Avicenna) who founded the school of Avicennism, Ibn Rushd (Averroes) who founded the school of Averroism, and others such as Ibn al-Haytham (Alhacen) and Abu Rayhan al-Biruni. Two periods of development can be traced back in *halam*: during the

first period the theologians were almost exclusively engaged in interpretative casuistry. This doctrinal movement was called the *mutazilite* and its founder was Wasil bn 'Ata' (700-749). This movement evolved and the mutazilites looked for support in philosophy and were one of the first to pursue a rational theology called *Ilm-al-Kalam* (Scholastic theology). The thinkers of this second period were regarded as the architects of *halam* from which the name of this period, *mutakallimoun*, is derived. The subsequent generations who were critical to Mutazilism paved the way for another trend called Asharism, which made use of the dialectical method for the defence of the authority of divine revelation.

MUTAZILISM

Mutazilism, originated from Basra in the beginning of the eighth-century, was a moderate reaction against the literal interpretation of the Quran. The Mutazilites focused their speculation on four main topics:

- i) On the unity of the Divine Being (God) and that of His attributes. In order to safeguard both God's unity and his transcendence they held that the attributes of God are indissolubly part of His essence.
- ii) On divine justice and human freedom, which they tried to reconcile by denying God's intervention in the affairs of the world.
- iii) On the sin of infidelity, saying that in order to be saved, believing in the Quran is not enough: it is necessary to avoid mortal sins;
- iv) On the attitudes one must have towards his enemies and to infidels, who need to be converted by kind methods, but without discounting the use of force if they persevere in their errors.

According to Mutazilites God is a Being who is strictly One and absolutely Necessary, while everything else is strictly possible being. God willed Creation, but properly speaking, what he created was only the universal primordial act from which all other created things necessarily flow.

MUTAKALLIMOUNS

The Mutakallimouns considered the Quran as the prime source for their knowledge about the world, and therefore they intended to set-up to understand the world according to the stipulations of the Quran. They brought forth a theological reaction to the unorthodox activity of the Mutazilites. They searched for answers to the speculative problems posed by the Mutazilites: how can the divine will be explained if God merely created the universal primordial act, and that he does not interfere in all that happens in Creation? They wanted to preserve the immutability of the divine essence within the context of the continual interventions of the divine will. The solution offered by the Mutakallimouns can be summarized as follows: The divine will cannot cease its activity because that would imply that in God there is discontinuity and accidental changes in his essence. Therefore, it is necessary that he be creating continuously some atoms, which do not have any special properties nor special laws in themselves; the divine will unites and separates them in a vacuum.

ASHARISM

Al- Ash'ari (874-936), the founder of Asharism, belonged to the school of the Mutazilites and he continued to support its doctrines up to the age of forty. But later he abandoned it because of a disagreement with his teacher, the head and scholar of the School of Basra. He abandoned the rationalism of Mutazilites and became their most vehement and severe critic. He spent the rest of his life in combating 'Mutazilite heresy' and proposing orthodox interpretation of the Quran. The Ashirites held the view that God's will rules all creation and governs the deliberations of the human will. Things happen because God so wills, and if they occur, it is because God wants it that way. Nothing escapes the scope of divine will because God alone is absolutely necessary in himself. God is not only the Necessary Being, He is absolute possibility as well. Without God, created things are not necessary nor are they possible; they do not simply exist.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What were the motivations of a medieval Jewish philosopher to take recourse to philosophy?

.....

2) Explain the doctrine of universal hylomorphism of Ibn Gabriol.

.....

3) Explain Maimonides' doctrine on God.

.....

4.5 MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHERS

AL-KINDI (796–ca. 866)

Chronologically, the first important Aristotelian Arab philosopher was Al-Kindi (796–ca. 866). Most probably he lived in Baghdad and Basra, under the aegis of the 'Abbasid Caliphs. Al-Kindi's philosophic thought is directly connected with Greek philosophical doctrines transmitted to him through translations and with the rationalist theological movement of the Mutazilites. The central point of Al-Kindi's theodicy is the denial of the positive attributes of God, and the negative attributes are given prominence; his purpose was to emphasize the absolute transcendence of God in relation to the world. In order to prove God's existence, he preferred the

demonstration based on creation, which shows God as the necessary Being, supreme Creator who is the source of order and government in the universe.

In his philosophy, Al-Kindi was more of Neoplatonist than an Aristotelian. He adopted the Neoplatonic doctrine of emanation in his metaphysics and cosmology. In his theory of intellectual knowledge, he adopted the doctrine of the active intellect and the passive intellect (formulated by Aristotle and later elaborated by Alexander of Aphrodisias and subsequently reworked and modified by Neoplatonists). After his study in detail, Al-Kindi differentiates four kinds of intellect: i) the intellect that is actual; ii) the intellect that is passive or potential; iii) the intellect that passes from potency to act, that is the possible intellect (actualized by intelligible forms); iv) the demonstrative intellect (that is, it retains acquired knowledge and transmits it via demonstration). The intellect that is always actual is the intellect of the last celestial sphere and it governs the sublunar world. The potential or possible intellect forms part of the individual soul of every human being.

4.5.2 AL-FARABI (ca. 870-950)

Al-Farabi, a great Islamic peripatetic, was a native of Persian Turkestan, studied in Baghdad and lived in Aleppo and Damascus. He attempted to elevate philosophy to the place of highest value and to subordinate the revelation and the *sharia* (the religious law) to it. His importance lies in his attempt to establish the concordance between Plato and Aristotle. During his time, the main disputed topics springing from discrepancies between Plato and Aristotle were the following: whether the world is eternal or created in time; how to prove the existence of the first maker of the universe, as well as how to affirm the existence of things emanating from him; the problem about the soul and the separated intellect; how good works and evil ones are remunerated; the so-called “problem on the substance” (what is the first and most noble substance: whether it is the substance closest to the intellect and to the soul, that is, the substance farthest from the senses, or is it the individual substance or the person).

An important contribution of Al-Farabi was his concept of the necessary being, which influenced Avicenna’s philosophy. The factor that distinguishes God from things is that God is uncaused while everything else is caused, and therefore God is a necessary being but creatures are all contingent. From the necessary Being or God at the top emanates a first intelligence, which is the beginning of unity-in-multiplicity, since though it is in itself one, by its knowledge it knows another. Out of it in successive emanations come the intelligences, each associated with one of the nine heavens, down to the moon. In the sublunar world, ruled by the tenth and last intelligence, exist the four elements (earth, air, water, fire) and human souls.

AVICENNA (980-1037)

Life and Works

Abu Ali ibn Sina, known to the West as Avicenna was responsible for systematizing eastern Islamic philosophy. The central thesis of his metaphysics is the division of reality into contingent being and Necessary Being, a doctrine that he formulated basing the theory of the distinction between essence and existence. He was born in Bukhara (Turkestan) in central Asia in 980 A.D. He was an extraordinarily precocious child. He studied the Humanities, the Quran, Mathematics,

and philosophy. He was well known for his skills in Medicine. At the age of eighteen he could consider himself an accomplished physician and had acquired all the immense philosophical knowledge displayed in his large philosophical encyclopedias and in his numerous treatises. After the collapse of the Samanid empire in 999, he left Bukhara, and the later decades of his life are marked by some vicissitudes. About 1020 he was Vizier in Hamdan. The last fourteen years of his life were spent in the company of Ala ad-Daula, the ruler of Isfahan, whom he followed on all his journeys and on all his military ventures. In 1037, during a military campaign, he died in Hamadan. His philosophical vocation was confirmed by his contact with Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which he read forty times in order to understand it, so much so that he was able to memorize it. Al-Farabi gave him the key to understand Aristotle's thought. His contribution to Christian Scholasticism is very important. St. Thomas Aquinas would quote him almost three hundred times, and Duns Scotus set the framework of his system in view of Avicenna's intuitions.

Around two hundred works were attributed to him. The best known of his large philosophical encyclopedia is *Ae-Sifa* ("Healing" or "Recovery"; i.e. of the soul from error), known in the Middle Ages as the *Liber Sufficientiae*. It was an encyclopedia of all knowledge during his time, a work that includes treatises on logic, physics, mathematics, psychology, metaphysics, etc. His most famous medical work is *Al-Qanun fi'l-Tibb* ("The Canon of Medicine" or Canone), a systematic encyclopedia in five books based on the achievements of Greek physicians of the Roman imperial age and other Arabic works and on his own experience.

The philosophical system

Like Aristotle, Avicenna assigned to metaphysics the study of being. According to Avicenna, the notion of being is the first to be formed, "it cannot be described other than by its name; since it is the first principle of all description, it escapes all description. But its concept immediately arises out of the mind without any mediating factor". Therefore, the point of departure for Avicenna's philosophy is the division of being into "being necessary by itself" and "being necessary in force of its cause". In the philosophical system of "necessity" and the "necessary being", Avicenna postulated the priority of necessity on the basis of his concept of creation, that is, as a necessary procession from the first principle.

The "necessary being" is the being whose nonexistence would be a contradiction. The logical concept of "essence" and the metaphysical concept of "existence" are identical for the highest being, the "necessary being". It can in no way depend on a principle apart from itself. In God alone essence, what He is, and existence, that He is, coincide. So, God is the first cause, the One, the highest light and the source of all light, as He is the highest intellect and the highest love. His essence is free from matter. All things proceed from Him, and things proceed from him necessarily, but it takes pleasure in and approves of that emanation. (This well-known Avicennian thesis regarding the necessity of creation, influenced the subsequent Islamic philosophy). Therefore, from the "necessary being", i.e., from God, proceeds the world, not through mechanical necessity, but through the requirement of divine goodness. Since only one can come from the One, only one thing in this world has a direct origin from God: "the prime intelligence". From the "prime or first intelligence" proceed nine other intelligences. The tenth intelligence, which is the most imperfect of all, closes the cycle of producing another intelligence

and it irradiates the intelligible forms and engenders in the material world everything that is perceived by the senses – among these forms are the individual souls of men. The tenth intelligence is the “Giver of forms” and it is the “agent intellect” that governs the souls of human beings. The argument of Avicenna to demonstrate the real distinction between essence and existence was taken up later by St. Thomas Aquinas. Although St. Thomas was inspired by the Avicennian methodology, we cannot conclude that the Thomistic notions of *essentia* and *esse* coincide with those of Avicenna. On the contrary, while there was similarity in their methods, they had a basic discrepancy as to the metaphysical framework they were working in.

ALGAZEL (1059-1111)

Life and works

Al-Gazel (Al-Ghazali), considered to be the greatest Moslem after Mohammed, enjoys a great place and authority among the Sunni (orthodox) Moslems. Al-Gazel was born in Tus, in north-eastern Iran, but most of his studies were conducted elsewhere: Giugian (near the Caspian Sea) and Nishapur. He was appointed to a professorship of the Nizamihah university in Baghdad; but, in 1099, after a period of severe spiritual crisis leading to his rejection of philosophy and rationalistic theology, he abandoned his position as a university professor. He devoted himself to the wandering life of the ascetic and Sufi religious practices. There are mainly four major works from Al-Gazel, two written before his “conversion” and two after. The works from the period before his conversion are *Maqasid al-falasifa (Intentiones philosophorum)* which is a methodological exposition of the principle doctrines of Islamic philosophers, especially of Avicenna, and *Tahafut al-falsifa (Incoherentia philosophorum)* which is a very severe critique of the errors of philosophers and philosophy. The other two works are *Ilhya ulum ad-din* (Revivification of the Religious Sciences) which gives a review of all theological questions, and *Al-Munqidh min addadal*, which is his autobiography.

Critique of philosophy

His knowledge of Greek and Islamic philosophy, together with a good grasp of logic, initiated him to introduce a new form of theology less rationalistic and more responsive to the needs of the piety, thus helping the believer to draw near to God both in heart and in mind. In criticizing philosophers, he distinguishes them into three principal groups: materialists, naturalists and theists. He accuses the first two groups of atheism and he considers the materialists “atheists par excellence”. According to Al-Gazel, Aristotle is the best among the theists.

He criticized the philosophers on:

- i) their teaching on the eternity of the cosmos and the inconsistency of their claim that this teaching fits with the doctrine of creation by God;
- ii) their notions about God’s knowledge of either universals or particulars;
- iii) their doctrine of souls of the heavenly spheres and of their knowledge;
- iv) their theory of causation;
- v) their failure to prove or recognize the spirituality and immortality of the soul;
- vi) their denial of the resurrection of the body.

He criticizes the philosophers because their views are in basic conflict with Islam, especially on the eternity of the world, their views on God's knowledge of particulars, and their denial of the resurrection of the body.

The question of the eternity of the world and its emanation

Al-Gazel is very fierce on the teaching of the philosophers about the eternity of the world and the related concept of the emanation of the world, because it offended strongly against his belief in the contingency of God's act of will in creating the world out of absolutely nothing. According to him, the philosophers assumed things about causation which there is no need to assume, that is, that every effect has a cause and that a cause lies outside of the effect and that a cause will lead immediately to an effect. Therefore they argued that if the world came into being at a particular time, there must be a cause of God's change of mind; but this is impossible since at the time in question *ex hypothesi* nothing else existed. So the world must have been in existence from all eternity. But Al-Gazel counters this by saying that we could equally believe that the cause of God's willing lies within his mind; God can will from all eternity, but at differing times : there is no need for the effect to follow directly upon his willing. God's will is not in any case bound by anything. Al-Gazel is especially critical of the philosophers because they are happy to think of God's knowledge as being of quite a different character than ours, but they continue to make close comparison between our will and his. Actually, according to him, the philosophers really reduce God.

God and His attributes

Al-Gazel organizes, following the example of Al-Ashari, theology around two fundamental doctrines of Islamic faith: God's unity (Allah is Allah) and God's message (Mohammed is his prophet). According to Al-Gazel, God is unique because God is uncaused, without principle; the prime principle and final end of each thing, God is one in His essence without associates, Single without anyone like Him, Lord without any to oppose Him. He is One, Eternal without a First, Perpetual without principle, Perennial without end, always Eternal without end, Subsistent without creation, Continuous without interruption. From the fundamental attribute of uniqueness, Al-Gazel logically reaches all the other attributes: Simplicity, incorporeity, immutability. God is the only creator of everything that exists; God is omniscient and omnipotent: His science and His will know no limits. Al-Gazel teaches that God, the eternal has manifested in a complete and definitive way through His messenger, his prophet, Mohammed, who gathered the Word of God in the Quran.

4.6 WESTERN ARAB PHILOSOPHERS

Islam spread to Europe when the Moslems crossed Gibraltar in 711 and conquered the Iberian Peninsula. They were stopped at Poitiers by Charles Martel in 732 and were driven out of Europe in 1492. Their stay in Spain and Portugal that lasted for almost eight centuries produced a Hispano-Islamic culture in which philosophy flourished. Spanish Arabic Philosophy was represented by Ibn Masarra (883-931, a native of Cordoba, who went to the East to study philosophy, becoming a neo-Platonist, returned to his native place during the Caliphate of Abderraman III), Avempace (ca. 1070-1138, born in Saragossa, had an important and wide-

ranging influence on medieval thinkers, especially St. Albert the Great, Alexander of Hales, Roger Bacon and Raymund Lull. He held the view that the agent intellect is extrinsic to man, that it is divine, immortal and eternal), Ibn Tufail (ca.1110-1185, born in Guadix) and Averroes.

AVERROES (1126-1198)

Life and Works

Averroes (Ibn Rusd) was born at Cordoba in Spain. The young Averroes received a complete education in theology, law, medicine, mathematics, astronomy and philosophy. From the twentieth year of his life, he dedicated his time to study Aristotle and he spent his life commenting on Aristotle's works; for that he received the title Commentator par excellence. He wrote three types of commentaries on those works: the greater commentaries (written at the end of his life), the lesser or 'middle' commentaries, and the paraphrases. These works which he wrote in Arabic were later translated into Latin in 1230; as Aristotle's commentator, his works were widely used among the Scholastics in the Latin West. The influence of Averroes in Islamic philosophy was also important because he dared to disregard the authority of Avicenna, which was unchallenged and widespread at that time. Averroes' another famous work is *Destructio destructionis philosophorum* (*Tahafut-al-Tahafut*), which he wrote in defense of philosophers and philosophy, when Algazel attacked philosophy as an enemy of religion.

Relationship between Philosophy and Religious Knowledge

On the relationship between Philosophy (reason) and religious knowledge (faith), Averroes teaches that only philosophy can properly express the truth; however, the same truth can be also shown by theology, although in a different manner, that is, allegorically. With this epistemological principle, he formulated the following hermeneutic rule: "We steadfastly say that every revealed text, whose literal sense contradicts a truth apodictically demonstrated, must be interpreted allegorically in accordance with the rules of this interpretation in the Arabic language". The allegorical reading of revelation is possible, according to Averroes, by the divine origin itself of the Koran that is so rich in meaning comprehensible by all sorts of men. About the relations between philosophy and religious knowledge, Averroes writes, "The demonstrative speculations of philosophy cannot arrive at contradicting the content of the Law because truth cannot place itself in conflict with truth; on the contrary, the former is in agreement with the latter and testifies to it. That this is the effective situation arises from the fact that when a demonstrative knowledge leads to the knowledge of something real, then the only possibilities are the following: either the Law says nothing about it, or the Law says something. If the Law does not say anything, then there can be no contradiction. If it does say something, then the external expression either agrees with what is said by demonstrative speculation, or the two are contradictory. If they agree, then there is nothing to add. If they contradict each other, then an interpretation becomes necessary. The goal of this interpretation is to extract the profound meaning of what the word of the Law expresses in a figurative way".

According to this text, Averroes attempts to reconcile his Islamic faith with Aristotelian philosophy. He thinks that this can be done with the allegorical reading of Quran.

Averroes did not hold the doctrine of “double truth” – attributed to him by his followers in 12th century, the so called Latin Averroists – which says that what is true for philosophy may be false for theology; that is, there can be a philosophical truth contrary to a theological truth about the same matter, with neither of the two “truths” being false. It is evident that Averroes subordinated theology to philosophy, because according to him it is the task of philosophy to determine which revealed truths must be interpreted allegorically, and which and how those truths must be taken literally. The subordination of religious matters to philosophical knowledge earned for him great difficulties before the extremely conservative members of the Almohade kingdom.

Creation

For Averroes, the world is eternal and it was created by God. Hence God can be called the cause of the world. He answers the question of how and when it was created: according to him, creation was a free act of God, the Almighty. Since God is Almighty, there is no reason to think that after that decision of God to create He would delay its execution in time. Such delay or waiting would imply that He is determined by something extrinsic to Himself, and that is contrary to God’s essence. Besides, since the divine will is immutable, neither can it be thought of as waiting to create and subsequently creating. And being Pure Act, He cannot delay acting; a non-acting Pure Act is inconceivable. Thus, with this argument and other similar ones, Averroes reached the conclusion that creation is eternal.

Unity of all human intellect

A doctrine of Averroes which became particularly well known in the Christian west is the doctrine of the unity of all human intellects. Averroes maintained that there are three intellects: passive (material) intellect, active (efficient) intellect, and acquired (corruptible) intellect. The passive intellect is eternal and is no part of the essence of the individual soul but one and the same for all mankind. Because this intellect is a separate substance which exists outside the individual man and outside of matter, it is immortal. Therefore, Averroes regards the passive intellect as incorruptible. The active intellect transmits the *intelligibilia* for the passive intellect, which, in grasping them, becomes, in a particular individual, first active and then acquired intellect. Although different persons differ in intelligence and knowledge thus obtained, there is always the same amount of intellectual knowledge in the world.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Explain *Halām* and *Falsafa* in Islamic philosophy

.....

2) Explain the important philosophical contributions of Al-Kindi

.....

.....

 3) What is the theory of Unity of all human intellect according to Averroes?

4.7 LET US SUM UP

We have observed in this unit that during the scholastic period of the Western Philosophy, there were quite interesting and profound contributions from Jewish and Islamic philosophers. Theirs was totally influenced by their religious conviction as that of the Christian philosophers of the West during the same period. Their contribution also enlightens the students of philosophy that their faith claims were strengthened by their leaning towards Greek philosophy and consolidating their claims as reasonable faith.

4.8 KEY WORDS

Halām: that which deals mainly with Islamic theological questions

Falsafa: that which deals with interpretations of Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism

Sharia: Islamic religious law

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MPY – 002

Western Philosophy



Block 4

MODERN PHILOSOPHY

UNIT 1
Rationalism



UNIT 2
Empiricism



UNIT 3
Immanuel Kant

UNIT 4
G.W. Hegel



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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

The authority of the church was diminished and the authority of science got increasing. Though the method of philosophy was radically changed with modern western philosophy, but the much of its content remained same. The medieval philosophy had close nexus to theology, but the modern philosophy was subservient to scientific methodology. The modern philosophy developed the philosophical method, formation of philosophical systems and humanism. The modern western philosophy flourished with philosophical traditions of Rationalism of Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza, and Empiricism of Locke, Berkley and Hume. The modern western philosophy has further carried by analytical, phenomenological and continental philosophical traditions. The modern era in western philosophy spans the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Modern era spurred mainly by advances in science, but also by criticisms of revealed theology, philosophers attempted to accommodate new learning with a broad view of human abilities, and to construct systematic understandings of the world that leads to the enlightenment in the west. Among the topics to be discussed are the nature of mind, free will, space and time, the self and scientific reasoning.

Unit 1 brings out the philosophical contribution of chief exponents of Rationalism. It is Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz of continental nations fashioned a new ideal for philosophy. They are influenced by the progress and success of science and mathematics; they attempt to provide philosophy with the exactness of mathematics. They set out to formulate clear rational principles that could be organized into a system of truths from which accurate information about the world could be deduced. Their emphasis was upon the rational capacity of human mind, which they now considered the source of truth about man and about the world.

Unit 2 represents the British empiricists Locke, Berkeley and Hume who consider experience as the source of knowledge. Locke argues that all knowledge is derived from experience; do not deny the possibility of metaphysical knowledge. Attack on innate ideas- Locke started his philosophy with an examination of the first principles of knowledge and attacks the doctrine of innate ideas. For Hume, nothing is really knowable or thinkable beyond the range of experience no certainty or knowledge about realities.

Unit 3 portrays the philosophy of Kant who combined the empiricist principle that all knowledge has its source in experience with the rationalist belief in knowledge obtained by deduction. He suggested that although the content of experience must be discovered through experience itself, the mind imposes form and order on all its experiences, and this form and order can be discovered *a priori*,—that is, by reflection alone. In political and social thought Kant was a leading figure of the movement for reason and liberty against tradition and authority.

Unit 4 illustrates the most powerful philosophical mind of the 19th century, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, whose system of absolute idealism was based on a new conception of logic in which conflict and contradiction are regarded as necessary elements of truth. Truth is regarded as a process rather than a fixed state of things.

UNIT 1 RATIONALISM

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- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Intuition and Deduction
- 1.3 Innate Ideas, Factitious Ideas, Adventitious Ideas
- 1.4 Doubt: Methodological scepticism
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- 1.6 After Descartes
- 1.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.8 Key Words
- 1.9 Further Readings and References

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to introduce rationalism especially Descartes' rationalistic thinking. It helps the students to know the method of abstraction as well. In this unit we shall try to understand how Descartes thinking deviate from classical philosophy. Finally we see how Spinoza and Leibnitz developed rationalism which was developed by Descartes in Modern Western Philosophy. Thus by the end of this Unit one should be able:

- to have a basic understanding of rationalism;
- to differentiate it from empiricism;
- to relate it with method of abstraction;
- to understand the influence of Descartes dualistic thinking;
- to know the limitation of rationalistic thinking.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the history of Western Philosophy, it is Rene Descartes (1596-1650) who ushers in such new lines of thought as would clearly mark the beginning of the modern era and earn him the title 'Father of Modern Western Philosophy'. He emphasise the role of the individual and his reasoning power against the background of church domination. He pronounces that it is within the power of every individual to know the truth. He highly influence on mathematics and scientific method. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) in England looked at scientific method and claimed it for empiricism-a triumph of the method of observation and experimentation over reason, theories, and systems. Descartes, however, looked at scientific method and claimed it for rationalism-a triumph of mathematics, of geometry, and of reasoning by axioms and deduction; it is these which make science into knowledge into certain. His vision was of a plan for a single, unified science in which philosophy and all the sciences would be interconnected in one systematic totality. All qualitative differences of things would be treated as quantitative differences, and mathematics would be the key to all problems of the universe. By contrast with Plato, who saw the unity of all sciences in the mystical Idea of the Good, for Descartes the unity

of science was a rationalistic and mathematical unity based upon mathematical axioms. By contrast with medieval Aristotelianism, explaining change teleologically as the movement of matter toward the actualization of forms, for Descartes all change is explained mechanically, as the movement of bodies according to the laws of physics. According to Bertrand Russell Descartes was a philosopher, a mathematician, and a man of science. He used the analytic method, which supposes a problem solved, and examines the consequences of the supposition. Modern western philosophy has very largely accepted the formulation of its problems from Descartes, while not accepting his solutions.

1.2 INTUITION AND DEDUCTION

According to Descartes, knowledge must be certain and indubitable. In his *Rules for the Direction of the Mind (Regulae)*, he states, “All knowledge is certain and evident cognition” which is “incapable of being doubted”. Such indubitable knowledge, he holds, can be had only through intellect or reason. He specifies two actions of the intellect through which we arrive at certain knowledge, *viz.* Intuition and deduction. Intuition, according to him, is “the indubitable conception of a clear and attentive mind, which proceeds solely from the light of reason”. Hence by intuition; he means the rational power of the mind to perceive clearly and distinctly. Such knowledge, according to him, is self evident, standing in no need of proof. Intuition is undoubted, immediate apprehension of a self-evident truth by reason. God imprints certain innate ideas on the mind at the time of birth. The ideas of causality, infinity, eternity, perfect Being of God and the like are innate ideas. In his view, we can also acquire certainty when the facts are “inferred from true and known principles through a continuous and uninterrupted movement of thought in which each individual proposition is clearly intuited”. This is what he calls Deduction, which attains its certainty from the intuitive certainty of the first principles and the intermediate steps. Thus Descartes applies the mathematical method to philosophy. His mathematical method consists in intuition and deduction. First principles are given by intuition. The remote conclusions are deduced from them. Intuition is prior to deduction. Deduction is necessary inference from truths known with certainty. Intuition is necessary in deduction. Though he subordinates deduction to intuition, he speaks of these as two mental operations.

According to Descartes, it is through intuition i.e. the natural light of reason, that we come to know the existence of the self or mental substance and then we gradually deduce the existence of God and the external material world. Descartes accepts the existence of all these three substances—mind, matter and God. In accordance with his definition of substance as “a thing which so exists that it needs no other thing in order to exist,” he declares God as the absolute substance. However, in the restricted sense of the term ‘substance’, he claims that both mind and matter come under it because they do not depend on anything else but “concurrence of God in order to exist.” Descartes recognises Mind and Matter as relative substances, dependent upon the absolute substance, i.e., God. Mind and Matter have been created by God. But the term substance is not applicable to Mind and Matter in the same sense in which it is applicable to God. In this context, Spinoza points out that if substance stands for complete independence, then it is contradictory to regard matter and mind as substances because they depend on God for their being.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Descartes felt that the most important question for philosophy at the outset was the basis for certainty. Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.

.....

2) Do you think that philosophy can and should be modelled after the methods of mathematics? Why, or why not?

.....

1.3 INNATE IDEAS, FACTITIOUS IDEAS, ADVENTITIOUS IDEAS

In his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, we find Descartes accepting three kinds of ‘ideas’ based three different sources, viz. ‘innate’, ‘adventitious’ and ‘factitious’. While he considers ‘innate ideas’ as implanted in our understanding and ‘factitious ideas’ as creations of our imagination, he views the ‘adventitious ideas’ as productions of sensations. The ideas imposed on the mind from without or sensations are adventitious; they are not clear and distinct. The ideas created by the mind by the conjunction of ideas are factitious; they are the ideas created by the imagination; they are also are not clear and distinct. Both are doubtful. But the innate ideas, which are neither adventitious nor factitious, are clear and distinct and implanted in the mind by God at the time of birth; they are self-evident. He distinguishes sense perception from reason on the ground that the former is liable to illusion, and hence needs to be judged by reason before being accepted as true. His only point of warning is that we should not accept reports of sense perception “without having (carefully and maturely) mentally examined them beforehand.” With the help of his mathematical method we must reject the vague and obscure light of the senses and imagination, and select the simple, clear, self-evident, and innate ideas of reason, and deduce other truths from them.

Descartes starts with the certainty of the self which is known intuitively. He deduces the existence of God from the innate idea of God. The idea of God is the idea of an infinite Being. It cannot be produced by myself, because I am a finite being. The finite things cannot produce the idea of an infinite Being. The cause must contain at least as much reality as is contained in the effect. So God or the infinite Being is the cause of the innate idea of God. Therefore, God exists. He is perfect and truthful. We have a conviction that external things exist; so they must exist. Thus Descartes deduces the existence of God and the world from the innate ideas in the self, which are distinct, clear and self-evident.

1.4 DOUBT: METHODOLOGICAL SCEPTICISM

The object of Cartesian methodology was to apply mathematical method of philosophy with a view to obtaining certitude in knowledge. Descartes believes that the single certain truth can be systematically sought by deliberate doubt. When doubt is pushed to its farthest limit then it will reveal something which is indubitable, which is clearly perceived. Now in order to discover the indubitable intuition, let us doubt all that can be doubted. (1) Sense-testimony can be doubted. (2) Even the truths of science can be doubted. That I doubt cannot be doubted: When the doubt has done its worst it finds a fact of completely unassailable certainty. I may doubt anything but I cannot doubt that I am doubting. Whether it is a dream or a real consciousness, I must exist as a doubting or thinking being. Let there be a demon to deceive me, but then I must exist as a thinking being to be deceived. Descartes starts with universal doubt. To doubt is to think. To think is to exist. "*Cogito ergo sum.*" "I think, therefore I exist." is the one certain truth which may be taken as the foundation of philosophy. If I ceased to think, there would be no evidence of my existence. I am a thing that thinks, a substance of which the whole nature or essence consists in thinking and which needs no place or material thing for its existence.

The doubt of Descartes should not be confused with psychological doubt. Descartes' doubt is not a thing of direct feeling and experience but is a deliberate and dispassionate attitude towards human experience in general. It is not directly determined by the nature of objects. The doubt of Descartes should not be confused with scepticism. Descartes is not asserting that whatever can be doubted is false, but he is only supposing it to be false. Again, the scepticism is the finished conclusion about knowledge which professes the denial of any certain knowledge whatsoever. However, the Cartesian doubt is only a starting point to find out that which cannot be further doubted.

In Descartes' theory of knowledge, the one truth that is unshakable, safe and secure from any doubt, is that of my own existence as a conscious subject. Thus the Cartesian Cogito introduces subjectivism into modern western philosophy. Subjectivism is the view that I can know certainty only myself as conscious subject and my thoughts. It is the view that I can know with certainty only my own mind and its content. Subjectivism carries the implication that the knowledge of other minds and of material objects can be proved, if at all, only by inference from what I know with certainty, the existence of my own subjective consciousness and my thoughts or ideas. Therefore for subjectivism the knowledge of the existence of everything other than my own mind becomes questionable, problematic.

The existence of the self, according to Descartes, is a self evident truth, because the very attempt to doubt its existence implies its existence. "For it is a contradiction to suppose that what thinks does not at the very time when it is thinking, exist." Hence Descartes discovers that "I think, therefore I exist" (*Cogito ergo sum*) is an indubitable truth. Further, he also realises that it is nothing but the clearness and distinctness of the fact 'I think' which makes it an indubitable truth. So, he establishes the criterion of truth as 'all things which I perceive very clearly and very distinctly are true.' From this criterion of truth, Descartes deduces our knowledge of the existence of God. According to him, we have within us the idea of God who is a supremely perfect being and we clearly and distinctly perceive that such an idea can be implanted in us "only by something which possesses the sum of all perfections, that is, by a God who really exists." As an all-perfect Being cannot be lacking in existence, he claims, God must exist. In his '*Meditations*' and '*Principles*', he goes to the length of arguing that the existence of material things follows from the existence of God, who being an All-Perfect Being, cannot be a deceiver.

Consequently, in his view, there must be things existing in the external world corresponding to our clear and distinct ideas of them.

According to Descartes knowledge of external things must be by the mind, not by the senses. He takes an example a piece of wax from the honeycomb. If we put the wax near the fire, all qualities (taste, smell, colour, size, shape etc-) change, although the wax persists; therefore what appeared to the senses was not the wax itself. The wax itself is constituted by extension, flexibility, and motion, which are understood by the mind, not by the imagination. The thing that is the wax cannot itself be sensible, since it is equally involved in all the appearances of the wax to the various senses. Knowledge by the senses is confused. The perception of the wax is not a vision or touch or imagination, but an inspection of the mind. From my sensibility seeing the wax, my own existence follows with certainty, but not that of the wax. Knowledge of external things must be by the mind, not by senses.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Explain the meaning of *cogito ergo sum* in the context of Descartes' philosophy?

.....

2) In your own words, state what you find to be the philosophical problem raised by Descartes' example of the piece of wax?

.....

1.5 ATTRIBUTES AND MODES: MIND/BODY DUALISM.

Descartes suggests matter as corporeal substance and mind as spiritual substance. These two are independent of each other. The fundamental property which expresses the very essence or nature of the thing is attribute. The attribute of Mind is consciousness or thought and the attribute of Matter is extension. Matter is divisible, figurable, movable quantity. The secondary properties of substance are known as modes or accidents and these modes are variable modifications of created substances. The modifications of Matter are position, figure, motion etc and the modifications of mind are feeling, volition, desire, judgement etc. Consciousness and extension, mind and body (two independent substances), are independent of one another and do not involve each other's existence. There is no real relation between body and soul for they are diametrically opposed. This is known as Cartesian dualism.

If the two substances are opposite to each other, how can there be interaction between them? My arm moves when I will that it shall move, but my will is a mental phenomenon and the motion of my arm a physical phenomenon. Why then, if mind and matter cannot interact, does my body

behave as if my mind controlled it? To solve this problem Descartes introduces the Psycho-physical Interactionism. According to this theory, body and mind act upon each other in the 'Pineal gland' of the brain which is the seat of the mind. The body acts upon the mind in sensations and the mind causes movements to take place in the body through the will. So the body at sometimes affects the mind, at other times the mind directs the body. Having separated mind from matter, and assigning them two distinct domains, Descartes prepares the ground for advocating mechanical explanation of the material world. All occurrences, in his view, are due to the transference of motion from one part to another. He holds that even the functions of the human body follow from the mechanical arrangements of its various organs. Even in the absence of mind, he contends, "it would still perform all the same movements as it now does in those cases where movement is not under the control of the will, or, consequently, of the mind." The relation of the soul to the body is of the nature of the pilot to his machine.

The Cartesian dualism appeared to have two features. The first was that it made the soul wholly independent of the body, since it was never acted on by the body. The second was that it allowed the general principle: "one substance cannot act on another." There were two substances, mind and matter and they were so dissimilar that an interaction seemed inconceivable. It explained the appearance of interaction while denying its reality.

1.6 AFTER DESCARTES

The rationalists maintain that there are certain fundamental principles of reality, which are innate and recognized as true by reason or intuition. Intuition is immediate apprehension by reason. All other truths are deduced from them. With the help of mathematical method we must reject the vague and obscure light of the senses and imagination, and select the simple, clear, self-evident, and innate ideas of reason, and deduce other truths from them. Followed by Descartes mathematical method Benedict De Spinoza (1532-1677) starts with the innate idea of God or substance which is self-existent and conceived by itself, and deduces the finite minds and the finite physical objects from it. Spinoza had the vision of the unity of all things. Descartes 'dependent substance' is contradiction in terms. A substance cannot depend on anything else. As such there can be only one substance. If there were more than one substance then they would limit each other and thus would take away their self-sufficiency. This one substance, he also calls God whom he defines as a "Being absolutely infinite; that is, substance consisting in infinite attributes each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence". He calls it *causa sui* or self-creative. By describing substance as *causa sui*, Spinoza means that the reality is a self-explanatory, all-inclusive, inter-related whole, outside which nothing can lie. Therefore there is one substance which is infinite. He calls the single substances as God. Nature conceived as a whole is identical with God. Nature is known as *Natura Naturata*, i.e., sum-total of all that exist. Nature is governed by eternal laws. God and Nature are one. "All determination is negation". There can be only one Being who is wholly positive, and He must be absolutely infinite. This is known as pantheism, according to which the reality of a single impersonal God permeates and in dwells all things.

Spinoza rejected Cartesian dualism and rejected the substantiality of mind and body. The attribute of Mind and Matter, i.e., thought and extension cannot interact are two parallel

attributes of the same absolute substance God. God has also an infinite number of other attributes, since He must be in every respect infinite number of other attributes, since He must be in every respect infinite; but these others are unknown to us. Spinoza believes that Mind is the expression of the infinite consciousness of God and Matter is the appearance of God's unlimited extension. God is extended as well as thinking. Substance thinking and substance extended are one and the same substance. To every mode of extension corresponds a mode of thought, in the same order or series. This parallelism excludes materialism as well as idealism, for matter cannot explain mind, nor can mind explain matter. By admitting only one substance God, Spinoza fails to explain the plurality, diversity, motion and change of the objects of the world.

Like Descartes and Spinoza, Leibniz (1646-1716) based his philosophy on the notion of substance, but he differed radically from them as regards the relation of mind and matter, and as regards the number of substances. Descartes allowed three substances, God, mind and matter; Spinoza admitted God alone. For Descartes, extension is the essence of matter; for Spinoza, both extension and thought are attributes of God. Leibniz held that extension cannot be an attribute of a substance. His reason was that extension involves plurality, and can therefore only belong to an aggregate of substances; each single substance must be unextended. He believed, consequently, in an infinite number of substances, which he called "monads". Each of these would have some of the properties of a physical point, but only when viewed abstractly; in fact, each monad is a soul. This follows naturally from the rejection of extension as an attribute of substance; the only remaining possible essential attribute seemed to be thought. Thus Leibniz was led to deny the reality of matter, and to substitute an infinite family of souls.

Every monad is a mirror of the universe, but a living mirror which generates the images of things by its own activity or develops them from inner germs, without experiencing influences from without. The monad has no windows through which anything could pass in or out, but in its action is dependent only on God and on itself. All monads represent the same universe, but each one represents it differently, their difference consists only in the energy or degree of clearness. The clearer the representations of a monad the more active it is. Leibniz suggests that to have clear and distinct perceptions only is the prerogative of God. He alone is pure activity; all finite beings are passive as well, that is, so far as their perceptions are not clear and distinct. No two monads can ever have any causal relation to each other; when it seems as if they had, appearances are deceptive. Leibniz held that every monad mirrors the universe, not because the universe affects it, but because God has given it a nature which spontaneously produces this result. There is a "pre-established harmony" between the changes in one monad and those in another, which produces the semblance of interaction. This is an extension of the two clocks, which strike at the same moment because each keeps perfect time.

What are the major limitations of rationalistic thinking? Rationalism rejects all knowledge derived from the senses of experience (*posteriori*), and condemns it as illusory. But we actually perceive the things around us clearly and distinctly, and so they cannot be treated as unreal. Our life presupposes the existence of external things which produce clear and distinct ideas, and to which we react successfully. We cannot spin out philosophy by mere reason without experience. Philosophical knowledge is not like mathematical knowledge. Mathematical knowledge is abstract; it deals with abstractions and deduction from them. The knowledge that is deduced from them is not concrete. But philosophy does not deal with abstractions or imaginary entities:

it ideals with real entities. It seeks to give a rational concept of the realities as whole by rational reflection of the facts of experience. So it cannot condemn experience as illusory. The facts are given by experience, organized by sciences and finally harmonized with one another, and reduced to a system by philosophy by rational reflection. Philosophy cannot do without reason; nor can it do without experience. It is criticism of life and experience. The doctrine of innate ideas advocated by Descartes is not tenable. Locke severely criticized Descartes' doctrine of innate ideas. Hume opposed Descartes' rationalism with a more powerful empiricism. Hume rejected the Descartes' Cogito proof, proofs of God and metaphysical dualism.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Whether Descartes had succeeded in explaining the interaction between Mind and Body? Discuss.

.....

2) What was Spinoza's concept of substance? Compare it with that of Descartes and Spinoza?

.....

1.7 LET US SUM UP

Rene Descartes (1596-1650), who is the father of modern western philosophy and rationalist philosopher, follows a method of abstraction which is evident from his fundamental contention that 'reason' is the source of clear and distinct knowledge, and 'sensibility' is a faculty of confused knowledge. Descartes rationalism goes from concrete things to something highly abstract and he rejects the objects given by means of senses. Descartes sees that one firm and immovable truth, *cogito ergo sum*, 'I think, therefore, I am' that even the most extravagant skepticism cannot touch. This is the highest possible abstraction. Following the method of abstraction, Descartes proceeds to analyze the nature of material substance by separating it from mental substance. So there is no meeting ground between mind and matter, both are diametrically opposed to each other. This is generally known as Cartesian dualism which constitutes the basis for the development of European philosophical thought in terms of two opposed trends-idealism and materialism. Descartes himself could not furnish any satisfactory solution to this problem. We have to go beyond dualism and search for its solution. Spinoza's (1532-1677) attempt to solve Cartesian dualism by admitting only one substance God by abstraction fails to explain the plurality, diversity, motion and change of the objects of the world. Leibnitz (1646-1716) was a pluralist, for according to him, each monad meets the requirement of

substance. But once it has been established that there are numerous substances- windowless monads- in the universe, it becomes impossible to establish, the unity of the world.

1.8. KEY WORDS

Metaphysics: the philosophical inquiry into the nature of ultimate reality. In contemporary usage, the term includes the analysis of fundamental philosophical principles.

Epistemology: (theory of knowledge): The branch of philosophy which studies the sources, validity, and limits of knowledge, it inquires into perception, meaning, and truth.

Deduction: Orderly, logical reasoning from one or more statements (premises) which are assumed, to a conclusion which follows necessarily.

Intuition: Direct and immediate knowledge, as in the case of our comprehension of self-evident truths, such as the axioms of geometry.

Idealism: Any metaphysical theory which holds that reality is mental, spiritual, or has the nature of mind, thought, or consciousness.

Materialism: Any monistic metaphysical theory which holds that ultimate reality is matter and that all seemingly nonmaterial things such as minds and thoughts are reducible to the motions of particles of matter.

Rationalism: the view that appeals to reason, not the senses, as the source of knowledge. In its most extreme form, rationalism insists that all knowledge is derived from reason.

Empiricism: the view that all human knowledge derived from the sense.

Dualism: Any view which holds that two equal but opposed ultimate, irreducible principles are required for the explanation of reality. Good and evil, mind and matter are dualism.

Abstract: defined as a part of whole, one-sided, simple or undeveloped. Abstract is the product of the mind alone. In abstraction, things, events and phenomena are conceived separately, independently and mutually isolated. At the level of conceptualization, in abstraction, things, events and phenomena are conceived separately, independently and mutually isolated.

Concrete: It is many-sided, complex or a developed whole. Concrete is understood as the sensuously perceived multiformity of individual objects, events and processes are seen as mutually interrelated, interdependent and in appropriate circumstances pass into one another.

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UNIT 2 EMPIRICISM

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- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Attacks upon Descartes Theory of Innate Ideas
- 2.3 Sense Perception: Impressions and Ideas
- 2.4 The Psychological Laws of Association of Ideas
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- 2.6 The Limits of Knowledge
- 2.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.8 Key Words
- 2.9 Further Readings and References

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall try to understand empiricism of John Locke, Berkeley and particularly David Hume. By the end of this unit one should be able:

- to have thorough understanding of rationalism and empiricism.
- to know the limits of *a priori* knowledge
- to understand the influence of Locke and Berkeley in Hume's thinking
- to analyse the limitation of knowledge

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The fundamental principle of empiricism is that sense perception (including direct observation by the senses, indirect observation by use of instrumentation, and experimentation) is the only reliable method for gaining knowledge and for testing all claims to knowledge. Empiricism is basing knowledge upon the senses, upon the flux of the sensible world, which the rationalist Descartes rejected as an inferior way of knowing. Nowhere is this challenge taken up with more devastating result than in the work of David Hume (1711-1776), the eighteenth century empiricist and sceptic, who elegantly, and relentlessly, pursues Cartesian insights and premises to what he sees as their inevitable logical outcome. In this unit, we shall present an exposition and critical examination of Hume's thinking with the influence of Locke and Berkeley in his thinking. He was the most mercilessly destructive of all the British empiricists and he took delight in demolishing the claims of philosophy, shocking the defenders of religion and undermining the validity of scientific laws and the Enlightenment belief in progress.

2.2 ATTACKS UPON DESCARTES THEORY OF INNATE IDEAS.

John Locke (1632-1704) in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) criticizes Descartes' doctrine of innate ideas, and expounds the doctrine of empiricism. The theory of innate ideas asserts that clear and distinct, self-evident ideas are innate in the sense that they are "born with us," as Descartes said, they are imprinted upon the soul. Examples of innate ideas are the ideas of substance, cause, God, and the principles of logic. If there are innate ideas, says Locke, they must be equally present in all minds. But Locke contends that there are no such ideas, which are universally present in all minds. Children, savages, idiots and illiterate persons are quite unconscious of the so-called innate ideas such as causality, infinity, eternity, God and the like. If there are innate ideas in the mind, they must be the same in all minds. But the so-called innate ideas of God, morality and the like differ in different societies, in different countries, and in different ages. They differ in different persons even at the same time in the same society. Even if there were the same idea in all minds, it would not prove their innateness. All persons have the same idea of fire. But it is not an innate idea; it is derived by all from experience. Universality of an idea does not prove its innateness. The so-called innate principles are general truths, which are induction from particular facts of experience. They are not the primary facts of knowledge, but generalisations from particular facts, which are acquired from perception. Perception is experience. The so-called innate principles are derived from experience; they are empirical truths, and not innate and intuitive. They are not *a priori* or prior to all experience. Thus Locke disproves Descartes' doctrine of innate ideas.

Locke maintains that the mind is a *tabula rasa* in the beginning. It is like a clean slate, blank white paper, on which experience writes, and this writing by experience is all the mind can know. Mind has no innate ideas. It receives ideas from experience. Experience is twofold; sensation and reflection. Sensation is external perception. Reflection is internal perception. Sensation is the source of our knowledge of external objects. Reflection is the source of our knowledge of the internal states of mind. There is not a single idea in the mind, which is not derived from sensation or reflection. The child gets his first ideas from sensation; then at an advanced age he reflects upon them. He cannot think before his mind is stocked with sensations. Descartes maintains that the mind always thinks even before it is furnished with sensations and that it can think independently of sensations. But Locke maintains that the mind cannot think before it has sensations. Sensations are the materials on which the mind thinks. The mind is passive in receiving sensations. But it is active in comparing them with one another, combining them into complex ideas, and forming general ideas out of particular ideas. It can form complex ideas out of simple ideas. "There is nothing in the intellect which was not previously in the sense." This is the dictum of Locke. All knowledge is derived from experience; it is posterior to or after experience. Knowledge is inductive in procedure and not deductive as Descartes and Spinoza think. Knowledge starts with particular facts of experience, and makes generalizations from them. It does not start with some self-evident innate ideas or principles, and deduce other truths from them. This theory is called *a posteriori* theory of knowledge. It is called empiricism because experience is the only reliable source of knowledge and testing all claims to knowledge. Empiricism is thus basing knowledge upon the senses, upon the flux of the sensible world, which rationalism rejected as an inferior way of knowing.

According to Locke, we have sensitive certainty of the existence of matter; we have intuitive certainty of the existence of our own minds; and we have demonstrative certainty of the existence of God. We are compelled to assume the existence of matter as the unknown and

unknowable substratum, of primary qualities-extension, solidity, figure, rest and motion-which are real and known through sensation or external perception. The mind is the substratum of the powers of perceiving, thinking, feeling and willing. We infer the existence of God from the external world as its maker. We form the idea of the infinite by negation of the finite. Thus, Locke, an empiricist, believes in the existence of matter, mind and God and reaches the same metaphysical conclusion of rationalist Descartes.

Locke also takes over the subjectivism of Descartes, the view that what I know best is my own mind and its ideas. Thus there enters into empiricism the problem inherent in subjectivism which we found in Descartes: the chasm or gap between my own mind with its ideas and the physical objects and human beings to which my ideas refer, and which are external to me, in the physical and social world. How can I know them since I am confined to knowing with certainty only my own ideas? So George Berkeley (1685-1753) pushes ahead with the argument of empiricism and demolishes Locke's acceptance of the belief held by Descartes that physical substances exist. We can never have sensory experiences of material substances, says Berkeley. We can experience only sensory qualities. What is my actual experience of substance? It is only the experience of qualities. I perceive a tree as a certain size and shape, I perceive the diameter of its trunk, the length of its branches, the brown colour of its trunk and branches, and the green colour of its leaves; I touch its rough textures and smell its woody aroma- but I can never perceive its substance itself. All that I have perceived of the tree are its qualities. I have no perception of a substance. The existence of physical substances, Berkeley concludes, is only in their being perceived. Physical substances cannot be known to have any other existence than in the qualities we perceive. For Berkeleian empiricism matter -physical substance, the physical universe- do not exist. But he believed that mental substances exist, in the form of finite minds and also in the form of God as infinite mind. The laws of nature for Berkeley are only the regularities of our own perceptions or ideas. Berkeley assured us that with the help of God our perceptions are reliable and orderly and that we can therefore trust in the uniformity of experience and in the dependability of scientific laws. But Hume gleefully asks how does Berkeley know that mental substance exists? Under this attack we will see collapse the idea that there are mental substances.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) "It seems a near contradiction to say that there are truths imprinted on the soul....." Examine Locke's reaction to such 'truths'.

.....

2) How does Berkeley refute the existence of material substance in his philosophy?

.....

2.3 SENSE PERCEPTION: IMPRESSIONS AND IDEAS.

David Hume's (1711-1776) exciting new philosophic outlook combined the empiricism of Locke and Berkeley, who argued that knowledge comes only from sense perception, with the moral philosophy of Francis Hutcheson, who argued that morality comes only from sentiment or feeling. Putting these two conceptions together, Hume began to move toward the shocking thought that our best knowledge, our scientific laws, are nothing but sense perceptions which our feelings lead us to believe. Therefore it is doubtful that we have any knowledge, we have only sense perceptions and feelings. Here in these thoughts of the young Hume was a radical, extreme scepticism, an extreme form of doubting the possibility that certainty in knowledge is attainable.

At the very outset of his book *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume holds, "All the perceptions of the human mind divide themselves into two different kinds, which I shall call Impressions and Ideas." It follows from the above citation that Hume accepts two basic premises of Locke. First, sense-perception is the only source of knowledge. Secondly, what we apprehend through sense-perception are impressions and ideas. Here, we may point out that what Hume calls 'impressions' are nothing other than the 'simple ideas' of Locke and 'ideas' of Berkeley. 'Ideas', for Hume, refer to the copies of impressions. It shows that all three of them-Locke, Berkeley and Hume, accept the Cartesian assumption, namely, the mind knows only its own ideas. Even with ideas as the immediate data of sense-perception, Locke attempts to establish materialism. Though Hume agrees with Locke that what the mind directly knows through sense-experience are ideas, yet as to Locke's materialism, he takes the side of Berkeley. Following Berkeley, Hume rejects Locke's abstract general ideas signifying material substances. On the ground that we cannot assert the existence of anything which is not 'given' through our sense-perception, Hume rejects not only the material substance of Locke, but also Berkeley's spirit or mental substance. He advocates the reality of impressions and ideas, alone. To quote him, "Now since nothing is ever present to the mind but perceptions, it follows that it is impossible for us to so much as conceive or form an idea of anything specifically different from ideas and impressions." His implication is that as our concepts of matter and mind as enduring substances are specifically different from impressions and ideas, we cannot assert their existence.

Hume defines impressions and ideas in the following term, "Those perceptions, which enter with the most force and violence, we may call impressions, and under this name I comprehend all our sensations, passions and emotions as they make their first appearance in the soul. By Ideas I mean the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning." In this definition, Hume makes it clear that both 'impressions' and 'ideas' are 'perceptions' of our mind, and the difference between them lies not in kind but only in the 'degrees of force and liveliness, with which they strike upon the mind'. 'Impressions', in his view, are the lively perceptions. When we reflect on these lively perceptions, we receive 'ideas', which are less lively copies of these 'impressions'. In order to emphasise the mental character of 'impressions' and 'ideas', Hume maintains that the difference between them is a difference of feeling and 'thinking'. Thereby, he means that impressions are directly felt, strong and vivid perceptions, whereas 'ideas' are comparatively feeble perceptions acquired through recollection or imagination. Thus, putting all the stress on the degree of vivacity with which 'impressions and ideas' are received by the mind, he says, "Everyone of himself will readily perceive the difference betwixt feeling and thinking." Here we notice the difference between Locke

and Hume. According to Locke, the strength and vivacity of the simple ideas of sensation assure us of the presence of external material objects as the causes of these ideas. It is this fact of being caused by extra-mental reality which, in Locke's view, distinguishes the ideas of sensation from the ideas of memory and imagination. Hume however does not refer to any substantial reality, material or mental as the cause of our 'impressions'. By 'impressions', he simply means those mental awarenesses or 'perceptions' which are distinguished from 'ideas' in respect of the degrees of 'force and liveliness' with which they are felt. He does not distinguish between impressions and ideas by the manner of their production. To quote him "By the term impression I would not be understood to express the manner, in which our lively perceptions are produced in the soul, but merely the perceptions themselves".

Hume attempts to exhibit the priority of impressions through different examples. For instance, he argues that if we lack any one of our sense-organs, then in the absence of specific impressions, we cannot have the corresponding ideas also. "A blind man can form no notions of colours, a deaf man of sounds." To mention another example cited by Hume where he says, "We cannot form to ourselves a just idea of the taste of a pineapple, without having actually tasted it." He means that we cannot form the accurate idea of anything without the previous impressions of it. In these examples, we observe Hume's attempt to give a realistic interpretation of his epistemology and ontology. However, all these examples, in the process of showing the temporal priority of impressions, prove the existence of material objects also. Hence, it follows from Hume's own examples that the distinguishing feature of impressions is not vivacity or temporal priority but the fact that they are caused by objective reality which is lacking in the case of ideas. Whereas Locke emphasises the objective ground of the simple ideas of sensation, Hume puts all the stress on the subjective characteristics of 'impressions'.

Just like Locke's division of simple ideas into those of sensation and reflection, Hume draws a similar distinction within impressions: namely, impressions of sensations and impressions of reflection. An impression of sensation, in Hume's view, "arises in the soul originally from unknown causes". This view implies that there are existents other than impressions and ideas but because they are not given in our sense-perception, they are 'unknown' to us. This statement contradicts his view that "we never....can conceive any kinds of existence, but those perceptions..." Hence, it seems to us that two different interpretations of Hume's ontological position are possible. On the one hand, we cannot conceive any other existences than 'perceptions' i.e., impressions and ideas; on the other hand, his view implies that there are existences other than 'perceptions' but they are 'unknown' to us. Herein lays agnosticism in Hume. As according to Hume, we do not know either external material substances or identical mental substance, the origin of the impressions of sensation is unknown for us. Impression of reflection, in Hume's view, "is derived in a great measure from our ideas..." An impression leaves its copy i.e., idea in the mind, and reflecting on this idea, the mind may again receive a new impression like desire or aversion. Hume calls it the impression of reflection. As this kind of impression is directly derived from an idea, we observe that neither of Hume's two criteria, namely 'liveliness' or 'priority' is properly applicable to it.

2.4 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL LAWS OF ASSOCIATION OF IDEAS

Impressions and ideas, which constitute the matter of knowledge, are disconnected from one another. They are connected with one another by the laws of association. The laws of association are purely subjective. Discrete impressions and ideas are automatically combined with one another according to these laws. They do not require any innate ideas or a priori forms of reason to connect them with one another. Hume advocates through-going empiricism. Impressions or sensations are the first units of knowledge; ideas or images are their faint copies. They are combined with one another according to the laws of association to form complex ideas. Knowledge is composed of sensations and ideas combined by the laws of association.

Hume has said that our atomic (distinct and separable) ideas, which correspond to our impressions, are connected or associated by three laws of association, which are a gentle force or impulse leading us to associate one idea with another. The association of our ideas is based upon three qualities of our ideas, which tend to lead the mind from one idea to another, to connect or associate one idea with another. The first law is that ideas are associated or connected by the resemblance between ideas. The second law by which we associate or connect one idea with another is by contiguity, one idea being close to, or adjacent to, another in space or time. The third law of the association of ideas is by cause and effect. These three laws pertain to all our thinking, thus also to our scientific thinking. All our reasoning about matters of fact, says Hume, is causal reasoning. And our most important reasoning about matters of fact is scientific reasoning, with its causal laws of nature.

Hume claims that the relation of cause and effect is the crucial concept in all our thinking about factual matters. By necessary connection is meant the relation between cause and effect in which the cause necessarily produces the effect. Hume now asks the powerful question: From what impression, if any, does the idea of cause arise? The principle, that everything must have a cause that nothing is uncaused, that something cannot come from nothing was regarded by Descartes and by the scholastic philosophers before him and the rationalistic philosophers after him, as a self-evident truth that proves itself directly to reason. Hume concludes that there is no rational proof whatsoever of the causal principle. He says flatly: "Every demonstration which has been produced for the necessity of a cause is fallacious." If we believe in the causal principle, he says, it is only through habit or custom that we do so, there is no rational basis for it. Here in this astonishing conclusion we see the outcome of Hume's early breakthrough: his notion of combining empiricism with Hutcheson's view of morality as coming only from sentiment or feeling. This had led Hume to the startling thought that what is true of morality is also true of science: that our scientific laws have their source only in feelings.

Why do we think that a particular cause must necessarily have a particular effect? We cannot know this by reason. Hume comes up with the answer. We have the idea of a necessary connection between a particular cause and effect after we experience their conjunction repeatedly. He calls this *constant conjunction*. If repeatedly we have sensory impressions of fire as spatially contiguous to my fingers and temporally prior to my fingers' having a sensation of burning, "without any further ceremony," says Hume, "we call the one cause and the other effect." Impressions of the constant conjunction, spatially and temporally, of the flaming match and the burning sensation in the fingers still do not provide an impression of necessary connection. If the idea of necessary connection has no corresponding impression, then on Hume's empiricist principle: no impression, no idea- the idea of a necessary connection between

cause and effects is worthless as knowledge and is meaningless, a fraud, nonsense. Thus Hume's empiricist rule is not only a test of the worth of our ideas as knowledge (where there is no impression, the idea is worthless) but is also a test of the meaning of our ideas (where there is no impression, the idea is meaningless).

Since necessary causal relation does not come from sensory impressions, it must be subjective; it must come from the mind, and specifically from the psychological laws of association of ideas. The idea of necessary connection between causes and effects is not in the objects we observe, but only in the mind, he concludes. Thus the idea of necessary connection between particular causes and effects is derived not from rational self-evidence and not from any empirical sense impression, but only from the psychological association of our ideas. Hume has shown that causal necessity is not an objective relationship between things which scientists can observe, but is only a subjective compulsion to relate things by the psychological laws of association. There is no necessary connection between objects. There is only the psychological necessity of our associating ideas with one another. Hume says: "Objects have no discoverable connection together, nor is it from any other principle but custom...that we draw any inference from one...to the other." Hume's point is that the idea of necessary connection between cause and effect is something that experience can never give us. Each impression is a separate experience. Experience cannot guarantee that this effect is necessary. Thus Hume redefines the idea of the cause-effect relation. A cause is an object in constant spatial and temporal conjunction with another such that the experience of the one compels the mind to expect the other. This is all that we can mean by the cause-effect relationship.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Explain Hume's distinction between impressions and ideas and clarify its sceptical implications?

.....

2) What are the arguments given by Hume to deny the necessary connection between cause and effect? Discuss?

.....

2.5 MATTERS OF FACT AND RELATIONS OF IDEAS

For Hume all the objects of human reason or enquiry may naturally be divided into two kinds of propositions, to wit, Matters of Fact and Relations of Ideas and they are mutually exclusive.

1) Matters of Facts: Here Hume attacks upon the validity of scientific knowledge. Propositions of matters of facts consist only in our impressions and ideas. There is no necessity that any particular impression will follow any other impression. The contrary of what usually occurs in observed constant conjunction is possible. How do you know, Hume asks, that the sun will rise tomorrow? No necessary causal law guarantees it. It is just as intelligible and without any logical contradiction to say "The sun will not rise tomorrow." There is no more logical necessity for the one than for the other. We can never know that a fact must be so, that a fact is necessary.

2) Relations of ideas: Logic and mathematics, specifically arithmetic, geometry, and algebra, give us knowledge of the relations of ideas. This is the domain of certainty. The propositions of mathematics are either self-evidently or intuitively certain, or they can be demonstrated by deductive reasoning to have complete certainty. The truths of mathematics assert relationships between ideas, between abstract symbols. They are formal abstract truths. They tell us nothing about matters of fact, and on the other hand, matters of fact cannot refute them. It is true independent of any experience we might have. Mathematical propositions must pay a price for yielding absolute truth. Mathematics is not truth about anything which exists, about any matters of fact. Mathematics is only empty, abstract, formal truth, which tells you nothing about existence. No proposition which states a relation between ideas can establish any truth about existence.

Relations of ideas have certainty but no factual content, and matters of fact which have empirical content but no certainty. Even though Hume has conceded that logical certainty can be attained through demonstrative reasoning in the field of the relations of ideas, he has implied in the *Enquiries*, that such knowledge is only verbal, or tautologous. As the 'relations' are already contained in the ideas, they do not provide any new information. In the *Treatise*, he has brought the faculty of reason into question. As human beings are not infallible, he argues that there is a possibility of error even with regard to rational knowledge. Hume has thus resolved both empirical and rational knowledge into mere probability.

2.6 THE LIMITS OF KNOWLEDGE

With regard to the idea of substance, when we ask, from what impressions does it arise, the answer cannot claim to be from an impression of substance, but only from impressions of qualities we experience, such qualities as size, shape, colour. Then the idea of substance is nothing but these qualities which we experience. We cannot, therefore, say that substances exist. We can know that something exists only if we have an impression of it, only if we have sensory experience of it. And so Hume destroys the claim that substance exist by showing that we have no impressions of physical substances. As far as our knowledge of the world of facts is concerned, we are limited to our atomistic impressions and their corresponding ideas. These impressions and ideas appear repeatedly in our experience. We have no way of knowing what causes them. We have no knowledge that an external world exists, that physical substances exist, that a God exists. There is no God. There is no valid proof for the existence of God. We have no impression of God. We do not perceive Him, nor can we infer His existence. We wish to believe

in God to fulfil our aspirations. So we believe in God. The idea of God is man-made. This is also the case for the idea of mental substance, and specifically for Descartes' claim that I am a thinking substance. There is no sensory impression to which the idea of thinking substance corresponds. On empiricist principles we cannot claim to have any knowledge of the self as a unity, as permanent and continuous, but only as a series of perceptions. Hume says "the rest of mankind.... are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement." This is Hume's famous "bundle of perceptions" theory of the self. Hume cannot claim that the flux of our perceptions have even the unity of a bundle. Hume is here getting close to the view of self as a stream of consciousness. Hume himself says, "The mind is a kind of theatre, where perceptions successively make their appearance, pass and re-pass, glide away and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations." There is no continuity, no permanence, and no identity, in these appearances in the theatre of the mind. But suddenly Hume catches himself and says that, strictly speaking, there is not even a theatre that we can know anything about through a sense impression. And thus the outcome of Hume's driving, consistent empiricism, which requires that the basis for our knowledge be solely in sensory impressions, leads to the conclusion that we have no knowledge. Not only is metaphysics impossible, science is also impossible. The causal laws of science have been reduced by Hume to the psychological laws of association of ideas. Through animal instinct we have animal faith in the world of the senses, and thus we are able to function in the world, says Hume. Animal faith, not philosophy, governs our lives.

In the *Treatise*, Hume not only brings the certainty of geometry to question, but also expresses doubt with regard to the very capacity of reason. Hume argues that it is never possible to claim certainty about a chain of reasoning as a rational proof. First of all, our judgement about the proof is probable and not completely certain. Then, our assessment of this judgment about the proof is also probable. Further, the evaluation of our ability to judge our judgment is also probable. Thus, the process leads to an infinite regress. There is no guarantee of certainty even in the field of 'Relations of Ideas' and in the realm of 'Matters of Fact.' Thus for Hume, "all knowledge degenerates into probability" In Hume's view, probability is all that we can aspire for in our life.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Explain in your own words the distinction Hume makes between "matters of fact" and "relations of ideas". Do you agree that these are different objects of knowledge?

.....

2) State and examine Hume's refutation of the notion of self as a substance?

.....

2.7 LET US SUM UP

David Hume's (1711-1776) exciting new philosophic outlook combined the empiricism of John Locke (1632-1704) and George Berkeley (1685-1753), who argued that knowledge comes only from sense perception, with the moral philosophy of Francis Hutcheson, who argued that morality comes only from sentiment or feeling. Putting these together Hume states that our knowledge is nothing but sense perceptions which our feeling lead us to believe. Hume's philosophy is an example of the method of abstraction in its extreme form. In the sphere of ontology, Hume is neither an idealist nor a materialist. He is generally known as a neutral monist. He rejects the existence of the self as well as of God. He also rejects the existence of the material substance. So what we are left with is the plurality of perceptions and impressions. Following the method of abstraction, Hume divides all knowledge into two kinds: (i) relations of ideas and (ii) matters of fact. These are two completely separate kinds of knowledge with no mediating transitions. One is analytic and the other synthetic. Knowledge of mathematics, physics, and geometry, according to Hume, are analytic because these are universal and necessary. In the *Treatise*, Hume not only brings the certainty of Geometry to question, but also expresses doubt in regard to the very capacity of reason. Hume has resolved both empirical and rational knowledge into mere probability.

2.8 KEY WORDS

Scepticism: A philosophical conception questioning the possibility of knowledge of objective reality. Consistent scepticism is close to agnosticism and nihilism.

Ontology: Ontology is the metaphysical inquiry into the nature of being in general.

Enlightenment: A movement in Europe from about 1650 until 1800 that advocated the use of reason and individualism instead tradition and established doctrines.

Causal Laws: Descriptive laws asserting a necessary connection between events of two kinds, of which one is the cause and the other the effect.

Causal Reasoning: Inductive reasoning in which some effect is inferred from what is assumed to be its cause, or some cause is inferred from what is assumed to be its effect.

Cause: Either the necessary condition for the occurrence of an effect or the sufficient condition for the occurrence of an effect, understood as the conjunction of its necessary conditions. The latter meaning is more common, and is the sense of cause used when we wish to produce something or event.

Necessary conditions: Necessary conditions for something are those factors without which that thing cannot exist, as breathing is a necessary condition for human life.

Substance: (1) An individual thing, a unity of matter and form; (2) by contrast with properties, qualities, attributes, a substance is that which possesses or has properties, qualities; (3) by contrast with properties, qualities, a substance is that which requires no other thing in order to exist.

Monism: Any view which holds that one principle is sufficient to explain reality.

Scholasticism: The philosophy of the medieval cathedral schools which attempted to support Christian beliefs with elements of Greek philosophy and with the use of syllogistic reasoning.

2.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCE

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UNIT 3 IMMANUEL KANT

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- 3.5 Moral Philosophy of Kant
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3.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of unit is to expose Kant's contribution to Western philosophy. His epistemological and metaphysical positions along with his moral thought by categorical imperatives are dealt here. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), a philosopher of enlightenment, is famous for his epistemology and metaphysics. His outstanding contribution to Western philosophy is laudable, especially in his notion of phenomenon and *noumenon*, categorical imperatives in moral philosophy. His transcendental idealism is seen as an attempt to resolve the issues of rationalism and empiricism in approaching reality.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Immanuel Kant has been regarded as the most important modern philosopher and the paradigmatic philosopher of the European Enlightenment. He is also one of the most influential German Idealist philosophers and the founder of Transcendental or Critical Idealism.

Kant proposes a "change in point of view" to reform metaphysics from the shackles of dogmatism and scepticism. While dogmatism, according to Kant, trusts in the principles of metaphysics "without a previous critique of the faculty of reason itself, merely with a view to their success," scepticism holds a "general mistrust in pure reason," again, "without a previous critique, merely with a view to the failure of its assertions." Metaphysics has hitherto been a merely random groping ..., a groping among mere concepts."

In spite of his strictures on the traditional metaphysics, he is ready to admit that "the idea of is as old as speculative human reason," and is "what rational being does not speculate either in scholastic or in popular fashion?" Interestingly, Kant opens the first *Critique* with a statement of

the inevitability of metaphysics, indicating that it is “prescribed by the very nature of reason itself.” Dogmatic metaphysics attempts to have *a priori* knowledge of reality independent of sensibility and experience.

The new metaphysics, which, for Kant, is only worthy of the name, is metaphysics as a science, “a system of *a priori* knowledge from mere concepts” and “the inventory of all our possessions through pure reason, systematically arranged.” Assuming that the quest of human reason for metaphysics is inherent to human nature (“natural disposition”), he looks for a justification of its ideas in the practical realm. Metaphysics of morals is indirectly a concession Kant gives to fulfil the natural quest of human reason for the realization of its ultimate ideals, which he rejects as untenable on the basis of the principles enshrined in the *Critique* itself. Kant tailors human natural disposition for metaphysics into the new metaphysics.

Reflecting on the development of his philosophy, Kant distinguished three periods: The ‘dogmatic period,’ The ‘sceptic period,’ and The ‘transcendentalist period.’ Kant’s philosophy can be characterised as an attempt to answer three fundamental questions: a) What can I know? b) What ought I to do? c) What may I hope for? He addresses these questions in his important works namely the three Critiques. a) In 1781 *Critique of Pure Reason* was published. ‘Pure reason’ means a critical enquiry into the faculty of reason with reference to all the cognitions to which it may strive to attain independently of all experience. b) It is true that his original conception of his critical philosophy anticipated the preparation of a critique of moral philosophy. *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), the result of this intention, is the standard source book for his ethical doctrines. *The Critique of Judgement* (1790), one of the most original and instructive of all of Kant’s writings - was not foreseen in his original conception of the critical philosophy. Thus it is perhaps best regarded as a series of appendixes to the other two Critiques. The work falls into two main parts, namely “Critique of Aesthetic Judgment” and “Critique of Teleological Judgment.”

3.2 METHOD OF KANT

Kant uniquely synthesizes Rationalism and Empiricism into Critical Philosophy of his own, by inspiration of both, eliminating the faults of both thoughts and critically unifying the strengths of these opposing philosophical insights. He rejected rationalism for being so dogmatic in metaphysics and the second for too sceptical in epistemology. His main objective was to save religion from reason and yet at the same time to save science from scepticism. For Kant, knowledge proper must have universal and necessary factors along with factuality. Such knowledge is found in mathematics and physics. Empiricism cannot give such knowledge as on the basis of experience, strict universality and necessity cannot be obtained. So empiricism cannot explain knowledge as it is found in mathematics and physics. According to Rationalism, there is a universal faculty of reason by virtue of which each individual has certain innate ideas. This theory explains universality and necessity according to Kant. All men have the same innate ideas because of their possessing a common faculty of reason. But the difficulty of rationalism lies in another direction. Innate ideas are subjective, being in the mind of human knowers. There is no guarantee that they will be true of facts. The upshot of the review is that reason, unaided by

experience, can build castle in the air only, and by no stretch of imagination can it lay claim to actuality. Therefore, Kant discarded rationalism on the ground that it dealt with airy structures without correspondence with facts.

Kant did not reject empiricism and rationalism outright. He tried to give solution based on the Critical, Transcendental and Agnostic philosophy.

Kant states that both empiricism and rationalism are right in what they affirm but wrong in what they deny. Empiricism affirms that knowledge is constituted by experience and rationalism affirms that knowledge is constituted by innate or *a priori* ideas. Empiricism is right in as much as it points out that propositions of facts can be derived from experience. But rationalism is also right in as much as it points out that knowledge is constituted of *a priori* elements also. Again, empiricism is wrong in as much as it denies the presence of *a priori* elements involved in knowledge. In the same way, rationalism wrongly denies that sense-experience also constitutes knowledge. The proper view, according to Kant, is "Knowledge begins with experience and does not necessarily originate from it." Therefore, knowledge proper is a joint venture of sense and understanding. Nevertheless, we shall also find in due course that the mind does not remain satisfied with scientific knowledge of the phenomenon only. It also tries to know *noumena* (thing-in-itself - *das Ding an sich*) as well but becomes impossible. Apart from sense and understanding there is reason which tries to constitute knowledge. Hence, according to Kant, knowledge begins with sense, proceeds to understanding and ends in reason.

According to Kant, any epistemology should have occupied itself with the enquiry of *a priori* elements involved in knowledge. These elements are independent of any experience whatsoever. Indeed, they are the pre-conditions of any cognitive experience whatsoever. Unless, these *a priori* elements be operative, no experience of any object would arise at all. So Kant is not so much concerned with any specific objects of knowledge as with the universal or *a priori* ways of knowing any object. Hence, Kant has called his epistemological enquiry Transcendental. It means something like going beyond ordinary level of experience. The term transcendental signifies the *a priori* condition of all possible knowledge. In Kant's philosophy '*a priori*' is the mark of necessity. Such necessity can never be explained in terms of experience. E.g. Unity, good, truth. Thus Kant's method is called transcendental method.

Agnosticism is that branch of philosophy according to which it is claimed that human beings have no faculty for knowing certain ultimate realities. It also holds that any attempt to prove or disapprove the existence of God becomes impossible. Agnosticism, in other words, completely or partially denies the possibility of knowing the nature of Universe. Following this philosophy, Kant maintains that there are things in themselves which are unknown and unknowable. Therefore, he concludes that we can know objects only as they appear to us, coloured and transformed by our ways of knowing. What these objects are in themselves apart from our ways of knowing, of course, can never be ascertained by us. Hence, according to Kant, knowledge of the *phenomena* alone is possible and *noumena* remain unknown and unknowable. Later on, Kant has maintained that although they are not objects of knowledge, they are yet proper objects of faith. After all, he was a deeply religious man and so he demolished knowledge in order to make room for faith.

3.3 KANT'S PHILOSOPHY OF KNOWLEDGE

Kant observed the sorry and confused state of philosophy which has been reduced to mere groping among concepts. Metaphysics has not been established on sure foundation. Instead man is a metaphysical animal that constantly asks questions about being. Metaphysics is a natural disposition of man. He is driven on by an inward need to ask questions which cannot be answered by empirical employment of reason. The Metaphysics of Kant's time was tinged with dogmatism and illogic and was not worthy of the name 'science' because science sought after precision and perfection. There is still a way for Metaphysics to enter upon the secure path of science. If in the past Metaphysics was not able to enter upon the secure path of science it was because it has been following a wrong path. Therefore Kant felt the need for a kind of radical re-ordering of presuppositions. Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects outside us. Instead Kant proposed that we should suppose that the external world must conform to our knowledge, to the forms and categories of objects in our mind. This came to be known as "Kantian Copernican Revolution".

Synthetic *a priori* Judgements

From a logical point of view, the propositions that express human knowledge can be divided according to two distinctions. 1) Distinction between propositions that are *a priori*, in the sense that they are knowable prior to experience. Necessity and Universality are the two criteria of *a priori* propositions and both of these criteria are inseparable. By 'strict universality' means 'true in all possible world.' *A posteriori* propositions are those that they are knowable only after experience. 2) Distinction between propositions that are analytic, that is, those in which the predicate is included in the subject. For example, "All bodies are extended." If we understand the meaning of the term 'material body' whose connotation was taken by Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz to be extension, then certainly the predicate 'extended' is already contained in the subject. And a synthetic proposition is one in which the predicate is not included in the subject. E.g. Material bodies are heavy. Whether a body is heavy or not is known through experience.

The distinction between the analytic and the synthetic is based on the content of propositions. Here the question is: "Does the proposition add or does not add to cognition or knowledge?" If it does, it is called synthetic, if it does not, it is called analytic. However, the distinction of *a priori* and *a posteriori* propositions has reference to the sources of cognition. *A priori* propositions stem from pure reason or pure understanding. As such they are valid independently of any experience whatsoever. *A posteriori* propositions, on the other hand, are derived from experience. They, therefore, require experience for their validation.

For the most of the empiricists, *a priori* and the analytic propositions, and, *a posteriori* and the synthetic propositions are identical. But, for Kant, synthetic propositions instead of being *a posteriori* may be *a priori*. For the empiricists and rationalists, who are unanimous in claiming that the analytical propositions are *a priori* in their nature, they are absurd and self-contradictory and consequently nonsense. For Kant, however, synthetic propositions *a priori* are most significant in scientific cognition and are found in mathematics and in physics. For example: $5+7$ are together equal to 12. It is universal, necessary and *a priori* in mathematics. Every event has a cause. Although it is not part of the concept of an event that it be a cause, it is universally true and necessary that every event has a cause. These judgements or propositions are synthetic as

they explain the progress of science and they are *a priori* as they explain the universal aspect of scientific knowledge.

The Process of Knowledge

Kant was meditative and methodical. A desire for thoroughness has made him highly analytic. As such Kant divides and sub-divides his subject into indefinite details. It was Kant who has introduced the tripartite division of mental processes into cognition, cognition and affection. Corresponding to these three divisions, the three Critiques are developed. In the history of philosophy, Critique of Pure Reason has played more important part than the other critiques. For Kant, knowledge requires both sensation (empiricists) and understanding (rationalists). Sensation supplies the data for knowledge to the understanding. Kant said, "Objects are 'given' to us by means of sensation and it alone yields us 'intuitions'; they are 'thought' through the understanding, and from the understanding arise 'concepts'." Therefore, it is only from the united action of sensation and understanding we can obtain knowledge. The only valid use of the understanding consists of its 'thinking of the data' supplied to it by sensation. Using the understanding to go beyond to the data of sensation is an illegitimate use of the understanding. The contribution of sensation: The data of sensation come to us through various sense organs and present themselves to us in a confused and unconnected way. This is known as 'matter' of sensation. These must be ordered properly. In sensation there are two 'a priori' forms which provide this ordering namely, 'space' and 'time'.

Space is nothing but the form of all appearances of outer sense. It is the subjective condition of sensibility under which alone outer intuition is possible for us. Time is the determinate form in which alone the intuition of inner states is possible. Neither space nor time is derived from experience nor do they represent any property of things in themselves. They are a priori forms according to which we organise and perceive sense data. The objects of our sense experience are represented as being spatio-temporal. The contribution of understanding: The confused sense data are supplied to reason which organises them in spatio-temporal forms and passes on the result to understanding to be 'thought' by it through concepts.

The Twelve Categories of Kant

There are 12 basic categories (concepts) according to which these sense-data are thought. Each category is linked to a type of judgement. These judgements can be brought under four groups: quantity, quality, relation, and modality. Each of these heads has 'three moments'; the last moment is the synthesis of the first two moments.

Table of Judgements	Illustrations	Derived Concepts
Quantity: Universal Particular Singular	All politicians are corrupt Some are honest Vijayakanth is corrupt	Unity Plurality Totality
Quality: Affirmative Negative	Man is mortal The soul is not mortal	Reality Negation

Infinite	The soul is immortal	Limitation
Relation: Categorical Hypothetical Disjunctive	God is just If God is just, he will punish sinners God is either just or unjust	Substance – Attribute Cause – Effect Reciprocity of agent – Patient
Modality: Problematical Assertoric Apodictic (Beyond Dispute)	This may be poison This is poison Every effect must have a cause	Possibility – Impossibility Existence – Non-Existence Necessity – Contingency

Hence, according to Kant, knowledge is the application of pure concepts of the understanding or categories to objects furnished us by the senses and perceived as spatial and temporal. Categories serve to make experience possible.

Noumena and Phenomena

Kant made a famous distinction between *phenomena* and *noumena*. The *noumenon* (plural *Noumena*) is the thing-in-itself (*das Ding an sich*) as opposed to the phenomenon—the thing as it appears to an observer. Though the *noumena* holds the contents of the intelligible world, Kant claimed that man's speculative reason can only know phenomena and can never penetrate to the *noumenon*. 'Phenomena' refers to 'things perceived', that is, the things as-we-know-it. 'Noumena' refers to 'things thought', that is, the things in themselves. By this distinction Kant wanted to show that what we know is the appearance of reality, clothed under the a priori forms of space and time and invested in a category. In other words, we can never know anything in its pure state, divested of forms and categories. Therefore, knowledge consists in getting objects to conform to the forms and categories of the mind. The universality and necessity of cause-and-effect relationship, weakened by David Hume, is now restored in strictness.

3.4 KANT'S PHILOSOPHY OF GOD

Morality and freedom give us the right to believe in the reality of two other Ideas of reason, namely those of God and immortality. He argues that we must postulate the reality of these Ideas in order to be able to act as moral beings in this world. Without immortality and God we would be condemned to moral despair. Moral action makes us deserving of happiness but frequently does not lead to happiness in this world. If we want to establish a connection between the two, we must assume that they will be made to coincide by God in the long run. In this way, the notions of God and immortality, as prerequisites for the realisation of the *summum bonum* or the highest good, make possible the moral enterprise for Kant, and therefore we must believe in their reality.

To elaborate on this: Reason's search for the unconditioned, the dialectical inference from contingent existence to the existence of a necessary being is an effective drive to advance beyond

experience to the transcendental ideal. It is also the *ens entium*, the being of all beings, or the ground of all beings, which in the transcendental sense is God, and the ideal of pure reason. Here it must be borne in mind that what is being considered by Kant is the objective reality of the concept of God, and not the objective reality of God, as it is beyond the critical philosophy to consider it, as God cannot be given in intuition. Kant insists that the transcendental ideal, or the concept of God can have the valid employment only as a regulative principle of reason; any attempt to employ the same to be constitutive of the existence of God would be dialectical and detrimental to the nature of human reason itself. The only possible proof for the existence of God, for Kant, must use moral premises; his insistence to rule out speculative theology gives way to the possibility of moral theology, and an initial attempt is made in this regard in the “Canon of Pure Reason” which is elaborated in his later ethical works. The schema of God is only a human way of conceiving the ground of nature, for the purpose of employing our cognitive faculties, in order to arrive at the unified understanding of the world of sensibility and understanding. Therefore, theoretical philosophy, in fact, does not address the question of the belief in the existence of God (it being set apart for moral theology), but deals only about thinking of the world *as if* it were created by God, with a view to purposive unity of nature.

Belief in these three concepts is central in Kant’s so-called moral faith. Though Kant himself was not religious and was indifferent to forms of external religious worship, he did believe that morality inevitably leads us to the acceptance of certain tenets of traditional theism. In his essays on religious matters and especially in his *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, he attempts to develop the parallels between revealed religion and philosophical theology. He claims that all that is essential in religion can be reduced to morality. Accordingly, he criticises established religion severely as engaging in mere idolatry in its insistence on merely formal requirements. According to Kant, then, what we may hope is that our moral actions ultimately do make a difference. Kant held the view that the three possible approaches to the existence of God established through reason are illusory.

a) Ontological Proof:

It is based on the notion of the most perfect being (St. Anselm). For Kant existence cannot be considered an attribute of a being, though a necessary being necessarily includes all its attributes. To grant ‘existence’ to the necessary being, we must go out of the concept, to experience. The concept expresses only what is possible.

b) Cosmological Proof:

It begins with the cosmos and proceeds to the existence of a Creator of the orderly universe. For Kant, it is not a rational argument because it also goes outside experience to suppose the properties of the necessary being, from the ‘concept’ of the ‘most real being’. It is another form of the ontological proof.

c) Physical-theological proof:

It is a proof based on ‘design’ in the world or proof from order or finality (5th way of St. Thomas). For Kant, this argument proves only the ‘architect’ of the world and not its creator. That is, one who planned and ordered this world and not one who brought it into being. Secondly, this ‘finite world’, with its ‘finite order’ is insufficient ground to demand an infinite

being to account for it. We may argue to the existence of a cause 'proportionate' to it but not of an 'infinite being'.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What does Kant mean by *noumena*?

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2) What do you understand by Kant's proof for God?

.....

3.5 MORAL PHILOSOPHY OF KANT

Kant's moral philosophy presented in his Critique of Practical Reason may be regarded as an attempt to discover the meaning of goodness, right and wrong, duty and the implications of our moral knowledge. In his practical philosophy, Kant argues that human reason is an autonomous source of principles of conduct, immune from the blandishments of sensual inclination in both its determinations of value and its decisions to act, and indeed that human autonomy is the highest value and the limiting condition of all other values.

Traditionally, Kant has been seen as an ethical formalist, according to whom all judgments on the values of ends must be subordinated to the obligatory universality of a moral law derived from the very concept of rationality itself. Kant exposes ethics as 'the inherent value of the world, the *summum bonum*, is freedom in accordance with a will which is not necessitated to action' and even more clearly in lectures on natural right he says that 'If only rational beings can be ends in themselves, that is not because they have reason, but because they have freedom. Reason is merely a means'. Kant holds that the incomparable dignity of human beings derives from the fact that they are 'free with regard to all laws of nature, obeying only those laws which' they make themselves.

Kant furnishes further formulations of the categorical imperative, especially the Formula of Humanity as an End in Itself - 'Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end'. It requires the possibility of rational consent to your action from any agent affected by it. It is the formula of the kingdom of ends, the requirement that any proposed course

of action be compatible with 'a whole of all ends in systematic conjunction. The formulations are supposed to follow from the Formula of Universal Law. Humanity is an end in itself because of its potential for freedom, that the real 'ground of a possible categorical imperative' is discovered. If so, then this is Kant's theory: the ultimate source of value is human freedom as an end in itself, manifested in interpersonal contexts in the possibility of freely given consent to the actions of others.

Postulates of Categorical Imperatives: From the categorical imperatives Kant derives three important postulates or necessary implications (arising out of practical reason).

- a) That man is free: An imperative (obligation) means that there is a possibility of disobeying, that is saying 'no' to it.
- b) That man has an immortal soul: It implies an absolute conformity with the law, which is 'holiness'. It is a perfection of which no rational being of the sensible world is capable at any moment of its existence. Since such a holiness is necessary, we have to postulate an everlasting tending to it as a remote goal. This requires an everlasting duration of existence and personality of the same rational being which is called the immortality of the soul.
- c) That God exists: God must exist to justify the moral order. The practical reason demands it.

Concept of Moral Law

From infancy Kant was always been struck by 'the starry heavens above and the moral law within', the two orders, the physical and the moral. In the history of philosophy we ascribe the term 'categorical imperative' in moral philosophy to Kant. For, reason demands that the moral law for every empirical rational agent be categorical and imperative. Moral law for Kant is a synthetic *a priori* proposition. Kant believes that a moral law for all empirical rational beings can be derived only when it is rooted in the autonomous freedom of the agent. Any conjunction with the empirical nature of the agent for the determination of the moral law affects its purity. The moral law must be foundationally rational, i.e., *a priori* and should have the form of universality. Kant's *a priori* moral law has universal application. He calls a rational moral being universal law-giver as well. The deliberations of a moral agent have to be based on pure practical reason. The moral law asserts the universal nature of rational beings and the consequent rational obligation of a will that expresses itself as free yet morally obliged. Kant does not admit any empirical factor to be the determining basis of moral duty. Only pure practical reason has the capacity to provide universal, objective and absolute morals for rational beings. The moral principles should have the pure practical reason as their determining basis. The moral law as categorical imperative must be the duty-bound *a priori* general principle of action and therefore the law of action for all situations. Any inalienable dependence on empirical factors brings forth only heteronomous and conditional laws of action. To a perfect rational being, the moral law is not an imperative but 'the law of holiness', because they possess unlimited reason. The moral law, thus, is categorical imperative for those rational beings that are affected by sensual impulses.

Moral Duties

Kant's principle of morality gives rise to a fourfold classification of duties, resulting from the intersection of two divisions: between duties to oneself and to others, and between perfect and imperfect duties. Perfect duties are proscriptions of specific kinds of actions, and violating them is morally blameworthy; imperfect duties are prescriptions of general ends, and fulfilling them is

praiseworthy. The four classes of duty are thus: perfect duties to oneself, such as the prohibition of suicide; perfect duties to others, such as the prohibition of deceitful promises; imperfect duties to oneself, such as the prescription to cultivate one's talents; and imperfect duties to others, such as the prescription of benevolence.

Ethical duties to oneself include the prohibition of injury to the physical and mental bases of one's free agency, as by suicide or drunkenness, and the prescription of efforts to improve both the physical and mental conditions for the exercise of one's freedom. And ethical duties to others include both the prohibition of injuries to the dignity of others as free agents, for example by insulting or ridiculing them ('duties of respect'), and the prescription of efforts to improve the conditions for others' exercise of their own freedom, as by beneficence and sympathy ('duties of love'). "Morality is not properly the doctrine of how we may make ourselves happy, but how we may make ourselves worthy of happiness." "Let us seek the happiness in others; but for ourselves, perfection – whether it brings us happiness or pain."

3.6 LET US SUM UP

Kant is one of the most influential philosophers in the history of Western philosophy. We can distinguish four levels of perception in Kant's theory of knowledge: the phenomenal, the ideal, the existential and the etiological (of values). *Phenomena* are known through sensibility, ideal objects through understanding, existence through volitional perception and values through feelings or emotions. The positivist line, which goes from Comte to analytical philosophy, drew from Kant his distrust of metaphysics. Even the irrational trend, so common in many philosophical tendencies, has a forerunner in Kant's voluntaristic and emotional intuitions. For Kant, while the reality of God cannot be demonstrated (by theoretical) it has to be believed (by practical reason) as the foundation of moral life. One should not say (God Is) but God must be, otherwise moral obligation is meaningless. In his dealing with the problem of God, Kant replaced reason by Faith. Kant has been accused of fideism. E.g. St. Augustine holds that faith and reason are contradictory but reason helps us in deciding what must be accepted by faith.

He eradicated the last traces of the medieval worldview from modern philosophy and joined the key ideas of earlier rationalism and empiricism into a powerful model of the subjective origins of the fundamental principles of both science and morality. Above all, Kant was the philosopher of human autonomy, the view that by the use of our own reason in its broadest sense human beings can discover and live up to the basic principles of knowledge and action without outside assistance, above all without divine support or intervention.

Kant is truly the Father of contemporary thought. His critical philosophy is important element influencing his successors. He proposed a system that was fundamentally *a priori* but upholding the value of the phenomenal reality. For him, the reality that human beings know is basically the reality constituted or constructed by human beings themselves. The autonomous individual, through the proper exercise of the will, constructs the moral world. For Kant, we can have *a priori* knowledge, which is necessary and universal. He holds that all our knowledge is

ultimately rooted in sense intuitions as well as in concepts. Kant believes that the human reason has the responsibility of determining the source, extent and bounds of its own principles.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Explain the Categorical Imperatives.

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2) Explain the difference between synthetic and analytic propositions.

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3.7 KEY WORDS

Categorical Imperative: A categorical imperative declares an action to be of itself objectively necessary without any reference to any purpose, i.e., without any end.

Synthetic A priori: That which is not contained in the very concept of subject but at the same time is known independently of experience.

Postulates: Postulates are the presuppositions of reason from a pure practical point of view. In Kant's practical philosophy, they are freedom, God and immortality.

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UNIT 4 HEGEL

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

Hegel was the last of the main representatives of a philosophical movement known as German Idealism. Hegel's thoughts on the history of philosophy made that topic a philosophical discipline in its own right. The unit elaborates on the philosophical contribution of Hegel through his three major works such as *phenomenology of Spirit*, *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Spirit*, from where his idea of the dynamic Absolute, organic physics and Dialectic method concretely emerged.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Hegel was born on 27 August 1770 in Stuttgart, son of a Württemberg official. In autumn 1793, after successfully completing this period of study, Hegel became a private tutor in Berne, Switzerland, and remained there until 1796. Thanks to a legacy, Hegel was able to abandon his position as a tutor and pursue his academic ambitions. With Schelling's energetic support Hegel qualified as a Privatdozent in the autumn of 1801 with a thesis on natural philosophy. Initially, Schelling and Hegel worked closely together, a fact which is documented by a philosophical periodical which they published jointly from 1802 (although it ceased publication following Schelling's departure from Jena in 1803). In 1805 Hegel was appointed Extraordinary Professor, but financial difficulties forced him to abandon his activities at the University of Jena in the autumn of 1806. In November 1808 the same friend then ensured that Hegel was nominated rector and professor at a grammar school in Nuremberg. After a few years in this capacity, Hegel was able to return to university life. Hegel died in Berlin during a cholera epidemic on 14 November 1831, at the height of his fame.

Hegel devoted his life wholly to academic purists. Hegel's works can be divided into three groups: (1) texts written by Hegel and published during his lifetime; (2) texts written by him, but not published during his lifetime; and (3) texts neither written by him nor published during his lifetime. His science of logic, dialectical reasoning, encyclopaedia of philosophical sciences, philosophy of Right – all provide an intellectual foundation for modern nationalism. Hegel was an idealist who methodically constructed a comprehensive system of thought about the world. Compared to other philosophers, it is rather very difficult and harder to understand Hegel. He differs from Parmenides and Spinoza in conceiving the whole, not as a simple substance, but as complex system like an organism. In Hegel's view, world is not an illusion. The apparently separate things of the world have a greater or a lesser degree of reality and their reality exists in the aspect of the whole. Hegel calls, 'The Whole', in all its complexity as 'The Absolute'.

4.2 HEGEL'S METAPHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS

Hegel's systematic philosophy attempts to comprehend reality in all its manifestations as a self-representation of reason (*Vernunft*). His conception of what he calls 'reason' combines various specifically Hegelian connotations, both ontological and epistemological. Reason is reality, and that alone is truly real which is reasonable. At least three different convictions make up this basic precept of the ontological dignity of reason. Hegel calls this primary structure 'the absolute' or 'reason'. For Hegel, therefore, this conviction does not require detailed philosophical justification. Hegel's second important conviction relates to the internal constitution of the structure which he characterizes as reason. He understands this structure to be a complex unity of thinking and being. The third conviction which enters into Hegel's basic assumption of reason as the primary structure constituting reality and thus being ultimately and only real is that this structure constitutes reality and thus its own objectivity in a teleological process which must be understood as a process of knowledge. It is this conviction which leads to the characteristically Hegelian dogma that there can be no adequate theory of reality without a dynamic or process-oriented ontology. This process is described as 'self-knowledge of reason' (*Selbsterkenntnis der Vernunft*). Hegel tries to integrate within this formula various aspects of his conception of reason. The first aspect is that it is necessary to take reason, understood as the primary structure, as something which is essentially dynamic. The second aspect Hegel has in mind when he speaks of 'self-knowledge of reason', describing a process which must indeed be understood as that of the self-realization of reason, is that this process represents a process of recognition for reason. The project of exhibiting reason not only as the basis for all reality, but also as the whole of reality itself, was Hegel's sole, lifelong philosophical goal.

4.3 'THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT' AND CONCEPT OF ABSOLUTE

The *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) is Hegel's most influential work. It serves as an introduction to his philosophical system by means of a history of the experience of consciousness. A discipline which Hegel calls 'logic' is intended to fulfil its introductory function by raising our 'normal' thinking, which is characterized by its confinement to

irreconcilable oppositions, to the level of 'speculation,' Hegel's term for philosophical thinking. For him, 'reflection' is that thinking which by its insistence on oppositions simultaneously maintains their basic irresolvability. According to Hegel, it is now the task of logic to carry out the destruction of the finiteness of reflection or of the thinking of the understanding, thereby simultaneously leading to the standpoint of speculation or of the thinking of reason.

In '*Phenomenology of Spirit*,' Hegel pursues this dual goal in a complex and ambitious thought-process, which attempts to combine and position within a comprehensive context a wide range of themes. This whole thought-process is based on two convictions which govern Hegel's entire construction: (1) It is possible to conceive of all epistemic attitudes of a consciousness towards a material world as relations between a subject termed 'cognition' (*Wissen*) and an object termed 'truth' (*Wahrheit*). For the Hegel of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and of the writings which were to follow, knowledge in the strict sense is thus really self-knowledge. In characterizing the various epistemic attitudes of a consciousness to the world in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel takes as his starting point something which he calls 'sense certainty'. Hegel demonstrates the untenability of this attitude by attempting to prove that in such an immediate reference to objects nothing true can be claimed of them. According to Hegel, however, even this attitude is not tenable. Although, according to Hegel, this interpretation of the objective world through the cognizing subject also produces neither a truthful concept of the cognizing consciousness nor of the object in question, it none the less leads to the enforcement of an attitude according to which consciousness, when referring to an object, is referring to something which it is itself. The realization of this insight - that consciousness, when referring to objects, in reality relates to itself - converts consciousness into self-consciousness.

The various ways in which consciousness deals with itself and the objective manifestations corresponding with these ways as reason and spirit are comprehensively discussed by Hegel in the remainder of his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The conclusion of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* forms what Hegel calls 'absolute knowledge'. Hegel characterizes this knowledge also as 'comprehending knowledge' (*begreifendes Wissen*), aiming thereby to highlight two ideas: (1) that this knowledge is only present when the subject of the knowledge knows itself to be identical under every description with the object of that knowledge. From another point of view, Hegel describes the phenomenological process as 'self-fulfilling scepticism'. For Hegel, the modern age is characterized by the fact that unity has disappeared from people's lives. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* describes this process of destruction and foundation-laying. While the phenomenological process thus concedes a philosophical value to scepticism, in Hegel's understanding it simultaneously overcomes this scepticism by claiming a truth-revealing function for it. It is also Hegel's intention that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* should in this respect be understood as a treatise on the cathartic effect of philosophical scepticism.

Concept of Absolute

Absolute is not a Being separate from the world, nature or even individual persons, thus not making a sharp distinction between appearance and reality as in Plato's philosophy. In Hegel's view, nothing is unrelated and whatever we experience as separate things, will upon careful reflection, lead us to the other things to which they are related, until at last, the process of dialectical thought will end in the knowledge of the Absolute. Still, the Absolute is not a unity of separate things. Hegel describes the Absolute as a dynamic process, as an organism having parts

but nevertheless, unified into a complex system. Therefore, the Absolute is not an entity which is separate from the world as Kant's Noumena, but it is in the world in a special way.

4.4 'THE PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE' AND ORGANIC SYSTEM

Hegel's philosophy of nature is an attempt to explain how it is possible that we can recognize nature as a complex whole standing under a set of laws. Hegel's philosophy of nature is of interest mainly in three respects. The first concerns the way in which he transforms his logical theory into an interpretation of natural phenomena. The second relates to the question of how far Hegel's conceptions in the field of the philosophy of nature take into account the scientific theories current at the time. The third leads to the question of what we should make of Hegel's approach to a philosophy of nature within the framework of present-day philosophy of science. This way of looking at nature makes it the object of what Hegel calls 'mechanics'. Hegel's philosophy of nature consists of the so-called 'organic physics' or 'organics'. Hegel interprets subjectivity as an essential characteristic of organic life and nature as a hierarchy of organisms or as an 'organic system'. Hegel links the last part of his *philosophy of nature* to his *philosophy of spirit* by means of an analysis of the phenomenon of the death of an individual natural being.

The relation of the Absolute, the Whole to its parts like an organism – is the basic conception of Hegel's philosophy. The conception of the relation between the parts and the whole in an organism is extended by Hegel to all truth and reality. Hegel explains this organic theory of Truth and Reality with an example of a work of art. This reality is Absolute, Divine and Abstract, but it is Concretized through different types of expressions in nature and humans. It is 'thought - thinking' itself, 'a unity of the subjective and objective Idea'. According to Hegel, there is no truth except the whole truth. So, Absolute is the synthesis of Subjective Spirit and Objective Spirit because, Reality is Rationality. Man's knowledge of the Absolute is actually the Absolute, knowing itself through the finite spirit of man.

Hegel believes that this Absolute is the ultimate reality, which passes through the different stages of development in time and becomes conscious of itself in human reason. Yet, this absolute is timeless, eternal, all embracing, self completed whole. The sense of fragmentation and discreteness is alien to the spirit of Hegel's philosophy. The self positing and self negating spirit of wholeness is the very nature of Hegelian reality. Man's unity with nature and Man's unity with his own self and other selves. According to Hegel world is intelligible, reason being at the heart of things. Man can understand this truth through its faculty of reason. Pure reason, as opposed to practical reason has formal existence, as opposed to material existence. Pure reason though is beyond space and time, it exists in the abstract sense with as much reality as the existence as the other concrete things. The reason for the world has a logical temporal priority to the world, just as a mathematical problem has a logical non-temporal priority for its solution. Hegel calls this Absolute – 'The Idea', 'The Spirit', 'The Mind' etc. In other respects, Hegel differs from Plato. 'The Idea' is not static and self subsistent. Hegel laid great stress upon logic believing that knowing and being coincide.

<p>Check Your Progress I</p>

Note: Use the space provided for the answers.

1) How does Hegel equate reason and reality?

.....

2) Explain Hegel's organic theory.

.....

4.5 'PHILOSOPHY OF SPIRIT' AND DIALECTIC METHOD

Hegel's *philosophy of spirit* is divided into a theory of subjective, objective and absolute spirit. The philosophy of subjective spirit contains Hegel's philosophical psychology; his philosophy of objective spirit is devoted to his theory of law and politics and his conception of world history; and his philosophy of absolute spirit presents his theory of art, religion and philosophy. Hegel presented his philosophy of subjective spirit and in particular his philosophy of absolute spirit to a wider public only in outline in a few paragraphs of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences. The philosophy of subjective spirit contains an anthropology, a phenomenology of spirit and a psychology. In these sections Hegel describes and analyses all the phenomena that influence the somatic, psychophysical and mental characteristics, conditions, processes and activities of the individual. While the philosophy of subjective spirit really only attracted attention up to the middle of the nineteenth century, Hegel's philosophy of objective spirit, in other words his theory of law and politics, received a great deal of attention during the nineteenth and especially the twentieth century. Finally, the third conviction consists in an application of the principle which shapes Hegel's whole philosophical enterprise, namely, that political philosophy must play its part in the confirmation of the thesis that only reason is real.

Hegel fulfils his self-imposed demand for the integration of freedom by making the conception of free will the fundamental concept of his philosophy of the objective spirit; this is where his characteristic conception of freedom comes into play. For Hegel, self-determination means to refer willingly to oneself, that is, to will oneself. In his theory of law, Hegel makes his contribution to the discussion of the philosophical foundations of civil and criminal law. According to Hegel, however, legal relationships and moral standards are founded in social institutions. In Hegel's language, ethical life as the basis for the possibility of law and morality is the truth of free will, that which free will really is. For Hegel, ethical life appears in three institutional forms: family, bourgeois society and the state. This diagnosis is grounded in Hegel's analyses of a society founded solely on economic relationships. Hegel thinks of the state as a constitutional monarchy with division of power. For Hegel, the constitution of a state is in no sense the product of some constitution-creating institution or the work of individual persons. Hegel's theory of the powers of the state (*Staatsgewalten*) recognizes, in addition to the princely power (*fürstliche Gewalt*) which represents the instance of ultimate decision-making within the constitutional framework, the governmental power (*Regierungsgewalt*) and the legislative power (*gesetzgebende Gewalt*). Hegel forges the link to his theory of the spirit, which contains his political philosophy, by interpreting what he calls 'ethical life' as the 'spirit of a people'. Now,

Hegel believes that this development has taken place during the course of a historical process which he calls 'world history'. Hegel now interprets this reconciliation as the conclusion of the process of the self-recognition of reason.

Hegel's philosophy of absolute spirit contains his philosophy of art, his philosophy of religion and his theory of philosophy. Although from the very first all these subjects had a fixed place in Hegel's attempts at a system, and although his philosophies of art and religion were to become very influential (the one in the history of art and the theory of aesthetics and the other in theology), none the less these sections of Hegel's philosophy are relatively little elaborated in the works published by Hegel himself. In philosophy, the self-reference of reason is accounted for in the mode of cognition. By way of example Hegel takes the lion, which symbolizes strength. Hegel interprets the various individual arts as realizations of styles of art in various materials. Although each individual art can present itself in each style of art, there is for each individual art an ideal style, which he calls its basic type. The first individual art which Hegel discusses is architecture.

The remaining individual arts are painting, music and poetry, whose basic type is represented by the romantic style of art. Music is the romantic style of art par excellence. Hegel could not resist the temptation to use his theory of individual arts and styles of art as a model for the interpretation of the history of the development of art. In the philosophy of religion Hegel holds that only in Christianity are the conditions fulfilled which are characteristic of the representational self-knowledge of reason. Philosophy of religion has as its subject not only God, but also religion itself, and for Hegel that means the way in which God is present in the religious consciousness. The second part of the philosophy of religion discusses what Hegel calls 'determinate religion'. This exposition starts with so-called natural religion, which according to Hegel assumes three forms: the religion of magic, the religion of substantiality and the religion of abstract subjectivity. Natural religion finds its historical concept in the Oriental religions. Hegel regards the 'religions of spiritual individuality' as a second stage; these assume the forms of the religion of sublimity, the religion of beauty and the religion of teleology. Hegel puts the Jewish, Greek and Roman religions in this category. According to Hegel, this idea of religion was first realized adequately in Christianity. Hegel's philosophy of religion greatly influenced theological discussions and points of view. Philosophy is the representation of this process in its necessity. This philosophical process also has its appearance in time in the form of the history of philosophy. Only in societies in which free constitutions exist can philosophical thought develop. Hegel divides Western philosophy into two main periods: Greek and Germanic philosophy. Hegel regards it as a great merit of his philosophy that it adequately explains this, and thus reconciles reason with reality in thought.

Dialectic Method

Every thesis for an argument has its anti thesis as life and death, love and hate, day and night, youth and old age. Whole nature is a reconciliation of opposites and Hegel's dialectic shows that any thesis implies its anti thesis and that the two are united in a higher synthesis in which the opposition between the two is reconciled and overcome in a larger unity. The Absolute Idea passes through a dialectic of many triads – each of which has its own Thesis, Anti Thesis and Synthesis. In the thesis, a certain aspect of reality is revealed and in the anti thesis, a contrasting aspect appears and the two are synthesised in a higher synthesis. Hegel uses the term *Abstract* or

Immediate to thesis and *Negative* or *Mediate* to anti thesis and *Concrete* to synthesis. Hegel's concept begins with the concept of *being* and this is the thesis. Hegel believed that the inner essence of the absolute could be reached by human reason because the Absolute is disclosed in nature as well as in the working of the human mind. What connects these three – the Absolute, nature and man's mind is thought itself. Nature is the *objective self*, as opposed to the *conscious self*. The second basic triad of nature is matter, life and mind. In matter, the thesis we do find that parts are related mechanically and in life, the anti thesis, they are united organically. The higher concept, mind is a union of matter and life. Mind or the subjective spirit is the synthesis of the evolution of matter and life. This mind in man is capable of controlling both the material body and the principle of life in man. In fact, the mind is the union of both matter and life in man who can reason with self-consciousness. Hegel calls this self consciousness – mind or spirit. The basic triad of this part are subjective spirit (thesis), which refer to the inner working of the human mind and the objective spirit which represents the mind in its external embodiment in the social and political institutions become the anti-thesis and at the apex of knowledge stands the absolute as its synthesis.

The objective spirit is explained by Hegel with reference to the social consciousness or the society in general. This concept of right has three implications – Right to property (Thesis), Right to contract (Anti-Thesis) and Right to punish (Synthesis) respectively. To unite the above thesis and anti-thesis, a higher level of concept called, right to punish arrives as a synthesis. If, claiming certain rights from the society called the concept of right becomes the thesis, then discharging certain duties to the society with duty consciousness called the *concept of morality* becomes the anti-thesis. The unity of reality finds richest expression at the man-society level. Our consciousness of the absolute, says Hegel is achieved progressively as the mind moves from art to philosophy through religion. In the object of art, mind apprehends the absolute as beauty. Since no sensuous form can convey adequately the profound spiritual truth, the dialectic passes from art to its anti-thesis in religion. Religion occupies an intermediate position between art and philosophy. Ultimately, in philosophy, according to Hegel – the thinker is the Absolute, the subject matter of thinking is the Absolute and the medium through which the absolute thinks is also the absolute. Thus Hegel places philosophy as the highest point of development of human knowledge. The history of philosophy is for him, the development of the absolute self consciousness in the mind of man. The philosophical mind discovers the absolute in all stages of the dialectic and in so doing man becomes rational.

4.6 HEGEL'S CONTRIBUTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Hegel was convinced that the philosophy of Kant did not represent the final word in philosophical matters, because it was not possible to conceive a unified theory of reality by means of Kantian principles alone. For Hegel a unified theory of reality is one which can systematically explain all forms of reality, starting from a single principle or a single subject. For Hegel, these forms of reality included not only solar systems, physical bodies and the various guises assumed by organic life, for example, plants, animals and human beings, but also psychic phenomena, social and political forms of organization as well as artistic creations and cultural achievements such as religion and philosophy.

For Hegel, the fundamental principle which explains all reality is reason. Reason is not some quality which is attributed to some human subject; it is, by contrast, the sum of all reality. In accordance with this belief, Hegel claims that reason and reality are strictly identical: only reason is real and only reality is reasonable. Since reason is the whole of reality, this goal will be achieved when reason recognizes itself as total reality. It is the task of philosophy to give a coherent account of this process which leads to self-knowledge of reason. Hegel conceived this process by analogy with the model of organic development which takes place on various levels. Hegel thought of a living organism as an entity which represents the successful realization of a plan in which all individual characteristics of this entity are contained. In accordance with these assumptions, Hegel distinguished the concept of reason from the process of the realization of this concept. He undertook the exposition of the concept of reason in that section of his philosophical system which he calls the *Wissenschaft der Logik* (Science of Logic). In this first part of his system, the various elements of the concept of reason are discussed and placed into a systematic context. He presented the process of the realization of this concept in the other two parts of his system, the *Philosophie der Natur* (Philosophy of Nature) and the *Philosophie des Geistes* (Philosophy of Spirit). In the Philosophy of Nature, Hegel aims to describe comprehensively all aspects of natural phenomena as a system of increasingly complex facts. The Philosophy of Spirit treats of various psychological, social and cultural forms of reality. For Hegel, examples of such facts are the state, art, religion and history.

Hegel gave the world a more plausible and comprehensive system of idealism. His sole concern was to understand the world as it is and to explain everything logically. He explains adequately, the rational constitution of the universe. Even God as has been remarked, does not seem to be permitted any secrets which Hegel's reason is unable to disclose. Like Berkeley, though Hegel is an idealist, his idealism differs very much from Berkeley. Berkeley being an empirical theistic idealist believes that, God created this world and has His own existence, independent of His creation. While, Hegel being a rationalistic pantheistic idealist opines that Absolute is the world in its organic unity and not the creator of it. For Hegel, world is real although its various parts are dependent upon the unity of the whole. The whole is not a blank, unknowable unity, but it is rational and knowable in its organic interrelatedness.

4.7 LET US SUM UP

Hegel points out that the Absolute first manifests itself in the categories of logic and then externalised in the physical nature, subjective mind and objective mind. Final culmination is reached in the absolute mind in which the whole reality is apprehended in its organic unity and completeness. In art, this is done through the medium of sensuous form, in religion through worship and in philosophy the absolute is disclosed in the conception of pure thought. Hegel criticises the traditional epistemological distinction of the objective from the subjective and offers his own dialectical account of the development of consciousness from individual sensation through social concern with ethics and politics to the pure consciousness, the spirit. The result is a comprehensive worldview that encompasses the historical development of civilization in all its sources.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for the answers.

1) Give an account of Hegel's dialectic method.

.....

2) How do you estimate Hegel's contribution to philosophy?

.....

4.8 KEY WORDS

Absolute: free from imperfection free or relatively free from mixture; being, governed by, or characteristic of a ruler or authority completely free from constitutional or other restraint (absolute power).

Absolute Mind: Absolute mind is the state in which mind rises above all the limitations of nature and institutions, and is subjected to itself alone in art, religion, and philosophy. For the essence of mind is freedom, and its development must consist in breaking away from the restrictions imposed on it by nature and human institutions.

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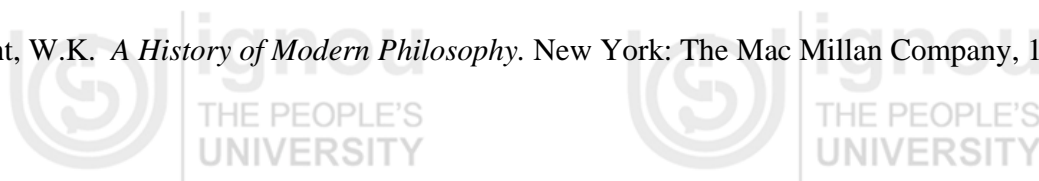
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Indira Gandhi National Open University
School of Interdisciplinary and
Trans-disciplinary Studies

MPY – 002

Western Philosophy



Block 5

CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY – I

UNIT 1

Masters of Suspicion (Marx, Nietzsche and Freud)

UNIT 2

Pragmatism

UNIT 3

Process Philosophy

UNIT 4

Philosophy of Language



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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

At each stage in human history, men and women have worked out some sort of picture of the world and their place in it. The pieces they use to make up this picture have been obtained by observing nature and through generalizing their day-to-day experiences. Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx and Freud made great contribution to development of critical thinking in the contemporary period. Continuing the romantic revolt against reason and social organization, Nietzsche stressed the values of individual self-assertion, biological instinct, and passion. Karl Marx developed the philosophy of *dialectical materialism*, based on the dialectical logic of Hegel, but they made matter, rather than mind, the ultimate reality. Freud by his psycho analysis gave a fresh and scientific understanding of human person.

Toward the end of the 19th century, pragmatism became the most vigorous school of thought in American philosophy. It continued the empiricist tradition of grounding knowledge on experience and stressing the inductive procedures of experimental science. Charles Sanders Peirce and William James were the outstanding figures in this tradition. Alfred North Whitehead who revived interest in speculative metaphysics in the United States developed process philosophy by developing a highly technical system of concepts that combined the Platonic theory of Ideas with the organism of Leibniz and Bergson. A form of analytic philosophy, also called linguistic analysis, which was inspired by the work of Moore and developed explicitly by his pupil Ludwig Wittgenstein in *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* has become the dominant view in philosophy of language. This school of thought also rejects speculative metaphysics and limits philosophy to the task of clearing up intellectual puzzles caused by the ambiguity of language by analyzing the meanings of words in ordinary discourse.

Unit 1 is titled as ‘Masters of Suspicion,’ a Paul Ricoueran terminology of describing the unsurpassed thinkers, namely Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud and Friedrich Nietzsche. They develop a Philosophy. These three thinkers left a legacy of their own in turning the history of human thought in different directions. The unit gives a gist of their critique and their vision.

Unit 2 is concerned about Pragmatism, which is the thinking about solving problems in a practical and sensible way rather than by having fixed ideas and theories. The core of pragmatism was the pragmatist maxim, a rule for clarifying the contents of hypotheses by tracing their ‘practical consequences’. In the work of Peirce and James, the most influential application of the pragmatist maxim was to the concept of truth.

Unit 3 introduces one of the contemporary trends in Western philosophy namely Process Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. Whitehead addressed it as ‘philosophy of organism’. The unit discusses the shift of emphasis from becoming to being that took place in modernity; the positive factors that accentuated the development of a philosophy of organism; the methodological shift that Whitehead calls for in view of the latter and the essential features of Process Philosophy. For Whitehead any reality is constituted of two poles, a physical pole and a mental pole.

Unit 4 discusses the Linguistic Turn in Contemporary Philosophy, through its leading figures, Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein. It enables the students to have a basic knowledge of and the relation between logical, linguistic and analytical turns in twentieth

century western philosophy and to have a critical view of Wittgenstein's earlier philosophy as in the *Tractatus*.



UNIT 1 MASTERS OF SUSPICION (MARX, FREUD AND NIETZSCHE)

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

Paul Ricoueran terminology of describing the unsurpassed thinkers, namely Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud and Friedrich Nietzsche, as 'Masters of Suspicion,' is used as the title for this unit. These three thinkers left a legacy of their own in turning the history of human thought in different directions. The unit gives a gist of their critique and their vision.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

At each stage in human history, men and women have worked out some sort of picture of the world and their place in it. They develop a Philosophy. The pieces they use to make up this picture have been obtained by observing nature and through generalizing their day-to-day experiences.

1.2 KARL MARX: CRITIC OF SYSTEMIC DOMINATION

Karl Marx was a remarkable era in the field of socialist theory and political economy. In his conception of reality as subject to turbulent change led to view human beings as having potentiality to realize themselves in the struggle for freedom, equality and classlessness. Having been influenced tremendously by Hegel's dialectics, Marx developed his theory of historical and dialectical materialism. His contribution to world of philosophy is radical in a sense that he was not just providing critique of religion but worked for the change of view of the basics of everything to provide for human emancipation. He dismissed the illusion that reality as a whole is an expression of the Idea, the absolute rational order governing reality. Against this, Marx held a position that it is Man, not the Idea, who is the true subject. Secondly for him, political life and

societal ideology and everything associated with are determined by the character of economic life. Everything of man consists in human labour. If it is just performed at dictates of the market forces, Man is 'alienated' from his own creative force. Humans can recognize themselves as what they are, i.e. true creators of history, only when labour recovers its collective character. Labour is 'not only a means of life but life's prime want'.

Marx presented history as a progress through stages. At every stage, the society's level of productivity and the requirements condition the form of society. In capitalism, as the means of production are owned privately and labour is bought and sold like a commodity, exploitation flows from an arrangement that is accepted without the need for coercion. It only reflects the fact that the ruling dominant class has a special influence over ideas in society. In *Das Kapital*, monumental work of Marx, he identifies the oppressive dynamics of capitalism with its deceptive objective of having a discrepancy between its essence and its appearance. In Marx's view, it is inevitable that capitalism should give way to socialism. With conflict evident in capitalism as far the ownership of means of production is concerned, growing consciousness for collective ownership in 'socialized' environment, Marx believed that the transition to collective ownership will be natural and inevitable. Of course till the end Marx nowhere explained how this collective ownership and social control was to be exercised. His maxim in the final vision of communism echoes 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.' (Rosen 1998)

1.3 HISTORICAL AND DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

When one looks at history, it appears to be a mass of contradictions. Events are lost in a maze of revolutions, wars, periods of progress and of decline. Conflicts of classes and nations swirl around in the chaos of social development. Marx attaches enormous importance to the study of history. Marxism is the science of perspectives, using its method of Dialectical Materialism to unravel the complex processes of historical development. Marxist philosophy examines things not as static entities but in their development, movement and life. Historical events are seen as processes. Evolution, however, is not simply the movement from the lower to the higher. Life and society develop in a contradictory way, as Lenin puts it, through, "spirals not in a straight line; a development by leaps, catastrophes, and revolutions; breaks in continuity; the transformation of quantity into quality; inner impulses towards development, imparted by the contradiction and conflict of the various forces and tendencies." As Marx explained, "the mode of production of material life conditioned the social, political and intellectual life processes in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary their social being that determines their consciousness".

Using this method, Marx was able to indicate "the way to an all embracing and comprehensive study of the processes of the rise, development, and decline of social-economic systems. People make their own history." Marx drew attention and indicated the way to a scientific study of history as a single process, which, with all its immense variety and contradictoriness, is governed by definite laws. From primitive communism, through slave society and feudalism, the western society has evolved into capitalism. The socialist transformation ushers in a new and higher form of society by breaking the fetters on the development of the productive forces. With huge strides forward in production, based on the most advanced science and conscious planning, humanity

enters the higher realms of real society. At each point in class society, the rising revolutionary class, aiming to change society, have to fight for a new world outlook and have to attack the old philosophy, which, being based on the old order, justified and defended it.

1.4 MARX ON ALIENATION

In capitalist society, man is not truly free. He is an alienated being. He is not at home in his world. The idea of alienation, Marx takes from Hegel and Feuerbach. The causes of alienation come to have an increasingly economic and social content. The alienation of labour takes place in the fact that the more the worker produces the less he has to consume. And the more values he creates the more he devalues him. The reason is His product and his labour is estranged from him. The life of the worker depends on capital. On things that he has created but that are not his. Instead of finding his rightful existence through his labour he loses it in this world of things that are external to him” no work, no pay. Under these conditions, labour denies the fullness of concrete man. Nature, his body, his spiritual essence become alien to him. “Man is made alien to man” Private property becomes the product of alienated labour. Alienated labour is seen as the consequence of market product, the division of labour, and the division of society into antagonistic classes.

Economic Alienation

As producers in society, men create goods only by their labour. These goods are exchangeable. Their value is the average amount of social labour spent to produce them. The alienation of the worker takes on its full dimension in that system of market production. In it part of the value of the goods is taken away from and transformed into surplus value. The capitalist appropriates this privately. Market production also intensifies the alienation. By encouraging specialization, piecework, and setting up of large enterprises. Thus the labour power of the worker is used along with that of others tools of production. Thus losing their quality as human products, the products of labour become alien and oppressive realities.

The fundamental economic alienation is accompanied by **political and ideological alienation**. The ideas that men form are closely bound up with their material activity and their material relation. This is true of human activity in political, intellectual, and spiritual. Men produce their representations and their ideas, but it is as living men, men acting as theory are determined by a definite development of their powers of production. Law, morality, metaphysics, and religion do not have a history of their own. Men developing their material production modify together with their real existence their ways of thinking and the products of their ways of thinking. “It is not consciousness, which determines existence; it is existence, which determines consciousness. **Ideological alienation** takes different forms, appearing in economic, philosophical and legal theories. Ideological alienation expresses itself supremely in religion. Taking up the ideas about religion that were current in left post-Hegelian circles, together with the thought of Feuerbach, Marx considered religion to be a product of man’s consciousness. It is a reflection of the situation of a man, who ‘either has not conquered himself or has already lost himself again.

1.5 MARXIAN CRITIQUE OF RELIGION

In the famous words of Marx, 'Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people'. For Marx, the world of religion is a reflection of a particular form of society. The state or the society produces religion. In religious belief, Man finds himself reflected in the 'fantastic reality of heaven.' Religion provides a realm in which individuals can realize themselves. In a desperate world full and adequate self-realization is said to be impossible. In this way, religion attempts to preserve the social order of which it is a by-product. The fundamental points on which Marxian critique of religion rest are: (1) Religion is a by-product of the impoverished and distorted world. (2) The image of reality produced by religion is falsely transfigured. (3) Human beings are made to believe that religion has its origins in other than the mundane reality. (Rosen 1998)

Marx directs his critique of religion specifically on the final aspect of unacknowledged origins in social existence. His critique aims at calling people to abandon their illusions and move towards, with help of philosophy, unmasking human self-alienation in its secular forms. The critique of religion is to throw away all conditions in which human beings are debased, enslaved, neglected, contemptible. It asserts a doctrine that man is the supreme being for man. (Marx, 1843a: 251). For Marx, speculative philosophy must move beyond itself and makes use of means of *praxis* towards human emancipation. A truly successful critique of religion requires the transformation of the social conditions within which religion is generated and sustained.

Marxian anthropology

Human history is therefore living human seeking to satisfy certain primary needs. "The first historical fact is the production of the means to satisfy these needs." This satisfaction opens the way for new needs. Human activity is essentially a struggle with nature, which becomes the means of satisfying his needs. Humans are productive being who humanize themselves by their labour. Humans humanize nature while they naturalize themselves. By his creative activity, by his labour, he realizes his identity with the nature that he masters, while at the same time he achieves free consciousness. "All that is called history is nothing else than the process of creating man through human labour, the becoming of nature for man. Man has thus evident and irrefutable proof of his own creation by himself." Understood in its universal dimension, human activity reveals that 'for man, man is the supreme being.' It is thus vain to speak of god, creation, and metaphysical problems. Fully naturalized, man is sufficient unto himself: he has recaptured the fullness of man in his full liberty.

1.6 SIGMUND FREUD: ANALYST OF HUMAN PSYCHE

Freud who is well known psychologist and psychotherapist developed the theory and practice of psychoanalysis. On Freud's account everyday actions are determined by motives which are far more numerous and complex than people realize. The most basic and constant motives which influence our actions are unconscious. Such motives are residues of encounters with significant persons and situations from the past. They operate not to achieve realistic satisfaction, but rather to secure a form of pacification through representation. He gave the psychological accounts of neurosis and psychosis. He explicated how the past gives significance to the present in normal mental functioning. Past desires are continually re-articulated through symbolism and representational pacification throughout life. In this Freud provides both a radically holistic account of the causation of action and a naturalistic description of the generation of meaning in

life. Significant desires can remain forever flexible, renewable and satisfiable in their expressions, precisely because they are immutable, frustrated and unrelenting at the root.

The childhood motives revealed by analysis characteristically included sensual love for one parent combined with rivalry and jealous hatred for the other, a constellation Freud called the 'Oedipus complex'. Children were liable to intense psychological conflict, as between desires to harm or displace each parent, envied and hated as a rival for the love of the other, and desires to preserve and protect that same parent, loved sensually and also as a caretaker, helper and model. Children apparently attached great emotional significance to their interactions with their parents in such basics of disciplined and cooperative activity as feeding and the expulsion and management of waste through various organs. Freud framed an account which systematically linked normal and abnormal sexual phenomena in the development of the individual.

Freud allocated the task of fostering the sense of reality to a hypothetical neural structure, or functional part of the mind, 'the ego.' He linked this structure with two others, the 'super-ego' and the primitive 'it', or *id.*, The 'super-ego' judged or criticized the ego. It included the ego-ideal, representing the ideals or standards by which the ego was judged. "*Id*" is the natural matrix of basic and potentially conflicting instincts or drives. Overall the ego, super-ego and *id* are neural systems described in a functional way.

The drives constituting the *id* are divisible into two main categories: those which engender motives which are creative and constructive, such as affection, love and care, which he called the life instincts; and those which yield motives linked to aggression, such as envy and hate, which he called the destructive or death instincts.

1.7 FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE: UNSYMPATHETIC DETRACTOR

Nietzsche has left a deep imprint on most areas of Western intellectual and cultural life. He is one of Germany's greatest prose stylists and one of its most important, if controversial, philosophers. Nietzsche attacks almost everything that has been considered sacred: Socrates, scholarship, God, truth, morality, equality, democracy and most other modern values. He gives a large role to the will to power. He proposes to replace the values he attacks with new values and a new ideal of the human person, 'overhuman' or 'superhuman'. Nazi theoreticians attempted to associate these ideas with their own cause. Actually, Nietzsche despised and unambiguously rejected both German nationalism and anti-Semitism.

Nietzsche's philosophizing began from a deep sense of dissatisfaction with modern Western culture. In that, he found superficial and empty in comparison with that of the ancient Greeks. He located the source of the problem in the fact that modern culture gives priority to science. Pre-Socratic Greece had given priority to art and myth. He wanted modern culture to return to the Greek valuation of art, calling for a recognition of art as 'the highest task and the truly metaphysical activity of this life'. In the works of his middle period he rejects metaphysical truth but celebrates the valuing of science and empirical truth over myth as a sign of high culture. He committed his own philosophy to a thoroughgoing naturalistic understanding of human beings. (Clark 1998)

1.8 KNOWLEDGE, TRUTH AND METAPHYSICS

Nietzsche denies often that any of our theories and beliefs are really true. The rejection of metaphysics (a belief in a second world) forms the cornerstone of his later philosophy. *Human, All Too Human* offers a genealogy of this belief, first in the dreams and in considering empirical world as mere appearance. Metaphysics is purported knowledge of this non-empirical world. He shows that knowledge of a non-empirical world is cognitively superfluous. Although Enlightenment established the adequacy of empirical methods, belief in a metaphysical world persisted because that world is assumed to be necessary to account for the things of the highest value in the human world. Nietzsche offers a naturalistic account of higher things, which presents them as sublimations of despised things and therefore as 'human, all too human'.

Nietzsche's position on knowledge is a combination of empiricism, antipositivism and perspectivism. 'All evidence of truth comes only from the senses.' He considers the rest of purported knowledge 'miscarriage and not yet science', or formal science, like pure logic and mathematics. Nietzsche's antipositivism involves a rejection of foundationalism. He denies that there is any experience that is unmediated by concepts, interpretation or theory. Sense experience, our only evidence of truth, is always already interpreted. Knowledge is therefore interpretation, as opposed to the apprehension of unmediated facts. Nietzsche's perspectivism is often thought to imply that empirical knowledge offers us 'only a perspective' and not truth. Nietzsche himself puts forward as truths not only perspectivism, but also many other claims. Perspectivism is a claim about knowledge; it is not a claim about truth, and it does not entail that truth is relative to perspective. Further, knowledge is always from the viewpoint of a particular set of beliefs and that there are always alternative sets that would ground equally good views of an object. Nietzsche's explicit point in describing knowledge as perspectival is to guard against conceiving of knowledge as 'disinterested contemplation'. This does not mean that true knowledge requires assuming as many perspectives as possible. Knowledge does not require complete knowledge, and complete knowledge is not Nietzsche's epistemological ideal. (Clark 1998)

1.9 AGAINST ASCETIC IDEAL

For him, ascetic ideal takes the highest human life to be one of self-denial, denial of the natural self, thereby treating natural or earthly existence as devoid of intrinsic value. Nietzsche saw this life-devaluing ideal at work in most religion and philosophy. Values always come into existence in support of some form of life. They gain the support of ascetic religions and philosophies only if they are given a life-devaluing interpretation. Ascetic priests interpret acts as wrong or 'sinful' because the acts are selfish or 'animal' - because they affirm natural instincts. Ascetic philosophers interpret whatever they value - truth, knowledge, philosophy, virtue - in non-natural terms. It is because they share the assumption that anything truly valuable must have a source outside the world of nature. The ascetic ideal itself undermines values. It deprives nature of value by placing the source of value outside nature. It promotes the value of truth above all else and it leads to a denial that there is anything besides nature.

Nietzsche proclaims that 'God is dead' and that morality will gradually perish. Morality has been brought about by the ascetic ideal as only possible form of ethical life. That ideal has little life

left in it, according to Nietzsche. Morality now has little power to inspire human beings to virtue or anything else. It does not inspire human beings to take on the task of becoming more than they are. It only induces them to internalize their will to power against themselves. Nietzsche believes that we need a new ideal, a real alternative to the ascetic ideal. He calls the philosophers to create new values and not continue merely to codify and structure the value legislations of ascetic priests. But Nietzsche now saw that there was no way to go back to earlier values and recognized the need for new values. Thus, in his own writings he exhibits a new ideal, often exemplifying old virtues that are given a new, life-affirming interpretation. (Clark 1998)

1.10 NIETZSCHE'S CLAIM OF 'DEATH OF GOD' AND NIHILISM

Nietzsche proclaimed the death of God that churches are now 'tombs and sepulchres of God', and that we are all God's 'murderers'. The 'death of God' is a metaphor for a cultural event that he believes has already taken place. Belief in God has become unbelievable and the Christian idea of God is no longer a living force in Western culture. Nietzsche views all gods as human creations, reflections of what human beings value. Non-Christian gods were constructed from the qualities human beings saw and valued in themselves. The Christian God was given qualities that were the opposite of what humans perceived in themselves, the opposite of our inescapable animal instincts. Constructed thus to devalue human natural being it interpreted natural being as 'guilt before God.' and taken to indicate our unworthiness. Nietzsche views that Christian theism is nearing its end as a major cultural force. The development of atheism in the West and the will to truth, a commitment to truth 'at any price', undermine the whole Christian worldview. Science has given us reason to believe that we can explain all the explicable features of empirical reality without appealing to God or any other transcendent reality. Theism has become cognitively superfluous. Atheism is 'the awe-inspiring catastrophe of a two-thousand year discipline in truth that finally forbids itself the lie involved in belief in God.'

Although atheism undoubtedly weakens Christianity, depriving it of both creative energy and prestige, it does not bring about the death of God by itself. Besides other factors that weaken the influence of Christianity and its ideal, Nietzsche includes the development of money-making and industriousness as ends in themselves, democracy, and the greater availability to more people of the fruits of materialistic pursuits. Loss of belief in God will initiate a 'monstrous logic of terror' and the collapse of all that was 'built upon this faith, propped up by it, grown into it.' Nietzsche calls this collapse of values 'nihilism;' and predicts 'the advent of nihilism' as 'the history of the next two centuries', and calls himself 'the first perfect nihilist of Europe'. However, he said that he has 'lived through the whole of nihilism, to the end, leaving it behind.' Nihilism is not his own doctrine. He does not believe that nothing is of value (or that 'everything is permitted') if God does not exist. (Clark 1998)

1.11 NIETZSCHE'S CRITICISM OF MORALITY

Every ethical code or system for evaluating conduct is 'a morality' in the wider. A system that determines the value of conduct solely in terms of 'the retroactive force of success or failure' is what Nietzsche counts it as 'pre-moral' in the narrower sense. Nietzsche calling himself an 'immoralist' (one who opposes all morality) repeatedly insists that morality 'negates life'. He turned against it inspired by an 'instinct that aligned itself with life.' However, his point is not

that morality is 'unnatural' restricting the satisfaction of natural impulses. His objection to morality rests on the fact that it promotes and celebrates a kind of person in which he finds nothing to esteem. It makes him a 'herd animal' who has little idea of greatness and seeks above all else security, absence of fear, absence of suffering. His immoralism does not oppose all forms of ethical life. He called himself an 'immoralist' as a 'provocation.' The three main strands of morality are the good (in the sense of virtue), the right (or duty), and a general understanding of value. Nietzsche's ideal celebrates the affirmation of life even in the face of its greatest difficulties. It gives rise to a doctrine and valuation of life that is fundamentally opposed to the one he finds behind morality. Committed to finding the sources of value in life, he rejects all non-naturalistic interpretations of ethical life which make reference to a transcendent or metaphysical world.

What he opposes in morality is not the idea of virtue, or standards of right and wrong, but the moralization of virtue and duty brought about by the ascetic ideal. Morality 'negates life' because it is an ascetic interpretation of ethical life. By interpreting virtue and duty in non-natural terms that things of the highest value must have their source 'elsewhere' than in the natural world. He calls the morality of contemporary Europe 'herd animal morality' because of the almost complete agreement 'in all major moral judgments'. There is nothing in it to hold out an ideal of the human person that encourages individuals to take up the task of self-transformation, self-creation, and to funnel into it the aggressive impulses, will to power. As the ascetic ideal is now largely dead (as part of the 'death of God'), we need something to replace it: a great ideal that will inspire the striving, internalization, virtue and self-creation. (Clark 1998)

1.12 THE SUPER-HUMAN AND THE WILL TO POWER

As an alternative to 'herd-animal morality' is Nietzsche's 'super-human' or 'overman' to bring out the idea of a being who overcomes in itself what has defined us as human. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche's work of philosophical fiction, Zarathustra is returning from ten years of solitude in the wilderness, bringing human beings a gift: his teaching that humanity is not an end or goal, but only a stage and bridge to a higher type of being, the overhuman. He teaches that now that God is dead, it is time for humanity to establish this higher type as the goal and meaning of human life, a goal that can be reached only if human beings overcome what they now are, overcome the merely human. Zarathustra commits himself to its central task: urging human beings to raise their sights above their usual immersion in materialistic pursuits to recognize the outlines of a higher form of being that calls them to go beyond themselves, to become something more than they are. Zarathustra's overhuman is a successor to the images of 'higher humanity' offered by traditional religions. It is not to encourage human beings to throw off the constraints and shackles of morality but to combat the forces of barbarism by encouraging us to take on a more demanding ethical task of becoming a 'true human being'. It applies only to 'those no-longer animals, the philosophers, artists, and saints'. In other words, the overhuman must overcome all the impulses that led human beings to accept the ascetic ideal, an ideal that has so far defined what counts as 'human'.

Nietzsche's central teaching is the will to power, which is one human drive among others, the striving for competence or mastery. It has apparent omnipresence in human life. It does not mean that that life is will to power (or that power is the only thing humans want). It does mean that

power has a special relation to human happiness. He calls the will to power ‘the most life-affirming drive’, that is, the one whose satisfaction contributes most to finding life worth living. Zarathustra claims that this ‘will to be master’ is found in all that lives, and that this explains why life is ‘struggle and becoming’, always overcoming itself, always opposing what it has created and loved. Nietzsche does say that life, and even reality itself, is will to power. Reality consists of fields of force or dynamic quanta, each of which is essentially a drive to expand and thus to increase its power relative to all other such quanta. Philosophers’ ultimate aim, he claims, is not to obtain knowledge or truth, but to interpret the world in terms of their own values. (Clark 1998)

1.13 LET US SUM UP

The unit aims at detailing of their ‘suspicion’ of the existing package of ideology handed down to their time. Instead of chewing what is given, they examined everything; criticised the existing and proposed their ideal vision of their own. Should their ideals be treated as a ‘given’ one and swallowed up uncritically? The students of philosophy are expected to follow the path of these masters of suspicion and critically accept or reject what is handed over to them. Mere critique may end up in ideological anarchy if not propped up by one’s own vision and ideal.

1.14 KEY WORDS

Das Capital :Central teaching of Karl Marx on critique of capitalism

Id :pleasure principle

Death of God :a metaphor for a cultural event that he believes has already taken place.

‘Super-human’: idea of a being who overcomes in itself what has defined us as human.

Will to power : one human drive among others, the striving for competence or mastery

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UNIT 2 PRAGMATISM

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

Pragmatism is the thinking about solving problems in a practical and sensible way rather than by having fixed ideas and theories. . The core of pragmatism was the pragmatist maxim, a rule for clarifying the contents of hypotheses by tracing their ‘practical consequences’. In the work of Peirce and James, the most influential application of the pragmatist maxim was to the concept of truth. But the pragmatists have also tended to share a distinctive epistemological outlook, a fallibilist anti-Cartesian approach to the norms that govern inquiry.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Pragmatism is a philosophical movement that includes those who claim that an ideology or proposition is true if it works satisfactorily, that the meaning of a proposition is to be found in the practical consequences of accepting it, and that unpractical ideas are to be rejected. Pragmatism originated in the United States during the latter quarter of the nineteenth century. Although it has significantly influenced non-philosophers notably in the fields of law, education, politics, sociology, psychology, and literary criticism this article deals with it only as a movement within philosophy.

The term “pragmatism” was first used in print to designate a philosophical outlook about a century ago when William James (1842-1910) pressed the word into service during an 1898 address entitled “Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results,” delivered at the University of California (Berkeley). James scrupulously swore, however, that the term had been coined almost three decades earlier by his compatriot and friend C. S. Peirce (1839-1914). (Peirce, eager to distinguish his doctrines from the views promulgated by James, later relabeled his own position “pragmaticism” a name, he said, “ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers.”) The third major figure in the classical pragmatist pantheon is John Dewey (1859-1952), whose wide-ranging writings had considerable impact on American intellectual life for a half-century. After Dewey, however, pragmatism lost much of its momentum.

There has been a recent resurgence of interest in pragmatism, with several high-profile philosophers exploring and selectively appropriating themes and ideas embedded in the rich tradition of Peirce, James, and Dewey. While the best-known and most controversial of these so-called “neo-pragmatists” is Richard Rorty, the following contemporary philosophers are often considered to be pragmatists: Hilary Putnam, Nicholas Rescher, Jürgen Habermas, Susan Haack, Robert Brandom and Cornel West.

2.2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW ON PRAGMATISM

Classical Pragmatism: From Peirce to Dewey

In the beginning was “The Metaphysical Club,” a group of a dozen Harvard-educated men who met for informal philosophical discussions during the early 1870s in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Club members included proto-positivist Chauncey Wright (1830-1875), future Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes (1841-1935), and two then-fledgling philosophers who went on to become the first self-conscious pragmatists: Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), a logician, mathematician, and scientist; and William James (1842-1910), a psychologist and moralist armed with a medical degree.

Peirce summarized his own contributions to the Metaphysical Club’s meetings in two articles now regarded as founding documents of pragmatism: “The Fixation of Belief” (1877) and “How To Make Our Ideas Clear” (1878). James followed Peirce with his first philosophical essay, “Remarks on Spencer’s Definition of Mind as Correspondence,” (1878). After the appearance of *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), James went on to publish *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (1896), *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (1907), and *The Meaning of Truth: A Sequel to Pragmatism* (1909). Peirce, unfortunately, never managed to publish a *magnum opus* in which his nuanced philosophical views were systematically expounded. Still, publish he did, though he left behind a mountain of manuscript fragments, many of which only made it into print decades after his death.

Peirce and James traveled different paths, philosophically as well as professionally. James, less rigorous but more concrete, became an esteemed public figure (and a Harvard professor) thanks to his intellectual range, his broad sympathies, and his Emersonian genius for edifying popularization. He recognized Peirce’s enormous creative gifts and did what he could to advance his friend professionally; but ultimately to no avail. Professional success within academe eluded Peirce; after his scandal-shrouded dismissal from John Hopkins University (1879-1884) his sole academic appointment, he toiled in isolation in rural Pennsylvania. True, Peirce was not entirely cut off: he corresponded with colleagues, reviewed books, and delivered the odd invited lecture. Nevertheless, his philosophical work grew increasingly in-grown, and remained largely unappreciated by his contemporaries. The well-connected James, in contrast, regularly derived inspiration and stimulation from a motley assortment of fellow-travellers, sympathizers, and acute critics. These included members of the Chicago school of pragmatists, led by John Dewey (of whom more anon); Oxford’s acerbic iconoclast F.C.S. Schiller (1864-1937), a self-described Protagorean and “humanist”; Giovanni Papini (1881-1956), leader of a cell of Italian pragmatists; and two of James’s younger Harvard colleagues, the absolute idealist Josiah Royce (1855-1916) and the poetic naturalist George Santayana (1864-1952), both of whom challenged

pragmatism while being influenced by it. (It should be noted, however, that Royce was also significantly influenced by Peirce.)

The final member of the classical pragmatist triumvirate is John Dewey (1859-1952), who had been a graduate student at John Hopkins during Peirce's brief tenure there. In an illustrious career spanning seven decades, Dewey did much to make pragmatism (or "instrumentalism," as he called it) respectable among professional philosophers. Peirce had been *persona non grata* in the academic world; James, an insider but no pedant, abhorred "the PhD Octopus" and penned eloquent lay sermons; but Dewey was a professor who wrote philosophy as professors were supposed to do namely, for other professors. His mature works *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1920), *Experience and Nature* (1925), and *The Quest for Certainty* (1929) boldly deconstructs the dualisms and dichotomies which, in one guise or another, had underwritten philosophy since the Greeks. According to Dewey, once philosophers give up these time-honoured distinctions between appearance and reality, theory and practice, knowledge and action, fact and value they will see through the ill-posed problems of traditional epistemology and metaphysics. Instead of trying to survey the world *sub specie aeternitatis*, Deweyan philosophers are content to keep their feet planted on *terra firma* and address "the problems of men."

Dewey emerged as a major figure during his decade at the University of Chicago, where fellow pragmatist G.H. Mead (1863-1931) was a colleague and collaborator. After leaving Chicago for Columbia University in 1904, Dewey became even more prolific and influential; as a result, pragmatism became an important feature of the philosophical landscape at home and abroad. Dewey, indeed, had disciples and imitators aplenty; what he lacked was a bona fide successor someone, that is, who could stand to Dewey as he himself stood to James and Peirce. It is therefore not surprising that by the 1940s shortly after the publication of Dewey's *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938) pragmatism had lost much of its momentum and prestige.

This is not to say that pragmatists became an extinct species; C. I. Lewis (1883-1964) and Sidney Hook (1902-1989), for instance, remained prominent and productive. But to many it must have seemed that there was no longer much point in calling oneself a pragmatist especially with the arrival of that self-consciously rigorous import, analytic philosophy. As American philosophers read more and more of Moore, Russell, Wittgenstein, and the Vienna Circle, many of them found the once-provocative dicta of Dewey and James infuriatingly vague and hazy. The age of grand synoptic philosophizing was drawing rapidly to a close; the age of piecemeal problem-solving and hard-edged argument was getting underway.

Post-Deweyan Pragmatism: From Quine to Rorty

And so it was that Deweyans were undone by the very force that had sustained them, namely, the progressive professionalization of philosophy as a specialized academic discipline. Pragmatism, once touted as America's distinctive gift to Western philosophy, was soon unjustly derided by many rank-and-file analysts as *passé*. Of the original pragmatist triumvirate, Peirce fared the best by far; indeed, some analytic philosophers were so impressed by his technical contributions to logic and the philosophy of science that they paid him the (dubious) compliment of re-making him in their own image. But the reputations of James and Dewey suffered greatly and the influence of pragmatism as a faction waned. True, W.V.O. Quine's (1908-2000) landmark article "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (1951) challenged positivist orthodoxy by drawing on the legacy

of pragmatism. However, despite Quine's qualified enthusiasm for parts of that legacy an enthusiasm shared in varying degrees by Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), Rudolf Carnap (1891-1970), Hans Reichenbach (1891-1953), Karl Popper (1902-1994), F.P. Ramsey (1903-1930), Nelson Goodman (1906-1999), Wilfrid Sellars (1912-1989), and Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996) mainstream analytic philosophers tended to ignore pragmatism until the early 1980s.

What got philosophers talking about pragmatism again was the publication of Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) a controversial which repudiated the basic presuppositions of modern philosophy with élan, verve, and learning. Declaring epistemology a lost cause, Rorty found inspiration and encouragement in Dewey; for Dewey, Rorty pleaded, had presciently seen that philosophy must become much less Platonist and less Kantian less concerned, that is, with unearthing necessary and ahistorical normative foundations for our culture's practices. Once we understand our culture not as a static edifice but as an on-going conversation, the philosopher's official job description changes from foundation-layer to interpreter. In the absence of an Archimedean point, philosophy can only explore our practices and vocabularies from within; it can neither ground them on something external nor assess them for representational accuracy. Post-epistemological philosophy accordingly becomes the art of understanding; it explores the ways in which those voices which constitute that mutable conversation we call our culture the voices of science, art, morality, religion, and the like are related.

In subsequent writings *Consequences of Pragmatism* (1982), *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989), *Achieving Our Country* (1998), *Philosophy and Social Hope* (1999), and three volumes of *Philosophical Papers* (1991, 1991, 1998) Rorty has enthusiastically identified himself as a pragmatist; in addition, he has urged that this epithet can be usefully bestowed on a host of other well-known philosophers notably Donald Davidson (1917-2003). Though Rorty is the most visible and vocal contemporary champion of pragmatism, many other well-known figures have contributed significantly to the resurgence of this many-sided movement. Prominent revivalists include Karl-Otto Apel (b. 1922), Israel Scheffler (b. 1923), Joseph Margolis (b. 1924), Hilary Putnam (b. 1926), Nicholas Rescher (b. 1928), Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929), Richard Bernstein (b. 1932), Stephen Stich (b. 1944), Susan Haack (b. 1945), Robert Brandom (b. 1950), Cornel West (b. 1953), and Cheryl Misak (b. 1961). There is much disagreement among these writers, however, so it would be grossly misleading to present them as manifesto-signing members of a single sector clique.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is pragmatism? Give explanation on it.

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.....

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2) What is Classical pragmatism? Give explanation on it.

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.....

.....

3) Explain Post-Deweyan pragmatism.

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2.3 PRAGMATIC THEMES AND THESES

What makes these philosophers *pragmatists*? There is, no simple answer to this question. For there is no pragmatist creed; that is, no neat list of articles or essential tenets endorsed by all pragmatists and only by pragmatists. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify certain ideas that have loomed large in the pragmatist tradition though that is not to say that these ideas are the exclusive property of pragmatists, or that they are endorsed by all pragmatists. Here, then, are some themes and theses to which many pragmatists have been attached.

2.4 A METHOD AND A MAXIM

Pragmatism may be presented as a way of clarifying (and in some cases dissolving) intractable metaphysical and epistemological disputes. According to the down-to-earth pragmatist, bickering metaphysicians should get in the habit of posing the following question: “What concrete practical difference would it make if my theory were true and its rival(s) false?” Where there is no such difference, there is no genuine (that is, non-verbal) disagreement, and hence no genuine problem.

This method is closely connected to the so-called “pragmatic maxim,” different versions of which were formulated by Peirce and James in their attempts to clarify the meaning of abstract concepts or ideas. This maxim points to a broadly verificationist conception of linguistic meaning according to which no sense can be made of the idea that there are facts which are unknowable in principle (that is, truths which no one could ever be warranted in asserting and which could have absolutely no bearing on our conduct or experience). From this point of view, talk of inaccessible Kantian things-in-themselves of a “True World” (Nietzsche) forever hidden behind the veil of phenomena is useless or idle. In a sense, then, the maxim-wielding pragmatist agrees with Oscar Wilde: only shallow people do not judge by appearances.

Moreover, theories and models are to be judged primarily by their fruits and consequences, not by their origins or their relations to antecedent data or facts. The basic idea is presented metaphorically by James and Dewey, for whom scientific theories are *instruments* or *tools* for coping with reality. As Dewey emphasized, the utility of a theory is a matter of its problem-solving power; pragmatic coping must not be equated with what delivers emotional consolation or subjective comfort. What is essential is that theories pay their way in the long run that they can be relied upon time and again to solve pressing problems and to clear up significant difficulties confronting inquirers. To the extent that a theory functions or “works” practically in this way, it makes sense to keep using it though we must always allow for the possibility that it will eventually have to be replaced by some theory that works even better. (See Section 2b below, for more on fallibilism.) An intriguing variant on this theme can arguably be found in Popper’s falsificationist philosophy of science: though never positively justified, theories (understood as bold conjectures or guesses) may still be rationally accepted provided repeated attempts to falsify them have failed.

2.5 ANTI-CARTESIANISM

From Peirce and James to Rorty and Davidson, pragmatists have consistently sought to purify empiricism of vestiges of Cartesianism. They have insisted, for instance, that empiricism divest itself of that understanding of the mental which Locke, Berkeley, and Hume inherited from Descartes. According to such Cartesianism, the mind is a self-contained sphere whose contents “ideas” or “impressions” are irredeemably subjective and private, and utterly sundered from the public and objective world they purport to represent. Once we accept this picture of the mind as a world unto itself, we must confront a host of knotty problems about solipsism, skepticism, realism, and idealism with which empiricists have long struggled. Pragmatists have expressed their opposition to this Cartesian picture in many ways: Peirce’s view that beliefs are rules for action; James’s teleological understanding of the mind; Dewey’s Darwinian-inflected ruminations on experience; Popper’s mockery of the “bucket theory of the mind”; Wittgenstein’s private language argument; Rorty’s refusal to view the mind as Nature’s mirror; and Davidson’s critique of “the myth of the subjective.” In these and other cases, the intention is emancipatory: pragmatists see themselves as freeing philosophy from optional assumptions which have generated insoluble and unreal problems.

Pragmatists also find the Cartesian “quest for certainty” (Dewey) quixotic. *Pace* Descartes, no statement or judgment about the world is absolutely certain or incorrigible. All beliefs and theories are best treated as working hypotheses which may need to be modified refined, revised, or rejected in light of future inquiry and experience. Pragmatists have defended such fallibilism by means of various arguments; here are sketches of five: (1) There is an argument from the history of inquiry: even our best, most impressive theories Euclidean geometry and Newtonian physics, for instance have needed significant and unexpected revisions. (2) If scientific theories are dramatically underdetermined by data, then there are alternative theories which fit said data. How then can we be absolutely sure we have chosen the right theory? (3) If we say (with Peirce) that the truth is what would be accepted at the end of inquiry, it seems we cannot be absolutely certain that an opinion of ours is true unless we know with certainty that we have reached the end of inquiry. But how could we ever know that? (See Section 2e below for more on Peirce’s theory of truth.) (4) There is a methodological argument as well: ascriptions of certainty block the road of inquiry, because they may keep us from making progress (that is, finding a better view or theory) should progress still be possible. (5) Finally, there is a political argument. Fallibilism, it is said, is the only sane alternative to a cocksure dogmatism, and to the fanaticism, intolerance, and violence to which such dogmatism can all too easily lead.

Pragmatists have also inveighed against the Cartesian idea that philosophy should begin with bold global doubt that is, a doubt capable of demolishing all our old beliefs. Peirce, James, Dewey, Quine, Popper, and Rorty, for example, have all emphatically denied that we must wipe the slate clean and find some neutral, necessary or presupposition-less starting-point for inquiry. Inquiry, pragmatists are persuaded, can start only when there is some actual or living doubt; but, they point out, we cannot genuinely doubt everything at once (though they allow, as good fallibilists should, that there is nothing which we may not come to doubt in the course of our inquiries). This anti-Cartesian attitude is summed up by Otto Neurath’s celebrated metaphor of the conceptual scheme as raft: inquirers are mariners who must repair their raft plank by plank, adrift all the while on the open sea; for they can never disembark and scrutinize their craft in dry-dock from an external standpoint. In sum, we must begin *in media res* in the middle of things and

confess that our starting-points are contingent and historically conditioned inheritances. One meta-philosophical moral drawn by Dewey (and seconded by Quine) was that we should embrace naturalism: the idea that philosophy is not prior to science, but continuous with it. There is thus no special, distinctive method on which philosophers as a caste can pride themselves; no transcendentalist faculty of pure Reason or Intuition; no Reality (immutable or otherwise) inaccessible to science for philosophy to ken or limn. Moreover, philosophers do not invent or legislate standards from on high; instead, they make explicit the norms and methods implicit in our best current practice.

Finally, it should be noted that pragmatists are unafraid of the Cartesian global skeptic that is, the kind of skeptic who contends that we cannot know anything about the external world because we can never know that we are not merely dreaming. They have urged that such skepticism is merely a *reductio ad absurdum* of the futile quest for certainty (Dewey, Rescher); that skepticism rests on an untenable Cartesian philosophy of mind (Rorty, Davidson); that skepticism presupposes a discredited correspondence theory of truth (Rorty); that the belief in an external world is justified insofar as it “works,” or best explains our sensory experience (James, Schiller, Quine); that the problem of the external world is bogus, since it cannot be formulated unless it is already assumed that there is an external world (Dewey); that the thought that there are truths no one could ever know is empty (Peirce); and that massive error about the world is simply inconceivable (Putnam, Davidson).

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What are the Pragmatic Themes and Theses?

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.....

2) Give explanation on Method and a Maxim.

.....

.....

3) Give note on Anti-Cartesianism.

.....

.....

2.6 THE KANTIAN INHERITANCE

Pragmatism’s critique of Cartesianism and empiricism draws heavily though not uncritically on Kant. Pragmatists typically think, for instance, that Kant was right to say that the world must be interpreted with the aid of a scheme of basic categories; but, they add, he was dead wrong to suggest that this framework is somehow sacrosanct, immutable, or necessary. Our categories and theories are indeed our creations; they reflect our peculiar constitution and history, and are not simply read off from the world. But frameworks can change and be replaced. And just as there is more than one way to skin a cat, there is more than one sound way to conceptualize the world and its content. Which interpretative framework or vocabulary we should use that of physics, say, or common sense will depend on our purposes and interests in a given context.

The upshot of all this is that the world does not impose some unique description on us; rather, it is we who choose how the world is to be described. Though this idea is powerfully present in James, it is also prominent in later pragmatism. It informs Carnap's distinction between internal and external questions, Rorty's claim that Nature has no preferred description of itself, Goodman's talk of world-making and of right but incompatible world-versions, and Putnam's insistence that objects exist relative to conceptual schemes or frameworks.

Then there is the matter of appealing to raw experience as a source of evidence for our beliefs. According to the tradition of mainstream empiricism from Locke to Ayer, our beliefs about the world ultimately derive their justification from perception. What then justifies one's belief that the cat is on the mat? Not another belief or judgment, but simply one's visual experience: one sees the said cat cavorting on the said mat and that is that. Since experience is simply "given" to the mind from without, it can justify one's basic beliefs (that is, beliefs that are justified but whose justification does not derive from any other beliefs). Sellars, Rorty, Davidson, Putnam, and Goodman are perhaps the best-known pragmatist opponents of this foundationalist picture. Drawing inspiration from Kant's dictum that "intuitions without concepts are blind," they aver that to perceive is really to interpret and hence to classify. But if observation is theory-laden, that is, epistemic access to reality is necessarily mediated by concepts and descriptions then we cannot verify theories or worldviews by comparing them with some raw, unsullied sensuous "Given." Hence old-time empiricists were fundamentally mistaken: experience cannot serve as a basic, belief-independent source of justification.

More generally, pragmatists from Peirce to Rorty have been suspicious of foundationalist theories of justification according to which empirical knowledge ultimately rests on an epistemically privileged basis that is, on a class of foundational beliefs which justify or support all other beliefs but which depend on no other beliefs for their justification. Their objections to such theories are many: that so-called "immediate" (or non-inferential) knowledge is a confused fiction; that knowledge is more like a coherent web than a hierarchically structured building; that there are no certain foundations for knowledge (since fallibilism is true); that foundational beliefs cannot be justified by appealing to perceptual experience (since the "Given" is a myth); and that knowledge has no overall or non-contextual structure whatsoever.

2.7 AGAINST THE SPECTATOR THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Pragmatists resemble Kant in yet another respect: they, too, ferociously repudiate the Lockean idea that the mind resembles either a blank slate (on which Nature impresses itself) or a dark chamber (into which the light of experience streams). What these august metaphors seem intended to convey (among other things) is the idea that observation is pure reception, and that the mind is fundamentally passive in perception. From the pragmatist standpoint this is just one more lamentable incarnation of what Dewey dubbed "the spectator theory of knowledge." According to spectator theorists (who range from Plato to modern empiricists), knowing is akin to seeing or beholding. Here, in other words, the knower is envisioned as a peculiar kind of voyeur: her aim is to reflect or duplicate the world without altering it to survey or contemplate things from a practically disengaged and disinterested standpoint.

Not so, says Dewey. For Dewey, Peirce, and like-minded pragmatists, knowledge (or warranted assertion) is the product of inquiry, a problem-solving process by means of which we move from

doubt to belief. Inquiry, however, cannot proceed effectively unless we experiment that is, manipulate or change reality in certain ways. Since knowledge thus grows through our attempts to push the world around (and see what happens as a result), it follows that knower as such must be agents; as a result, the ancient dualism between theory and practice must go by the board. This insight is central to the “experimental theory of knowledge,” which is Dewey’s alternative to the discredited spectatorial conception.

This repudiation of the passivity of observation is a major theme in pragmatist epistemology. According to James and Dewey, for instance, to observe is to select to be on the lookout for something is it for a needle in a haystack or a friendly face in a crowd. Hence our perceptions and observations do not reflect Nature with passive impartiality; first, because observers are bound to discriminate, guided by interest, expectation, and theory; second, because we cannot observe unless we act. But if experience is inconceivable apart from human interests and agency, then perceivers are truly explorers of the world not mirrors superfluously reproducing it. And if acceptance of some theory or other always precedes and directs observation, we must break with the classical empiricist assumption that theories are derived from independently discovered data or facts.

Again, it is proverbial that facts are stubborn things. If we want to find out how things really are, we are counseled by somber common-sense to open our eyes (literally as well as figuratively) and take a gander at the world; facts accessible to observation will then impress themselves on us, forcing their way into our minds whether we are prepared to extend them a hearty welcome or not. Facts, so understood, are the antidote to prejudice and the cure for bias; their epistemic authority is so powerful that it cannot be overridden or resisted. This idea is a potent and reassuring one, but it is apt to mislead. According to holists such as James and Schiller, the justificatory status of beliefs is partly a function of how well they cohere or fit with entrenched beliefs or theory. Since the range of “facts” we can countenance or acknowledge is accordingly constrained by our body of previous acquired beliefs, no “fact” can be admitted into our minds unless it can be coherently assimilated or harmonized with beliefs we already hold. This amounts to a rejection of Locke’s suggestion that the mind is a blank slate, that is, a purely receptive and patient *tabula rasa*.

2.8 BEYOND THE CORRESPONDENCE THEORY OF TRUTH

According to a longstanding tradition running from Plato to the present-day, truth is a matter of correspondence or agreement with reality (or with the aforementioned “facts”). But this venerable view is vague and beset with problems, say pragmatists. Here are just four: (1) How is this mysterious relation called “correspondence” to be understood or explicated? Not as copying, surely; but then how? (2) The correspondence theory makes a mystery of our practices of verification and inquiry. For we cannot know whether our beliefs are correspondence-true: if the “Given” is a myth, we cannot justify theories by comparing them with an unconceptualized reality. (3) It has seemed to some that traditional correspondence theories are committed to the outmoded Cartesian picture of the mind as Nature’s mirror, in which subjective inner representations of an objective outer order are formed. (4) It has also been urged that there is no

extra-linguistic reality for us to represent no mind-independent world to which our beliefs are answerable. What sense, then, can be made of the suggestion that true thoughts correspond to thought-independent things?

Some pragmatists have concluded that the correspondence theory is positively mistaken and must be abandoned. Others, more cautious, merely insist that standard formulations of the theory are uninformative or incomplete. Schiller, Rorty, and Putnam all arguably belong to the former group; Peirce, James, Dewey, Rescher, and Davidson, to the latter.

Apart from criticizing the correspondence theory, what have pragmatists had to say about truth? Here three views must be mentioned: (1) James and Dewey are often said to have held the view that the truth is what “works”: true hypotheses are useful, and vice versa. This view is easy to caricature and traduce until the reader attends carefully to the subtle pragmatist construal of utility. (What James and Dewey had in mind here was discussed above in Section 2a.) (2) According to Peirce, true opinions are those which inquirers will accept at the end of inquiry (that is, views on which we could not improve, no matter how far inquiry on that subject is pressed or pushed). Peirce’s basic approach has inspired later pragmatists such as Putnam (whose “internal realism” glosses truth as ideal rational acceptability) as well as Apel and Habermas (who have equated truth with what would be accepted by all in an ideal speech situation). (3) According to Rorty, truth has no nature or essence; hence the less said about it, the better. To call a belief or theory “true” is not to ascribe any property to it; it is merely to perform some speech act (for example, to recommend, to caution, etc.). As Rorty sees it, his fellow pragmatists James, Dewey, Peirce, Putnam, Habermas, and Apel all err in thinking that truth can be elucidated or explicated.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What you mean by the Kantian Inheritance?

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2) Give description on against the Spectator Theory of Knowledge.

.....

3) What you mean by beyond the Correspondence Theory of Truth?

.....

2.9 LET US SUM UP

For the most part, pragmatists have thought of themselves as reforming the tradition of empiricism though some have gone further and recommended that tradition’s abolition. As this difference of opinion suggests, pragmatists do not vote *en bloc*. There is no such thing as the pragmatist party-line: not only have pragmatists taken different views on major issues (for example, truth, realism, skepticism, perception, justification, fallibilism, realism, conceptual

schemes, the function of philosophy, etc.), they have also disagreed about what the major issues are. While such diversity may seem commendably in keeping with pragmatism's professed commitment to pluralism, detractors have urged it only goes to show that pragmatism stands for little or nothing in particular. This gives rise to a question as awkward as it is unavoidable namely, how useful is the term "pragmatism"? That question is wide open.

2.10 KEY WORDS

Pragmatism: Thinking about solving problems in a practical and sensible way rather than by having fixed ideas and theories.

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UNIT 3 PROCESS PHILOSOPHY

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this unit is to introduce one of the contemporary trends in Western philosophy namely Process Philosophy. The objective is fourfold: to discuss the shift of emphasis from becoming to being that took place in modernity; the positive factors that accentuated the development of a philosophy of organism; the methodological shift that Whitehead calls for in view of the latter and to discuss the essential features of Process Philosophy. We will focus on its Western and Eastern contexts and the pioneers of this trend and the chief features of this approach in philosophy. Last part of the unit discusses some of the notional clarifications, such as creativity, prehension, actual entity, etc.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The chief advocate of process philosophy, a trend of philosophy in the twentieth century is Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), a British Mathematician, Scientist and philosopher. Whitehead addressed it as 'philosophy of organism'. For Whitehead any reality is constituted of two poles, a physical pole and a mental pole. And what is primary is not being but becoming. For Whitehead reality is process and God is no exemption to metaphysical principle, God is also a subject of becoming. Such a position was so radical and has invited so many criticism even from the religious circles. Whitehead's methodology is more attuned to East.

3.2 THE *SITZ IM LEBEN* OF PROCESS PHILOSOPHY

Many factors contributed to its development. The early Greek thinking was more sensitive to the question of being and becoming and they were reluctant to follow a univocal approach to being and becoming. They accommodated both categories as facts of existence. Western philosophy, arguably from the Middle Ages, is a metaphysics of being. This emphasis upon 'being' determined with its own impacts the largest part of Western metaphysics not only in the Middle Ages, but in modernity as well. Thus the struggle between being and becoming is not a feature of 'classical' philosophy alone. We see a revival of it very clearly in Hegel's dialectical way of

philosophizing. Hegel unites being and becoming in a unique way in his thought. Nietzsche emphasized the reality of becoming. He considered reality itself as an endless Becoming (*Werden*). He believed that there is no final state of the universe; that the world is in a constant state of flux, always changing and becoming. Nietzsche holds that the world is a world of becoming and there is no being. A world of being is merely a world of appearances. The shift of emphasis from being and becoming in the early Greek thought to being in medieval and early modernity and again to becoming which characterises present day thinking. The East in general always maintained its primacy for being, except in the case of Buddhism.

However, the growth and development that one observes in nature is fascinating. It reveals a more profound truth that the fundamental characteristic of nature is not permanence but dynamism and activity. Whitehead's experience and the result of his analysis went against the general understanding of Western philosophy. For Whitehead, the enquiry into the nature of reality is as important as an enquiry into the fundamental reality in nature: what is primordial - being or becoming? The question of being and becoming can be considered as two sides of the same coin: the first raises the question what is the fundamental reality in nature; and the second, what is the nature of this fundamental reality.

Whitehead's shift from being to becoming recalls to mind of a more primordial shift that occurred in Greek philosophy from becoming to being, which was accentuated in modernity. One can say that the development of Process philosophy can be understood as a reaction to the modern philosophizing which maintained a univocal approach to the question of being. Process Philosophy will give us an opportunity to discuss modernity and the emergence of scientific materialism.

Scientific Materialism

Philosophy of being was the result of the "marriage" between science and philosophy that resulted in a static outlook of nature. This development in the course of history paved the way for a metaphysics of being which culminated in the modern scientifico-mechanistic understanding of nature and reality. Greek philosophy had in itself the potency to develop a static conception of nature and reality, which ultimately paved the way for developing a philosophy of being or a materialistic outlook of nature and reality in modernity at the cost of becoming. However, it is to be added that though one can identify traces of materialism already in Greek philosophy it was modernity and its materialistic outlook together with the Newtonian Mechanistic outlook that is in the background of the development of Process Philosophy.

Modern philosophers have given a new orientation to their ontological quest by introducing a new language and new thought pattern of ideas. Whitehead's philosophy at its inception was a reaction to the mathematico-mechanistic perspective of nature that dominated his own age. The material outlook of nature has passed through two major stages: one with Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, and the other with Descartes, whereby nature was seen through the eyes of mathematics and science. If one is to identify a third stage that brought this process to its zenith it is the mechanization of the universe by Newton. Amidst the great service Newtonian thought rendered to modern thinking and developments it had its own flip side as well. It was Newton who gave a final stroke to the mathematico-mechanistic vision of the universe. From the very beginning Whitehead distanced himself from scientific materialism. Whitehead's goal was to construct an alternative all-inclusive cosmological scheme. With this goal in view Whitehead undertook a historical survey of the scientific development to establish the various impacts of

reigning cosmology on thought. It is over against this scientific materialism of the modern epoch that Whitehead developed his organic philosophy. A remarkable characteristic of nature is that we experience the whole as a flux, i.e., changing or becoming with the lapse of time.

It was this mechanistic mode of thinking that prevailed during Whitehead's philosophical development that he inherited from tradition. Whitehead soon realized that it was his vocation to extricate philosophy from this false metaphysical perspective. He wanted to overcome the 'bifurcation of nature,' and the mathematico-mechanistic perspective of nature. Nevertheless, it was no easy task. Whitehead's purpose was to construct a cosmological doctrine that avows to include what is important for science as well as for its critics. The fundamental position enjoyed by inorganic matter in the scientific outlook is replaced by an organic synthesis in the philosophy of organism.

Whitehead's critique of materialism emphasized and advocated a metaphysic of static being against which Whitehead developed his metaphysics of becoming. Whitehead's objective was to develop a metaphysical system that would account for the total experience of human beings. The other two ideas that arrested the attention of the people were concerned with notions of transition or change. They were the doctrine of conservation of energy and the doctrine of evolution. However, we do not go into the details of these theories. For the moment it suffices to understand that the first theory has to do with the notion of quantitative permanence underlying change, and the latter was concerned with the emergence of new organisms as the outcome of chance (SMW 101). This had tremendous repercussions on the general train of thought. We see science is taking up a new orientation which is neither purely physical, nor purely biological. It becomes the study of organisms.

3.3 AN INEVITABLE SHIFT IN METHODOLOGY

Whitehead's exploration of scientific materialism brought out its inadequacy to account for the complete human experience. Therefore, Whitehead's objective was to develop an alternative metaphysics that would account for all dimensions of human experience. And Whitehead rightly divined that the first step to achieve this goal was a methodological shift. Whitehead was a mathematician and scientist during the first half of his life. The then circulated picture of the universe, namely, the mathematico-mechanistic mode of thinking based on the Newtonian science and philosophy was not very promising. Thus, a shift from pure science to a joint venture undertaken with the help of the necessary means available to him, namely, science and philosophy was inevitable. The nature of the physical universe for science was a static-mechanistic one. Contrary to the existing model of the universe Whitehead wanted to develop a picture of the universe more truthful to human experience. Whitehead observed that any reconstruction of cosmology should take into account the rich variety of human experience and should be in accord with the modern scientific developments.

3.4 PHILOSOPHY OF ORGANISM

A distinctive feature of the philosophy of organism is its attempt to combine philosophy and modern science into a "speculative synthesis." It attempts to formulate a comprehensive vision of the world. The philosophy of organism was thus proposed as an alternative to the "scientific

materialism”, which dominated the modern epoch of thought. Whitehead’s alternative metaphysics proposed a theory of an indefinite plurality of ‘actual entities’. What is emphasized in the organic philosophy is an ‘absolute no’ to the materialistic outlook on nature. In the organic philosophy, nature is characterised by ‘creative advance’; static nature becomes a ‘structure of evolving process’; the theory of simple location is substituted with a ‘process of prehensive unification’; the absoluteness of matter is replaced with ‘creativity’; and the traditional notion of substance (act) and potentiality are re-configured as actuality and eternal objects, respectively. Philosophy is no more the discourse of the static substance but rather of the dynamic organism.

From Being to Beingness in Becoming

In the previous section we saw that Whitehead’s attempt was to reinstate the metaphysics of becoming which was neglected in the modern period. The primary objective of this section will be to clarify the fundamental characteristics of the Whiteheadian actual entity.

The chief characteristic of Whitehead’s philosophy is that it has made a radical shift from philosophy of being to a philosophy of becoming. For him, “actual is a process, and is not describable in terms of the morphology of a “stuff” (PR 41). What does he mean by it? An actual occasion cannot be taken as some kind of stuff which exists or which is antecedent to its process. The fundamental fact about any actuality or that which constitutes any actuality is its process. Without process there is no actuality. For Whitehead an actual entity *is* (exists) only ‘in the becoming’ (Leclerc 71). The following quotes of Whitehead are self-explanatory: “The aim of the philosophy of organism is to express a coherent cosmology based upon the notions of ‘system,’ ‘process,’ ‘creative advance into novelty,’ ‘res vera,’ (in Descartes sense), ... as ultimate agents of stubborn facts” (PR 128).

“This doctrine of organism is the attempt to describe the world as a process of generation of individual actual entities, each with its own absolute self-attainment. This concrete finality of the individual is nothing else than a decision referent beyond itself. The ‘perpetual perishing’ (Locke II, XIV, I) of individual absoluteness is thus foredoomed. But the ‘perishing’ of absoluteness is the attainment of ‘objective immortality’” (PR 60).

The germs of Whitehead’s philosophy of becoming can be traced back to his earlier writing. From the very beginning Whitehead expressed his opposition to the static outlook on nature. This is clear from the terms he used such as ‘passage of nature’ in the earlier writings and ‘process’, ‘creative advance’, in his later works (PNK 61). “All things are involved in the creative advance of the Universe, that is, in the general temporality which affects all things, even if at all times they remain self identical” (AI 143). However, only at a later stage does he use the term process to denote the fundamental nature of reality.

The Fundamental Principle of Becoming

Whitehead’s philosophy of becoming argues against certain principles that traditional philosophy held as very fundamental. Whitehead, again and again, expresses his opposition to the static notion of nature and reality. For him, “the foundation of all understanding of sociological theory ... is that no static maintenance of perfection is possible. This axiom is rooted in the nature of things. Advance or Decadence are the only choices offered to mankind. The pure conservative is fighting against the essence of the universe” (AI 274). This statement as such needs further clarification. Three metaphysical principles come to our aid.

First, “the very essence of real actuality – that is, of the completely real – is process” (AI 274). Therefore, one can understand any actuality only in terms of its becoming and perishing. The second metaphysical principle is the principle of individuality. It concerns the doctrine of harmony. Whitehead identifies this individual endurance with what Descartes has designated by *realitas objectiva*. Whitehead is arguing against the Aristotelian doctrine of primary substances: “no individual primary substance can enter into the complex of objects observed in any occasion of experience. The qualifications of the soul are thus confined to universals” (AI 280). For Whitehead, this is a misconception of reality.

The individual, real facts of the past lie at the base of our immediate experience in the present. They are reality from which the occasion springs, the reality from which it derives its source of emotion, from which it inherits its purposes, to which it directs its passions. At the base of experience there is a welter of feeling, derived from individual realities or directed towards them. Thus for strength of experience we require to discriminate the component factors, each as an individual ‘It’ with its own significance (AI 280).

Whitehead’s point about individuality recalls another characteristic of the metaphysics of becoming. For Whitehead, the “ultimate metaphysical truth is atomism. The creature is atomic” (PR 35). It is a natural corollary of Whitehead’s position that there is no continuity of becoming but only becoming of continuity. We have already seen that becoming is the becoming of each actual entity and what constitutes extensive continuity is their succession. Here the point is that the continuously extensive world is not itself an actual entity, but is a multiplicity of actual entities, which by their succession constitute a unity. Therefore, continuous extensiveness is not a metaphysical feature of an actual entity (Leclerc 75).

Thirdly, Whitehead’s philosophy of organism is based on the fundamental unity of being, which his principle of relativity explicates. Furthermore, Whitehead’s idea of universal relatedness is developed in defiance of Aristotle’s above cited dictum that ‘a substance is not present in another subject’. On the other hand, the principle of relativity in clear-cut terms states that ‘an actual entity is present in other actual entities’ (PR 50). Whitehead maintains that the philosophy of organism is devoted to elucidate the notion of “being present in another entity” (PR 50). These three fundamental principles of becoming do not stand isolated, but rather form an integral unity. The first principle which emphasizes becoming goes very well with the second that underscores infinite possibilities and their unity that is stressed in the third principle. It is the principle of becoming and the inter-dependent nature of the individual actualities that make the metaphysics of becoming. Therefore, it is right to say that each actual occasion exemplifies an identity of being and becoming (Canevi 186). Nevertheless, since we are attuned to a metaphysics of being it is hard to comprehend a metaphysics of becoming. In fact, becoming itself is enigmatic.

3.5 FUNDAMENTAL REALITY IN WHITEHEAD

It is equivalent to ‘what is the fundamental substratum of the universe’? What is remarkable here is that it is the same question as that of the “to be”, that the philosophers asked from the very

beginning. The philosophy of organism is distinctive by the following fundamental notions: actual occasion, prehension, nexus and the ontological principle.

Actual Occasion: the Dynamic Subject

Whitehead's theory of actual occasion is the foundation stone of his attempt to "construct a system of ideas which brings the aesthetic, moral, and the religious interests into relation with those concepts of the world" (PR xii). His aim was a speculative philosophy which he defined as "the endeavour to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted" (PR 3). In the preface to his *Process and Reality*, Whitehead tells us what he means by an actual entity: "An actual entity is a 'res vera' in the Cartesian sense of that term; it is a 'Cartesian substance,' not an Aristotelian primary substance" (PR xiii). Therefore, by the term actual entity Whitehead means what we understand by subject or self. He uses the terms subject and actual entity synonymously (PR 122; Johnson 17). For Whitehead, actual entities "are the final real things of which the world is made up. There is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real" (PR 18). In its primary sense actual occasion signifies the general metaphysical category of 'that which is' (Leclerc 1958, 53). In the tradition of philosophy, it is the equivalent of *ousia* in Aristotle, substance in Descartes, monad in Leibniz, etc. Whitehead's theory of actual entity stresses "change, permanence, the interaction of creative individuals, God and value" (Johnson 12). All actual entities are having two poles: a physical pole and a mental pole. In his view God is also an actual entity, having two poles. And God cannot be made an exemption to metaphysical principles.

The Theory of Concrecence

The word concrecence literally means a 'growing together'. In using this word Whitehead's primary purpose was to analyze the coming to be of each moment of human experience. He wanted to explain the structure of becoming. How does each moment of our experience come into existence and constitute the fundamental reality, i.e., the actual occasion? The theory of concrecence explains the internal constitution of an actual entity. Each actual occasion is a process in the Whiteheadian perspective and the theory of concrecence exposes the "beingness" of this process. Concrecence is defined by Whitehead as "the name for the process in which the universe of many things acquires an individual unity in a determinate relegation of each item of the 'many' to its subordination in the constitution of the novel 'one'" (PR 211). This definition in a nutshell elucidates the whole philosophy of organism. It is observed that the theory of concrecence "constitutes his ontology, his theory of nature, essential properties, and relations of any actual entity" (Hosinski 46).

Whitehead has used the notion of 'concrecence' in order to signify the unity of both physical and conceptual prehensions. "The integration of the physical and mental side into a unity of experience is a self-formation which is a process of concrecence, and which by the principle of objective immortality characterises the creativity which transcends it" (PR 108). Further analysis of the theory of concrecence can only be done in light of the theory of prehension, which is a necessary correlative of the former.

The Concept of Prehension

The principle of prehension is the foundational basis for the Whiteheadian philosophy of process. It is the theory that substantiates his claim that "the nature is a structure of evolving processes.

The reality is the process” (SMW 72). The word prehension comes from the root *‘prehendere’* meaning ‘grasp or seize’ (Hosinski 59). In the concrescence of an actuality what occurs is the prehension of the data. In other words, in the growing together of an actuality (concrescence) what is actualised is the seizing or grasping (prehension) of data. Thus, it can be said that any explication of the becoming or the formation of the actual occasion must take into account these two concepts together. The importance of the concepts of concrescence and prehension can be elucidated from the statement Whitehead makes in the categories of explanation. “[T]he first analysis of an actual entity, into its most concrete elements, discloses it to be a concrescence of prehensions, which have originated in its process of becoming. All further analysis is an analysis of prehensions” (PR 23). Theories of concrescence and prehension account for the constitution of an actual occasion. One may also say that prehension is a process of unifying. In itself an actual occasion is whole and undivided. However, Whitehead does admit that for the purpose of rational analysis we have to distinguish several phases of this becoming, namely the receptive, the responsive, and the integrative, which happen in a logically successive sequence.

Satisfaction

The notion of “satisfaction” has to do with an entity’s moment of receiving individuality. It can be observed that the moment of satisfaction is not merely a component factor in the process of concrescence but it is the final and sublime moment in the process of ‘concrescence’. In other words, all the process of concrescence was just in view of this moment of ‘satisfaction’. Whitehead writes, that each actual entity “is a process of ‘feeling’ the many data, so as to absorb them into the unity of one individual satisfaction” (PR 40). It is the moment where a ‘concrete actuality’ is formed out of the process of concrescence. It is the end result of concrescence and where the process of concrescence ceases with regard to that particular actuality. It is the outcome of the process. Whitehead writes: “An actual entity is a process in the course of which many operations with incomplete subjective unity terminate in a completed unity of operations, termed the ‘satisfaction’. This satisfaction is the contentment of the creative urge by the fulfilment of its categorical demands” (PR 219). In ‘satisfaction’ the process of concrescence reaches its completion and as such it is the terminal point of concrescence.

The Eternal Objects: Pure Potentials for Actual Occasion

The eternal object is one of the three formative elements in the constitution of an actual occasion, and the other two remain Creativity and God. For Whitehead, “[a]ny entity whose conceptual recognition does not involve a necessary reference to any definite actual entities of the temporal world is called an ‘eternal object’” (PR 44). He continues that “[a]n eternal object is always a potentiality for actual entities; but in itself, as conceptually felt, it is neutral as to the fact of its physical ingression in any particular actual entity of the temporal world. Potentiality is the correlative of the givenness” (PR 44). The first question to be discussed is why are they called eternal objects? It is because they are not subject to becoming and change and are objects in the sense that they are given (Leclerc 1985, 306). Moreover, Whitehead calls them ‘eternal objects’ to differentiate them from their historical presuppositions. Eternal objects or these transcendent entities (ideals) are called ‘universals’ in traditional philosophy. Eternal objects are the “pure potentials” (PR 23) of the universe and on account of the realization of these pure potentials actual entities differ from each other.

Creativity: the Metaphysical Ultimate in Whitehead

Every philosophical system needs an ultimate as the final reference point in its foundation and thus to avoid infinite regress. “In all philosophic theory there is an ultimate which is actual in virtue of its accidents. It is only then capable of characterisation through its accidental embodiments and apart from these accidents is devoid of actuality. In the philosophy of organism this ultimate is termed ‘creativity’” (PR 7).

The ultimate is that without which one cannot think anything at all. No creativity means no reality. What one cannot think away is creativity. Creativity is described as the most general characteristic feature that all actualities have in common. In the categorial scheme of Whitehead it is described as the “universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact” (PR 21). What does it mean? Here “characterising” shall not be taken in the sense of creativity as an eternal object, not even the “thinnest” or “most abstract” of all eternal objects.

Creativity is the ultimate in the sense that without creativity there is no reality at all. This points to the complexity as well as the primordial role that creativity plays in the metaphysical system. At the same time, it recalls also the limitation it bears as the Ultimate of the system that it alone cannot account for the “complete fact”, but is in need of another principle, namely God. Creativity is the dynamic principle which is active in the self-creative process of an actual occasion. This underlying and substantial activity has no existence of its own, for existence presupposes determination. In the Whiteheadian system this role is assigned to God. Creativity is beyond all temporal determinations and characterisations, being foundational to the metaphysical system. By being the ultimate descriptive notion, describing the nature of things, it is also the ultimate explanatory principle.

If one understands creativity in Thomistic terms, it accounts only for the preservice of the world in the sense of why the world continues to exist. However, it does not account for the existence itself; creativity has no existence apart from actual entities. In the same way “actual entities cannot exist except as instances of creativity; they cannot be meaningfully separated from the ultimate metaphysical principle” (Garland 370).

3.6 GOD AND THE METAPHYSICS OF BECOMING

Another sphere of philosophizing where one observes the originality of Process Philosophy is Whitehead’s understanding of God. He was critical of both mechanistic and anthropomorphic views of God, which primarily expressed a static outlook of God, thereby making a way for his metaphysics of becoming in the philosophy of God. Whitehead deals with the question of God, and on rational grounds. It is also emphasized that Whitehead’s system is incomplete without a proper philosophy of God.

God and the Metaphysical Principles

Whitehead identifies three conceptions of God that gained a wider acceptance and exerted considerable influence. “God in the image of an imperial ruler, God in the image of a personification of moral energy, [and] God in the image of an ultimate philosophical principle” (PR 342). He associates these three strains of thought respectively with the Roman Caesars, the Hebrew prophets, and Aristotle. In Whitehead, the Aristotelian view of God as “unmoved mover” is replaced by a God who is very much involved in the world; in fact, for him, God becomes a “Moved Mover” (Oomen 108) and “a fellow sufferer” (PR 351).

Whitehead criticizes both Descartes and Leibniz for introducing God arbitrarily into their system. Referring to Descartes' conception of bodily substances he says: "Descartes tells us that they are sustained by God, but fails to give any reason why God should care to do so" (FR 24). Coming to Leibniz we see that the monads are windowless, however, this isolated nature of monads is mitigated in their relation to God (AI 133). Whitehead comments that "no reason can be given why the supreme monad, God, is exempted from the common fate of isolation. Monads, according to this doctrine, are windowless for each other. Why do the monads have windows towards God, and why has God windows towards them?" (AI 134) For Whitehead, God is no exception "to all metaphysical principles, invoked to save their collapse. He is their chief exemplification" (PR 343).

Whitehead's concept of God is based on the fundamental assumption that there is uniformity in the fundamental laws of the universe. Therefore, the same structure must be applicable to God. Whitehead maintained that God's existence is not generically different from other actual entities. God is an actual entity, but he is "primordial." Actual means having 'existence' in the fullest sense. On the grounds of his principle that God cannot be made an exception to metaphysical principles, Whitehead applies to God many of the categories that apply to actual occasions.

The Primordial Nature of God

The Primordial nature of God corresponds to the mental or conceptual pole of any actual entity. It "is abstracted from his commerce with particulars, and is therefore devoid of those impure intellectual cogitations which involve propositions. It is God in abstraction, alone with himself. As such it is a mere factor in God, deficient in actuality" (PR 34). Moreover, Whitehead defines the primordial nature of God as "the non-temporal act of all-inclusive unfettered valuation" (PR 31). God in his primordial nature is deficient in actuality. His primordial nature "shows forth God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of Nature and of a Finite Spirit". In the primordial nature God is 'bodiless' and as the first creature of creativity God is locked in his conceptual aloneness (Kraus 170).

The Consequent Nature of God

Whitehead's conception of God was not fully worked out, in his early works. It receives a more detailed explication in PR. Whitehead finds that God's nature is not exhausted by the primordial nature. Moreover, a notion of God limited to his primordial nature alone will not do justice to his basic contention that God is an actual entity. Thus, Whitehead recognises in God a consequent nature, which corresponds to the physical pole of any actual entity. God, being an actual entity, bears and expresses all the characteristics of an actual entity. Thus, with every actual entity God is endowed with a conceptual as well as a physical prehension (consequent nature). "Analogously to all actual entities, the nature of God is dipolar. He has a primordial nature and a consequent nature. The consequent nature of God is conscious; and it is the realisation of the actual world in the unity of his nature, and through the transformation of his wisdom. The primordial nature is conceptual, and the consequent nature is the weaving of God's physical feelings upon his primordial concepts (PR 345)."

Following are the chief characteristics of the Consequent Nature of God:

1. God's consciousness and knowledge: "the consequent nature of God is conscious ..." (PR 345).

2. The finitude of the consequent nature: “One side of God’s nature is constituted by ... Conceptual experience can be infinite, but it belongs to the nature of physical experience that it is finite” (PR 345).
3. The consequent nature as everlasting: “The primordial nature of God is eternal, but the consequent nature is everlasting.” Everlasting in the Whiteheadian sense means “the property of combining creative advance with the retention of mutual immediacy” (PR 346). Here ‘everlasting’ means involving a creative advance that the earlier elements are not lost while at the same time new ones are added which remain with God forever (Cobb 1971, 223).

Moreover, Whitehead understands God as the Principle of Limitation in the sense that it is God who gives structure and order to the universe. In the Whiteheadian understanding God is the source of potentiality and source of novelty and the wisdom that permeates the universe. Whatever position one may take with regard to Whitehead’s understanding of God it is true that Whitehead has presented a way to think the God question anew. He has brought out some relevant insights concerning God and religion. Nevertheless, it highlights the tension between the classical view of God and the one Whitehead drew up. In this context only, one can see some of the criticism raised against Whitehead or process theodicy. Whitehead wanted to make God relevant in the modern world, but in his attempt to make God relevant, by a vision of God that is more attuned to modern world and science and metaphysics, the identity of the notion “God” is attenuated, in light of the classical perspective. The point is that he does not pay adequate attention to the religious sensitivity and the milieu in which the meaning of the term God originated. Nevertheless, whatever his critics might say, it is deemed necessary to add that one cannot conclude that Whitehead’s notion of God is a failure.

3.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit our attempt was to introduce Process Philosophy. For this we focused primarily on the context which necessitated a shift in the way of philosophizing. Moreover, we try to explain fundamental concepts of Whiteheadian metaphysics of becoming or Process Philosophy. Whitehead himself does not call his philosophy Process, but this name was given to his philosophy by others. Now there is a trend in theology which is known as Process theology which is developed from having insights from process philosophy. For Process philosophy what is primary is process or becoming rather than being. This same view he applies in the case of God as well, which has invited much criticism.

3.8 KEY WORDS

Philosophy of Organism: It is an attempt to combine philosophy and modern science into a “speculative synthesis.” It attempts to formulate a comprehensive vision of the world “harmonising the thoroughness and universality of philosophical questioning with the state of knowledge attained by modern science”

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UNIT 4 PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

Contents

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this Unit is to introduce the Linguistic Turn in Contemporary Philosophy (this title suits better than ‘Philosophy of Language’) through its leading figures, Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein. By the end of this Unit you should be able:

- To have a basic knowledge of and the relation between logical, linguistic and analytical turns in twentieth century western philosophy;
- To be familiar with the life and works of Frege, Russell and Wittgenstein;
- To have a critical view of Wittgenstein’s earlier philosophy as in the *Tractatus*;
- To understand the key concepts as given in the *Philosophical Investigations*;
- To have a critical understanding of Wittgenstein’s earlier and later thoughts

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Philosophy in the Twentieth Century, at least in the English speaking world, is characterised by linguistic and logical turns. Due to the enormous success of science and technology in the 20th century, it was felt that science had taken over much of the territory formerly occupied by philosophy. Since the task of acquiring knowledge about the world has been taken over by science, the only task that remained for philosophy was to clarify meaning. As Moritz Schlick, put it, “Science should be defined as the ‘pursuit of truth’ and Philosophy as the ‘pursuit of meaning.’” Moreover, new and more powerful methods of logic had been developed in the twentieth century that promised to solve or dissolve some of the perennial philosophical problems, through logical analysis of language. In spite of the differences linguistic philosophers shared the following convictions: (1) philosophical problems are not problems about the world, but what we say about the world; they are logical and not empirical; (2) they are to be first be clarified and then solved or dissolved through a process of logical analysis of language; and (3) the rest of the problems are pseudo-problems and are not worth worrying about.

4.2 GOTTLOB FREGE

Life and Works

Gottlob Frege, (1848-1925) a German philosopher and mathematician, is the father of modern logic and one of the founding figures of analytic and linguistic philosophy. He taught at the University of Jena, in Germany. Frege's goal was to show that most of mathematics could be reduced to logic, in the sense that the full content of all mathematical truths could be expressed using only logical notions and that the truths so expressed could be deduced from logical first principles using only logical means of inference. He tried to articulate an experience and intuition independent conception of reason. He held that what justifies mathematical statements is reason alone; their justification proceeds without the benefit or need of either perceptual experience or intuition.

His important works are:

1. *Begriffsschrift* (Conceptual Notation) (1879) presents his logic;
2. *Die Grundlagen der Arithmetik* (The Foundations of Arithmetic) (1884), outlines the strategy he is going to employ in reducing arithmetic to logic and then goes on to provide the reduction with a philosophical rationale and justification;
3. *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik* (Basic Laws of Arithmetic) (volumes 1, 1893, and 2, 1903), seeks to carry out the programme in detail.

Essays: *Funktion und Begriff* ('Function and Concept') 1891, '*Über Sinn und Bedeutung*' ('On Sense and Reference') 1892, '*Über Begriff und Gegenstand*' ('On Concept and Object') 1892 and '*Der Gedanke: eine logische Untersuchung*' ('Thoughts: A Logical Investigation') 1918.

Language and Logic

To ground his views about the relationship of logic and mathematics, Frege conceived a comprehensive philosophy of language. He translated central philosophical problems into problems about language: for example, faced with the epistemological question of how we are able to have knowledge of objects which we can neither observe nor intuit, such as numbers, Frege replaces it with the question of how we are able to talk about those objects using language and philosophy becomes linguistic. Instead of asking questions such as "What is number or time?" we should better ask "How the word number or time is used?" Arguing for the Primacy of Sentences, he held that meaning of a word can be found only in the context of a proposition. According to him, it is the operation of sentences that is primary: the explanation of the functioning of all parts of speech is to be in terms of their contribution to the meanings of the whole sentence. In philosophical analysis of language, the logical is to be separated from the psychological. We should not confuse explanations with psychological accounts of the mental states of speakers, unshareable aspects of individual experience.

Sense and Reference

In his essay 'On Sense and Reference' (1892), Frege considered whether the 'sense' of an expression - what it is that we know when we understand the expression - is simply identical to what it designates (the 'reference'). In the case of a singular term its reference is the object denoted by the term, whereas its sense is determined by the way that object is presented through the expression. Frege was motivated to introduce the sense-reference distinction to solve certain puzzles: (1) the apparent impossibility of informative identity statements and (2) the apparent failure of substitution in contexts of propositional attitudes. As for (1), the statements 'the morning star is the evening star' and the 'morning star is the morning star' differ in cognitive value, which would be impossible if the object designated constituted the only meaning of a

singular term. The sense-reference distinction allows one to attribute different cognitive values to these identity statements if the senses of the terms flanking the identity sign differ, while still allowing the objects denoted to be one and the same. Regarding (2), the sentences ‘John believes that the morning star is a body illuminated the by the Sun’ and ‘John believes that the evening star is a body illuminated by the Sun’ may have different truth values, although the one is obtained from the other by substitution of a co-referential terms.

4.3 BERTRAND RUSSELL

Life and Works

Bertrand Arthur William Russell (1872 - 1970) was a British philosopher, logician, essayist, and social critic, best known for his work in mathematical logic and analytic philosophy. Russell’s various contributions were also unified by his views concerning both the centrality of scientific knowledge and the importance of an underlying scientific methodology that is common to both philosophy and science. In the case of philosophy, this methodology expressed itself through Russell’s use of logical analysis. Russell often claimed that he had more confidence in his methodology than in any particular philosophical conclusion. He made significant contributions, not just to logic and philosophy, but to a broad range of other subjects including education, history, political theory and religious studies. In addition, many of his writings on a wide variety of topics in both the sciences and the humanities have influenced generations of general readers. After a life marked by controversy, including dismissals from both Trinity College, Cambridge and City College, New York, Russell was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950. In addition to numerous articles, he wrote over ninety books, both technical and popular, on a wide range of topics. Also noted for his many spirited anti-war and anti-nuclear protests, Russell remained a prominent public figure until his death at the age of 97.

Russell’s most important writings include “On Denoting”(1905), “Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description”(1910), “The Philosophy of Logical Atomism”(1918, 1919), “Logical Atomism”(1924), *The Analysis of Mind* (1921), and *The Analysis of Matter* (1927). Two of his best selling works are *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912) and *A History of Western Philosophy* (1945).

Logical and Linguistic Turn

According to Russell, “every philosophical problem, when it is subjected to the necessary analysis and purification, is found either to be not really philosophical at all, or else to be, in the sense in which [I am] using the word, logical.” (“Logic as the Essence of Philosophy,” 1914). Russell’s central assumption through most of his life was that there was a necessary link between the nature of language and the truths of metaphysics. Since language is capable of describing the world and expressing true propositions about it, then there must be, he argued, some correspondence between the logical structure of language and the necessary structure of reality. Although the later analysts would be decidedly anti-metaphysical, Russell enthusiastically believed that the new, powerful tools of modern logic he had developed would let us put metaphysics on a sound foundation at last.

In his view, the philosopher’s job is to discover a logically ideal language that will exhibit the true nature of the world in such a way that the speaker will not be misled by the surface structure

of natural language. According to him, the primary function of language is to represent facts. It was Russell's belief that by using the new logic of his day, philosophers would be able to exhibit the underlying "logical form" of natural language statements. A statement's logical form, in turn, would help philosophers resolve problems of reference associated with the ambiguity and vagueness of natural language. A proposition will be true if it corresponds to a fact and false if it doesn't. What is needed is a logical language where this correspondence can be set out clearly. "In a logically perfect language the words in a proposition would correspond one by one with components of the corresponding fact, with the exception of such words as 'or', 'not', 'if', 'then', which have a different function." This correspondence is revealed by the parallel activities of analyzing complex propositions down to their simplest components (called "atomic propositions") and likewise analyzing facts down to their simplest components (which he called "atomic facts").

While the logical structure of language provides us with the logical form of the world, a metaphysics of this sort cannot tell us what particular things exist. This can only be accomplished by an appeal to experience. The more Russell tried to get clear on the sort of facts we can actually know, his position became increasingly difficult to hold.

Knowledge by Acquaintance and Description

According to Russell one can distinguish the two kinds of knowledge in terms of their respective objects. One has knowledge by acquaintance of things, and by description of propositions. Knowledge by acquaintance is neither true nor false and knowledge by description is either true or false. According to Russell, all knowledge of truths ultimately rests on knowledge by acquaintance. Although I can know one truth by inferring it from something else I know, not everything I know can be inferred in this way. We can avoid a regress of knowledge by holding that at least some truths are known as a result of acquaintance with those aspects of the world that make the corresponding propositions true. When one knows a particular shade of colour by acquaintance, for example, the colour is directly and immediately 'before' one's consciousness. There is nothing 'between' the colour and oneself. By contrast, one might know truths about Gandhiji but one's access to such truths is only through inference from other things one knows about the contents of history books and the like. There is a spatio-temporal gap between us and Gandhiji.

According to Russell, all knowledge by description ultimately depends upon knowledge by acquaintance. But if knowledge by acquaintance does not involve the possibility of error because it does not have as its object something that can be true or false, how can it give us first truths? How can it give us premises (which by their very nature must be true or false) from which to infer other truths? Either knowledge by acquaintance does not involve the application of concepts and cannot therefore give premises for inference, or it does involve the application of concepts and cannot be distinguished from knowledge by description. There are no facts that are independent of conceptual frameworks, some philosophers argue. The world is not divided into things, their properties and relations. Indeed the only distinctions that exist are distinctions that we make out of the world with our concepts and categories. Referring to a fact is just another way of talking about a proposition's being true. To say that the world contains the fact, grass being green, is just another way of saying that it is true that grass is green. Only a structured reality could make propositions true and only acquaintance with such structure would be a plausible candidate for the source of foundational knowledge. Many contemporary philosophers

argue that the very nature of justification precludes the possibility of having justification for believing empirical propositions that eliminates the possibility of error.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is the significance of the relation between sense and reference, according to Frege?

2) Do you agree with Russell's distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description?

4.4 LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

Life and Works

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) played a significant role in the development of various contemporary philosophical traditions like Analytic Philosophy, Logical Positivism, and Ordinary Language Philosophy. He continues to influence the Hermeneutic and Postmodern trends in philosophy today. His works are immensely challenging, and he raises fundamental questions about the nature of philosophy and philosophizing.

The *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* was the only book published during his lifetime. Throughout his life Wittgenstein wrote down his thoughts in notebooks, returning to the same topics repeatedly for conceptual clarity. He was never fully content with any of the arrangements of the remarks and thoughts in his notebooks and left to his literary editors to publish from his manuscripts. The *Notebooks* are preliminary versions of ideas which was later crystallised in the *Tractatus*. *Philosophical Remarks* contains his thoughts in 1930 and *Philosophical Grammar* is a collection of his remarks from 1932-34. The *Blue and Brown Books* were prepared so as to help his students in 1932 and 1933. From 1936 onwards he worked on various versions of what we now know as the *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), which he hoped would provide a definitive presentation of his thought. *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (1956) contain ideas he worked on from 1937 to 1944. From 1944 onwards he worked mainly on philosophical psychology: *Zettel*, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology I and II* and *Last Writings on Philosophical Psychology I and II* are from these years. From 1950 to 1951 we also have *On Certainty* and *Remarks on Colour*. Another source for his views is records of his conversations and lectures taken by friends and pupils.

The Early Wittgenstein

Coming out of the *Notebooks*, written in 1914-16, and showing Schopenhauerian and other cultural influences, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is a continuation of and reaction to Frege and Russell's conceptions of logic and language. *Tractatus* consists of a series of short, numbered statements and its structure purports to show its internal essence. It is constructed around seven basic propositions, numbered by the natural numbers 1-7, with the rest of the text numbered by decimal figures as numbers of separate propositions indicating the logical importance of the propositions. Wittgenstein was setting the limits of thought and language, in this work. The book can be summed up, in his words: 'What can be said at all can be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent' (*T* Preface).

Picture Theory of Meaning

The *Tractatus* addresses the problems of philosophy dealing with the relation between the world, thought and language, and presents a logical solution. The world, thought, and proposition share the same logical form and hence the world is represented by thought, which is expressed in proposition. The world consists of facts and not of things (*T* 1.1). Facts are existent states of affairs (*T* 2), which are combinations of objects. Objects have various properties and combine with one another according to their internal properties. The states of affairs are complex by nature which can be analysed into constituent simple objects. The totality of the actual and possible states of affairs makes up the whole of reality and the world is totality of the actual states of affairs.

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein presents a picture theory of thought and language. Pictures are models of reality (*T* 2.12) and are made up of elements that represent objects, and the combination of objects in the picture represents the combination of objects in the state of affairs. The logical structure of the picture, whether in thought or in language, is isomorphic with the logical structure of the state of affairs which it pictures. The possibility of this structure being shared by the picture (the thought, the proposition) and the state of affairs is the pictorial form. The function of language is to represent states of affairs in the world. 'A proposition is a picture of reality. A proposition is a model of reality as we imagine it' (*T* 4.01). The logical relationships among the elements of a proposition represent the logical relationships among the objects in the world. A proposition has a sense if it describes a possible state of affairs; otherwise, it is meaningless. Thus, the only meaningful language is the fact-stating language of the natural sciences. 'The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science' (*T* 4.11). Logic is based on the idea that every proposition is either true or false. This bi-polarity of propositions enables the composition of more complex propositions from atomic ones by using truth-functional operators (*T* 5). Wittgenstein supplies, in the *Tractatus*, the first presentation of Frege's logic in the form of what has become known as 'truth-tables'. This provides the means to analyze all propositions into their atomic parts. He also provides the general form of a proposition (*T* 6), showing that any proposition is the result of successive applications of logical operations to elementary propositions.

Wittgenstein's Silence

Wittgenstein's views on values are radically different from that of logical atomism and logical positivism. According to the *Tractatus*, there are only propositions of science within the boundary of

meaningful language. For the positivists there is nothing to be silent about. Wittgenstein, however, believed that 'There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical' (*T* 6.522). The propositions of the *Tractatus* themselves are also to be included in the class of the inexpressible, as they are not propositions of science.

Ethical and spiritual values also are in the realm of the mystical. Wittgenstein says we will not find values among the facts of the world, for everything is what it is (*T* 6.41). Therefore, the sense of the world, what constitutes its value, must lie outside the world. It cannot be one more fact among the scientifically observable facts in the world. Consequently he held that 'ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental' (*T* 6.421). 'How things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself in the world' (*T* 6.432). Wittgenstein closes his discussion of the mystical and ends the *Tractatus* with his final, oracular statement: 'What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence' (*T* 7). The *Tractatus*, on this reading, is part of the ineffable, and should be recognized as such.

The Later Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations*

The complex edifice of the *Tractatus* is built on the assumption that the task of logical analysis was to discover the elementary propositions, whose form was not yet known. What is 'hidden' in our ordinary language could be 'completely clarified' by a final 'analysis' into 'a single completely resolved form of every expression', which would bring to the goal of 'complete exactness'. Wittgenstein recognizes this as an illusion in the *Investigations*. Rejecting this dogmatism, he moves from the realm of logic to that of ordinary language as the centre of philosophical investigations; from an emphasis on definition and analysis to 'family resemblance' and 'language-games'; and from systematic philosophical writing to a collection of interrelated remarks. With the rejection of the assumption that all representations must share a common logical form, the conception of the unsayable disappeared; what remains are language-games of conversation and collaboration in the stream of life. 'What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use' (*PI* 116). The picture theory of meaning is replaced by a tool-use model of language.

Tool-Use Model of Language

The *Investigations* begins with a quote from Augustine's *Confessions* which gives 'a particular picture of the essence of human language,' based on the idea that 'individual words in language name objects,' and that 'sentences are combinations of such names' (*PI* 1). This picture of language is at the base of the mainstream philosophy, including the *Tractatus* and Wittgenstein in *PI* replaces this name-reference picture with a tool-use model: 'the meaning of a word is its use in the language' (*PI* 43). We learn the meaning of words by learning how to use them, just as we learn to play chess, not by associating the pieces with objects, but by learning how they can be moved.

A sign becomes a meaningful word not because it is associated with a reference, but because it has a function in the stream of life. One can elucidate the meaning of a word by describing how it is used in a variety of situations, showing the similarities and differences of the uses. Wittgenstein compares words to tools, each having distinctive functions: 'The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects' (*PI* 11). For example, 'pain' and 'pen' are both nouns and 'to speak' and 'to think' are both verbs; the difference between these words, however, are

revealed by looking at their various uses as a hammer is distinguished by a chisel by the way it is used. One and the same word can have different meanings: To know the height of Mount Everest is different from knowing how a mango tastes. The former, but not the latter, can be expressed in a proposition (*PI* 78). This is simply because the word 'to know' functions in different ways. The meaning of a word is not fixed forever; there are variety of uses and similarities and differences in the meaning. Wittgenstein explains this dimension of language with the analogies of family resemblance and language-games.

Language-games

In order to address the variety of language uses, and their being 'part of an activity', Wittgenstein introduces an investigational tool, 'language-game'. Wittgenstein's choice of 'game' is based on the over-all analogy between language and game. As he was watching a game, he thought that in language we are using words in a variety of ways. Similar to the diversity of games, our multiple ways of language use do not conform to a single model. In contrast to the one-dimensional picture theory of name-object of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein gives a list of language uses such as giving orders, and obeying them; describing the appearance of an object; speculating about an event; making a joke; translating from one language into another; asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying (*PI* 23). Just as we cannot give a definition of 'game', we cannot find 'what is common to all these activities and what makes them into language or parts of language' (*PI* 65).

A second reason why Wittgenstein compares the use of language to games is to emphasize that language use is an activity: "... the term 'language-game' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life" (*PI* 23). Words and deeds are interwoven in the stream of life: 'the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, [is] the language-game' (*PI* 7). The problem with the name-object theory of language is not only that there are other uses of language besides referring to objects, but also that the act of referring to objects plays no role unless it is an activity within the context of a particular language-game (*PI* 49).

Wittgenstein used the notion of language-games also to illustrate that we run into philosophical confusions when we do not pay attention to the fact that the function of words vary from one language-game to another. The logical positivists treated scientific discourse as the only meaningful discourse and judged all other ways of speaking (aesthetic, religious and ethical discourses) to be meaningless. According to Wittgenstein, language-uses (like basketball and football) must be judged on their own terms, by their own standards. Not paying attention to the differences in the governing rules in different language-games is the cause of many traditional philosophical problems. Wittgenstein thinks the proper role of the philosopher is not to propose new theories but to remove 'misunderstandings concerning the use of words, caused, among other things, by certain analogies between the forms of expression in different regions of language' (*PI* 90).

Rule-following

The analogy of language-game also points to the fact that both language and games are rule-governed activities. Like games, language has constitutive rules; they determine what is normative in a language/game. A rule is not an abstract entity, transcending all of its particular applications; knowing the rule is not grasping that abstract entity and thereby knowing how to use it. His investigations free one from the bewitchment of Platonic, Augustinian and Cartesian

picture of language use. He wants to show that we need not posit any sort of external or internal authority beyond the actual applications of the rule. Wittgenstein's formulation of the problem was wrongly interpreted as a sceptical problem concerning meaning, understanding and using of a language.

According to Wittgenstein, "Obeying a rule' is a practice' (*PI* 202) and involves objectivity, regularity and normativity. First of all, rule-following is something that an agent actually does, not merely something that seems so to the agent. It is only in the actual use of a rule, that is, in the actual practice, a rule is revealed, understood and followed. Secondly, rule-following is a repeatable procedure. It is repeatable over time and across persons. It can be taught and learned. Thirdly, there is normativity; i.e., regularity is subject to standards of correctness. The distinction between is and ought is kept; there is a correct way of following a rule. Rule-following actions are not just regularities of behaviour but regularities that have normative force, ways one ought to act. 'Following a rule is analogous to obeying an order. We are trained to do so; we react to an order in a particular way' (*PI* 206). As a practice there is no gap between a rule and an action following a rule; they are distinct but inseparable.

Private Language

The rule-following remarks are followed by the so called "the private-language argument", one of the most discussed among the Wittgensteinian themes. A private-language is something in which 'individual words ... are to refer to what can only be known to the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations' (*PI* 243). Wittgenstein has shown that if sensations are metaphysically (only I can have it) and epistemologically (only I know it) private, one cannot have a language about sensations. A language in principle unintelligible to anyone but its user would necessarily be unintelligible to the user also, because no meanings could be established objectively and normatively for its signs. The proposed language is not a useful language; for words can only be correctly or incorrectly applied if there are objective criteria for using them correctly. Rules of grammar determine whether a particular language use is correct or not. Private linguist cannot build up grammar for a private language. The signs in language can only function when there is a possibility of judging the correctness of their use, 'so the use of [a] word stands in need of a justification which everybody understands' (*PI* 261). Even apparently the most self-guaranteeing of all sensations, pain, derives its identity from a practice of expression, reaction and use of language. Agreement in human behaviour is fundamental to language use. The common behaviour of human beings and the very general facts of nature make particular concepts and customs, including those about sensations, possible and useful. Like any practice, language use must have objective and normative standards.

Family Resemblance

To illustrate the relationship of language-games to one another, Wittgenstein uses the concept of 'family resemblances' (*PI* 67). The members of a family share many similar features, such as eye colour, temperament, hair, facial structure, and build. However, there will be no one particular feature that they all share in common. With this analogy, Wittgenstein is attacking the theory of essentialism, which is the Platonic thesis that for things to be classed together they must share some essence. According to Wittgenstein our modes of discourse are examples of language, and the fact that they belong to the same category does not imply there is a single essence they all possess. Instead, the different language-games 'are related to one another in many different ways' (*PI* 65).

Instead of general explanations, and definitions based on sufficient and necessary conditions, there are ‘family resemblances’ among the various uses of a word and language games. The meaning of a word is not located in the logical form which is common to all uses of that word, but in the ‘complicated network of similarities, overlapping and criss-crossing’ (PI 66). ‘The strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres’ (PI 67). The mistake of the *Tractatus* was to impose on language the standards of ‘the crystalline purity of logic’ as though human language were some sort of calculus (PI 107). Family resemblance, thus, serves to exhibit the variety as well as vagueness that characterize different uses of the same concept. It is neither Platonic Idea nor the logical form of the *Tractatus* that govern the various uses of words; they are interwoven in the form/stream of life.

Form/Stream of Life

According to the *Tractatus* language is an autonomous, abstract system of symbols in which the role of the human subject is insignificant. In striking contrast, for later Wittgenstein, language is something living and growing. Language use is an activity that takes place within the stream of life. The notion of ‘form/web/stream of life’ captures this insight: ‘To imagine a language means to imagine a form of life’ (PI 19). Our ways of speaking are not bound by logically necessary structure but are intimately tied into the common human practices, the hurly-burly of our everyday actual life. He is emphatic: ‘Only in the stream of life words have meaning’.

Philosophers often held that a philosophical justification had to be given for every belief we have. This is, however, a hopeless and useless task. There is simply a point where justifications come to an end: ‘If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: “This is simply what I do.”’ (PI 217) ‘What has to be accepted, the given is—so one could say—forms of life.’ (PI p. 226). There can be no justification for our most basic concepts and ways of viewing the world because ‘what people accept as a justification—is shown by how they think and live’ (PI 325). Forms of life can be understood as changing and contingent, dependent on culture, context, history, etc. It is also the form of life, “the common behaviour of mankind” which is “the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language” (PI 206), giving a shape and continuity to the stream of life.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Critically evaluate: ‘What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence’

2) Critically evaluate *Tractatus*’ view of philosophy and the correct method in philosophy, in the light of *Philosophical Investigations*.

4.5 LET US SUM UP

The linguistic turn in twentieth century philosophy makes philosophy predominantly analysis and description of language. Language is not only a medium of philosophizing but the primary subject matter of philosophical investigations. Despite their differences in style and content, Frege, Russell and early Wittgenstein share the goals of (1) repudiating traditional metaphysics, (2) reducing language to a series of elementary propositions that would represent facts, and (3) developing a theory of language that would establish the boundaries of meaning. The later Wittgenstein links language and philosophy with activity and firmly places philosophizing in the stream of life. His analogies of language games, family resemblance and form/stream of life has shown new ways of doing philosophical therapy and the remarks on rule-following and private language have initiated philosophical discussions and debates in many branches of philosophy.

4.6 KEY WORDS

Linguistic Turn, Analytic Philosophy, Sense and Reference, Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description, Picture Theory of Meaning, Language-games, Family Resemblance, Rule-following, Private Language and Form of Life.

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

MPY – 002

Western Philosophy



Block 6

CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY - II

UNIT 1
Phenomenology



UNIT 2
Existentialism



UNIT 3
Hermeneutics and Post-modernism

UNIT 4
Neo-scholasticism and Feminism



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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Existentialism reacted against these approaches and looked upon philosophy as a meditation on subjective existence. Husserl's focus on subjective experience influenced aspects of existentialism. Hermeneutic consistency refers to analysis of texts for coherent explanation. Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation. Traditional hermeneutics, Biblical hermeneutics, refers to the study of the interpretation of written texts, especially texts in the areas of literature, religion and law. Hermeneutic consistency refers to analysis of texts for coherent explanation. As a philosophical school Postmodernism considers many apparent realities are only social constructs, as they are subject to change inherent to time and place. In allowing plurality postmodernism did affirm the identity and importance of smaller and hitherto neglected groups in the society.

Unit 1 presents the story and method of phenomenology rather elaborately starting from Husserl's phenomenological method. After introducing phenomenology in a preliminary manner, we shall make this study in two parts: the first part will focus on the story of phenomenology as developed by Husserl, and the second part, on the phenomenological method. Phenomenology is a return to the things themselves, as opposed to mental constructions, illusions etc. Phenomenology, thus, is the methodical attempt to reach the phenomenon through an investigation of the pure consciousness, the objective content of which is the phenomenon.

Unit 2 gives a general introduction' to existentialism. Study of the various existentialists has to be based on such an introduction, since it is intended to serve as a horizon for the particular thoughts of individual thinkers to be situated. The unit begins with an introduction on the meaning and definition of existentialism; it will be followed by a look into the general background (what gave rise to existentialism), and sources (the tracing of the gradual growth of existentialism).

Unit 3 features Hermeneutics and postmodernism, which are in continuity with the reaction against the Enlightenment criterion of neutral, objective and universal *reason* as the ultimate arbiter of truth and meaning. The field of hermeneutics has to do with interpretation, and more specifically the interpretation of texts. The 'postmodern' way of thinking was opposed to all of these features of Modern Philosophy, and manifested itself not only in philosophy, but also in literature, art, architecture and in a new way of life in general. This gives rise not only to a greater appreciation of difference and plurality, but more radically to an all-pervasive, comprehensive and consistent 'relativism' which is the hallmark of postmodernism.

Unit 4 deals with Neo-scholasticism and Feminism. Neo-Scholasticism is the development of the Scholasticism of the Middle Ages during the latter half of the nineteenth century. It has some times been called neo-Thomism partly because St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century gave to Scholasticism among the Latins its final form, partly because the idea has gained ground that only Thomism can infuse vitality into twentieth century scholasticism. Feminist philosophies

have histories that date back historically at least to the early modern period, and have different genealogies in different geographical regions.



UNIT 1 PHENOMENOLOGY

Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introducing Phenomenology
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- 1.3 The Method of Phenomenology
- 1.4 Intentionality of Consciousness
- 1.5 Meaning of Essence
- 1.6 Eidetic Reduction
- 1.7 Bracketing (*Epoché*)
- 1.8 Period of Pure Phenomenology
- 1.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.10 Further Readings and References

1.0. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit is to present the story and method of phenomenology rather elaborately. It is done on purpose, since most of the continental philosophers of contemporary period basically follow Husserl's phenomenological method, although they have deviated considerably from him. Other prominent thinkers of the movement are Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-80), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-61) and Emmanuel Levinas (1906-95). In the problems they dealt with, as well as in the theoretical content of their philosophies, these thinkers differed from one another considerably. For Husserl phenomenology was primarily a means for the philosophical clarification of the formal *a priori* sciences (logic and formal mathematics). Heidegger saw in it the means to overcome the metaphysical tradition of Western philosophy through a 'fundamental ontology;' Sartre saw there a window that opens to existentialism; for Maurice Merleau-Ponty it offered the means to lay bare the pre-scientific consciousness; and Emmanuel Levinas saw in it the promise of an ethics. Phenomenology is not confined to Husserl's philosophy, nor is it right to say that all of Husserl's philosophy is phenomenology. All the same, the central figure of and the initiator to *this* movement is none other than Husserl. Hence Husserlian phenomenology serves as the basis and foundation for the contemporary Western philosophy. It will enable the students to handle the other thinkers of contemporary period with facility.

After introducing phenomenology in a preliminary manner, we shall make this study in two parts: the first part will focus on the story of phenomenology as developed by Husserl, and the second part, on the phenomenological method. The first part is intended as the foundation for the second part which is more important, and it will focus on second stage of Husserl's thought during which the phenomenological method got developed.

1.1. INTRODUCING PHENOMENOLOGY

A general introduction on phenomenology cannot but be centred on Husserl, as he is the central figure in it. Before we launch ourselves into phenomenology, it is good to have a pre-view of phenomenological method. The term 'phenomenology' reminds us of Kant's distinction between phenomenon and *noumenon*. Husserl was opposed to this dualism of Kant. He agrees that only phenomenon is given, but in it is given the very essence of that which is. When one has described the phenomena, one has described all that can be described. The problem of reconciling reality and thought about reality is as old as philosophy itself. We meet consciousness as the consciousness of something, and something as the object of consciousness. The history of philosophy is a series of attempts at reconciliation of these two aspects: the subjective, and the objective. The difference in reconciling occurs due to the more or less emphasis on the subjective or the objective. Husserlian phenomenology is an attempt at reconciling them; but he too experienced in himself this difference of emphasis in his reconciling consciousness and reality.

Phenomenology is a return to the things themselves, as opposed to mental constructions, illusions etc. The 'thing' is the direct object of consciousness in its purified form; hence it is never merely arbitrary, being conditioned subjectively. The phenomenologist is convinced that an analysis of the things themselves can be made by a return to the pure consciousness. Phenomenology, thus, is the methodical attempt to reach the phenomenon through an investigation of the pure consciousness, the objective content of which is the phenomenon.

1.2 THE STORY OF PHENOMENOLOGY

It was as a programme of clarifying logic and mathematics through the descriptive-psychological analysis of the acts of consciousness which 'constitute' the entities that make up the subject-matter of these sciences, that phenomenology had its birth in Edmund Husserl. Many others too belong to this movement with their shared concern with consciousness—a concern that is born out of the belief that consciousness is essentially involved in knowledge, in ways that were not suspected in hitherto philosophies. Different phenomenologists would conceive of the contribution of consciousness in different ways, and would differ in the degree of that contribution. But all of them are convinced of the contribution of consciousness to the objects known. We are concerned here with Husserl's understanding of phenomenology.

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

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

Historians of philosophy distinguish three periods in the development of Husserl's philosophy, and this distinction is based on the varying emphasis he placed on the subject or on the object: the pre-phenomenological, phenomenological and the period of pure phenomenology.

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

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

1.3. THE METHOD OF PHENOMENOLOGY

In this section we come to the most important part of phenomenology, namely, the method, which got developed during the second stage of Husserl's thought. It is at this period that Husserl reached a philosophical maturity; and he achieved the reconciliation between the subjective and the objective—the act of consciousness and its objective correlate. He had to look for some reconciliation since the problem posed itself as to how the 'ideal' *objects* are given to *consciousness*. He takes up this task in Vol.11 of *Logical Investigations*. Some thought that it was a lapse into 'psychologism,' rejected in Vol. I. But by making use of the theory of 'intentionality, Husserl has worked out this reconciliation in such a way that it was not a choice of the one at the rejection of the other.

1.4 INTENTIONALITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In Vol.11 of *Logical Investigations* Husserl holds that a separation between logic and psychological phenomena is inadmissible and impossible. Ideal logical entities are given to us in experiences. The relationship between the 'ideal objects' of pure logic and the subjective experiences corresponding to them illustrates an insight which pervades whole of his philosophy, i.e., 'intentionality'. According to this, there is a parallelism between the subjective act and the objective correlate. This parallelism forms the basis for a correlative investigation under which both the aspects of any phenomenon are to be studied and described in conjunction. To study one without the other would be an artificial abstraction. In Husserl's terms this parallelism came to be known as that between the '*noetic*' (act) and '*noematic* (content). (*Noesis* is abstract noun, and *noema* is concrete noun). His aim has been a reconciliation of the objectivity of truth with the subjectivity of the act of knowledge.

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

First of all, *intentionality objectivates*. It presents the given data in such a way that the whole object is presented to our consciousness. The various acts of consciousness are referred to the same intentional object. The sameness of the object is compatible with the various ways of referring to it such as: love, doubt, thought, which are the qualities of 'intention' as opposed to the object. When one gives thought to one's mother, it is the person of one's mother that is the objective correlate. It is not the fragmentary aspects, like the kindness or generosity of the mother, but the mother as kind or generous is the objective correlate. Secondly, *intentionality*

identifies. It allows us to assign a variety of successive data to the same referent of meaning. Without an identifying function, there would be nothing but a stream of perceptions, similar but never identical. Intentionality supplies the synthetic function by which the various aspects, perspectives and stages of an object are all focused upon and integrated into the identical core. For instance, the various intentional experiences of one's mother do not take one to different referents, but to the identical referent: one's mother. Thirdly, *intentionality connects*. Each aspect of the identical object refers to the related aspects, which form its horizon; an object is apprehended only within the context, or horizon that consists of the possible apprehensions. The actual intentional experience of an object does not stand in isolation, but links itself to the other possible intentional experiences. To give an example from the realm of sense experience: the frontal aspect of the statue refers to the lateral, and the lateral to the rear. Because of this 'connecting' function are we able to perceive the 'statue.' Finally, *intentionality constitutes*. It constitutes the intentional object. The intentional object is not conceived as the pre-existent referent to which the intending act refers as something already given, but as something which originates or is constituted in the act. The snake as fearsome is constituted in the act of one's getting frightened.

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

1.5 THE MEANING OF ESSENCE

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

In order to come to the knowledge of essences, Husserl proceeds step by step. He distinguishes between ordinary experience and transcendent experience or intuition. The first is the accurate apprehension of the individual fact. In the ordinary experience man finds himself as a unique person, the empirical ego. The phenomenologist is not interested in the ordinary, but in the transcendental experience, which is the essential intuition proper. In the transcendental experience, I bracket all reference to existence. For the phenomenological reduction of essences, Husserl proposes to use 'inductive generalization' and 'imaginative variation' that enable one to eliminate the inessential features in order to come to the essential. Inductive generalization is not anything typically phenomenological; it means nothing other than universalizing from the various particular experiences. 'Imaginative variation' can be understood only in the light of the Husserlian notion of 'horizon'. An object is actually experienced or apprehended only within a setting or horizon, which is the context of the possible apprehensions. The objective and essential extends beyond the limits of actual perception. It is by imaginative variation that one can move from the limitation of the actual perception to the indeterminacy of what can be perceived. The

horizon or the setting of the 'can be perceived' is the objective correlate of the 'can perceive' or the un-actualized capacity of the perceiver. Thus by a varied and systematic process, Husserlian phenomenology claims to attain a 'direct essential insight' or transcendental reduction into the pure eidetic sphere. The essence is the objective content of my transcendently reduced conscious experience. Looking at the object of consciousness, I reach the essence by a method of variation. I can vary the various view-points. The essence is what remains invariable, when I vary the various view-points.

1.6 EIDETIC REDUCTION

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

1.7 BRACKETING (*EPOCHÉ*)

After the *Logical Investigations* the concepts of *epoché* (bracketing) and reduction began to occupy an important place in Husserl's reflections. It was in the two series of lectures which he delivered at Göttingen in the winter semester of 1906/07 and in the summer semester 1907 that Husserl for the first time explicitly introduced these concepts. It was further elaborated in the *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology* (1913). *Epoché* was conceived as something which the phenomenologist has to perform; the performance would lay bare before him the infinite field of his research. The performance consists in suspending or 'putting out of action' the 'thesis of the natural attitude.' The thesis of the natural attitude is the belief that the world and objectivities exist independently of and apart from being related to consciousness. Once this belief is suspended, Husserl claims, the world and the entire field of objectivities would appear before us as being correlated with consciousness. Further, we would reach transcendental consciousness which 'constitutes' the world.

Bracketing is the negative aspect in grasping the essence. It is the radical and universal elimination of any aspect of factual existence. The factual or the existential is kept in parenthesis or in bracket. Things under consideration may have existence, but it has no significance

whatsoever with regard to the essence of things. Besides the elimination of 'existence', to describe the phenomena correctly, the phenomenologist too must be free from all cultural and philosophical bias. It requires an ascetic neutrality in one's attitude to the phenomenon of one's awareness. Phenomenology deals with the insight into the essences, without *regard* to the empirical conditions of their perceptibility, nor even their existence. It is not a question of making it appear in its factual reality or in its existence, but in its intentional presence as transcendent to consciousness. There is a similarity between Husserl's epoché and Descartes' methodological doubt. Descartes doubted everything; only the ego indubitably exists. In Husserl the world is not doubted, but the judgements about it are suspended. The epoché demands that the philosopher takes a distance from the various solutions, which in the course of history have been proposed for different philosophical problems. It aims at eliminating the factuality, the root of all 'contingency'.

Thus, during the 'phenomenological period' Husserl developed the phenomenological method, and succeeded in reaching reconciliation between the subjective and the objective. Although the method is presented step by step, the phenomenological intuition of the essences takes place in a single act of grasping. This is the reason why he uses the expression 'phenomenological reduction' rather than 'phenomenological deduction.'

1.8 PERIOD OF PURE PHENOMENOLOGY

After having come to a more or less satisfactory method of phenomenology, Husserl continued his philosophical thinking and reflection. This ended up in a transcendental (pure) phenomenology. It is called 'pure' in order to differentiate it from other pseudo phenomenologies. The distinction is based on the subject matter. The subject matter of pure phenomenology is pure phenomena. The pure phenomena are reached by means of the pure consciousness. Since the publication of *Ideas*, pure phenomenology goes by the name, 'transcendental phenomenology'. In *Ideas* 'transcendental' meant that the phenomenologist suspends all assertion about reality other than that of consciousness itself. Later on it meant, reaching back to the ultimate source of all knowledge, the subjectivity. Emphasis on the pure subjectivity as the source of all objectivity is the characteristic of this phase.

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

As Husserl moved more towards the subjective, his critics gave him the label of an 'idealist', which he hesitatingly accepted; but he insists that his 'idealism' must be distinguished from the subjective idealism of Berkeley, that makes all being dependent on the psychological consciousness. By contrast, Husserl ties up Being with the transcendently reduced consciousness. Being is nothing apart from the 'meaning' which it receives in the bestowing act

of consciousness. Husserl gives two arguments for his idealism: the self-contradictory nature of realism, and the direct phenomenological evidence, supplied by the analysis of transcendental constitution. According to him, being, by its very meaning, refers us back to acts which assign such being. In other words, being derives its meaning from consciousness. The idea of reality as unrelated to consciousness is self-contradictory. The next argument is related to the first, i.e., the doctrine of transcendental constitution. 'Constitution' does not refer to a static structure of an object, but the dynamic process by which it is built up as an object. It is the intentional consciousness that actively achieves this constitution. Objects exist for me only as objects of consciousness. In his *idealism*, reality is extra-mental, but the meaning of reality is in the mind. His philosophy is called 'idealism' also because it is a search into the *eidos* (essence, meaning). It is transcendental idealism in the sense that the real world is reduced to its pure, transcendental significance.

Thus, in the final phase of his thought, especially in the *Crisis of the European Sciences* (posthumous, 1954), Husserl takes up pre-predicative consciousness or life-world for phenomenological analysis. It may have been influenced by Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Maurice Merleau-Ponty has later continued this line of thought especially in his *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945). It has also influenced Hans-Georg Gadamer in his development of philosophical hermeneutics. Together with 'life-world,' Husserl gradually wanted to develop a phenomenological philosophy by applying the method to some *sui-generis* realities.

Husserl developed the idea of a 'life-world'—the world of our immediate experience in our everyday life, a world of our concrete experience. The scientist conceals the world as *our* world. It is a vast domain of subjective phenomena, as they are immediately experienced in all colours and practical meaning. Sciences left out the subjective and the practical aspect of the world, and took only the *objective* aspect. A life-world is to be conceived as an oriented world, with an experiencing self at its centre, designated as such by personal pronouns. Thus the world becomes the one related to life and to the humans, with his human values and aspirations. He tried to make a phenomenological reflection on 'time' as well. The inner consciousness of time shows the following structure: a primal impression of a streaming present, surrounded by a horizon of immediate retention of the past (to be distinguished from active recollection) and of immediate protention (to be distinguished from active expectation). Describing retention, Husserl shows how the consciousness of the present sinks off steadily below the surface, and becomes sedimented in such a way that it is accessible only to acts of recollection. He has not given us any evidence of an active 'constitution' of time, but only of a passive synthetic genesis. Thirdly Husserl was forced to consider the 'Other', as he was criticized that phenomenology is a purely solipsistic explanation of the intentional constitution. For, when phenomenological reduction brackets, even the belief in the existence of the other subjects too is suspended. In his *Cartesian Meditations* he shows the difficulty of transcendental ego constituting other egos, as equal partners in an intersubjective community. If the other subjects are to be meaningful, they are to be constituted. But it is not possible, since if the constitution is subjective, it is a constitution of one's own self; if it is objective, others as subjects cannot be constituted. This problem remains unsolved in his published works. For a phenomenological evidence for the knowledge of others, Husserl makes use of 'empathy' giving his own interpretation to it. It is a kind of intentional category, by which I experience another's experience. When we perceive a body other than our own, as there rather than here, we apperceive at as the body of an 'alter ego' by way of an assimilative analogy with our own ego. In this process, the analogizing ego and the analogized

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

1.9 LET US SUM UP

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

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UNIT 2 EXISTENTIALISM

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to give a 'General Introduction' to existentialism. Study of the various existentialists has to be based on such an introduction, since it is intended to serve as a horizon for the particular thoughts of individual thinkers to be situated. A particular thought can be comprehended in its depth and width only in the light of its general background. In fact, what is vaguely and generally delineated in the 'General Introduction' takes different concrete shapes in the thoughts of different existentialists. Hence the 'General Introduction to Existentialism' and the 'Deeper Study of Individual Existentialists' complement each other: the former is given a *depth* in the latter, and the latter is given a *width* in the former. Besides, even when one is not able to make a study of the various existentialists, this 'General Introduction' can serve as a supplement, since it considers most of the existential themes.

In this unit we begin with an introduction on the meaning and definition of existentialism; it will be followed by a look into the general background (what gave rise to existentialism), and sources (the tracing of the gradual growth of existentialism). It is important to look into its various characteristics in order to show the specificity of existentialism as a different way of philosophizing. Finally we take a quick glance at some of the important families (groups) of themes in existentialism. Consideration of these points will hopefully give the searching minds of the students at the Master's level a solidity of basis for further personal search and academic research into different existentialists.

2.1 INTRODUCING EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism got developed mainly in the first half of 20th century in continental Europe. Although it is primarily a philosophical movement, we can find its 'roots' and 'branches' (basis and influence) in various fields, such as art, literature, religion culture, etc.. Traditional philosophy did not bother about the problem of concrete existence, like death, love, despair, body, finitude, anxiety, hope, etc. As humans were caught up in the trap of their naked and concrete existence, they could not get away to an ideal and abstract realm. In such a situation existentialism made its appearance not as a stroke of chance but of necessity. The luxury of

philosophizing was not limited to the few arm-chair philosophers; existentialism brought philosophy to the appeal of the ordinary humans.

Existentialism is an elusive notion that escapes all definitions. The term itself is surrounded by a certain amount of confusion, ambiguity and lack of precision, since it includes the widely disparate philosophers and philosophies, ranging from Kierkegaard's theistic commitment to Sartre's categorical denial of the existence of God. Besides, what was intended as a serious type of philosophy has been vulgarized to the level of a fad so that the existentialist label gets applied to all sorts of peoples and activities. At the same time, the difficulty in defining existentialism is in keeping with the nature of its philosophizing. All the thinkers of this movement are against constructing any 'system' of philosophy, and hence it is more appropriate to address this movement as a way of *philosophizing* rather than a *philosophy*. Just as existentialism refuses to be labeled as a 'system,' so also most of the thinkers of this movement do not want to be categorized as 'existentialist.'

Although no adequate definition of existentialism is possible, the following seems to be quite significant: "Existentialism is a type of philosophy which endeavours to analyze the basic structures of human existence, and to call individuals to an awareness of their existence in its essential freedom." From this definition—so also from most of the other ones—it is evident that existentialism first of all deals with the question of the human who alone is said to be existing. Secondly, existentialism is not a theory about the human, but it is a *call* that keeps on calling the human away from the intellectual and social forces that destroy freedom, and from the stifling abstractions and automatic conformity. It bids and challenges each individual to sort out the existential problems in authentic freedom, instead of taking easy answers from someone else. It pays heed to those existential questions that are usually passed over by the academic philosophers. Instead of retreating to a realm of eternal truths, existentialism hugs close to the terrain of ordinary living. Thus existentialism has brought about a revolution in philosophizing.

2.2 GENERAL BACKGROUND OF EXISTENTIALISM

Although existentialism made its arrival as a corrective to the traditional philosophy, there are certain factors that have accelerated its appearance in the 20th century. As the background of existentialism we present two fundamental experiences in the West: experience of 'nothingness' in the decline of religion, and of 'finitude' in the economico-scientific growth.

Experience of 'Nothingness' in the Decline of Religion

Although religion has not totally disappeared from the West, its all pervasive character has been lost. It is no more the uncontested centre of human life. The waning of religion is so complex a fact that it penetrates the deepest strata of human's psychic life. In losing religion humans lost the connection with the transcendent realm of being; they were set free to deal with this world in all its brute objectivity. Besides, they were forced to find themselves 'wanderers' and 'homeless' on the face of this earth that no longer answered the needs of the inner spirit. Religion and reason reigned supreme in the middle ages. They no longer have the same sway in the contemporary period. The rationalism of the medieval philosophy was well contained by the mysteries of faith and dogma, which were powerfully real and meaningful. Whereas the approach of the modern rationalism was different! With the newly found scientific attitude, humans began to be critical to all that the religion has been standing for. The religion-less human is like the earth set free from the sun—a human picture that is grim, bleak, dark and naked!

A similar experience can be seen in the context of the movement of Protestantism that laid stress on the irrational datum of faith, as against the imposing rational structure of medieval catholic theology. The institutional character of the Catholic Church was in keeping with the rational nature of medieval theology. Faith as an intellectual assent never touched the interior of the human. As against this, Protestantism succeeded in raising the religious consciousness to a higher level of individual sincerity and strenuous inwardness. Faith for the Protestantism is the numinous centre of religion, stripped of all mediating rites and dogmas. But the cosines of the bourgeois civilization made the protestant Western humans more secularized, and their faith began to lose its grip on them. This too made them starkly naked; and their relation to God turned out to be a relation to *nothingness*! It is in the wake this deterioration that the theistic existentialists call the humans to a life of faith as a personal commitment.

Experience of 'Finitude' in Economico-Scientific Growth

Protestantism and capitalism went hand in hand, seemingly to prove that this earth itself is the Promised Land. Capitalism emerged from the feudal society as the enterprising and calculating mind who must organize production rationally to show a favorable balance of profits over costs. Everything is calculatively done in the interest of efficiency. The capacity for easy living seemed to be within human power. But the tremendous economic power of modern society is accompanied by human ambiguities, and rootlessness. Life is reduced to a bundle of needs and wants. The human is looked at in terms of functions. The First World War shattered the apparent stability of this human world. The stability, security and material progress rested upon the void. The human came face to face with oneself as a stranger. The question: 'what is human being?' came out of the bourgeois society in a state of dissolution. With capitalism, society has become more secular, rational, utilitarian, and democratic, with the accompanying wealth and progress. But the unpredictable realities like wars, political upheavals were on the increase. In this impersonal mass society the human is terribly alienated: a stranger to god, to nature, and to the social apparatus, and a stranger to oneself! The economic growth has only entrenched human limitation.

The modern age is characterized also by rapid scientific growth. This is countered by the growing awareness of human inability, fragility and the impotence of reason. On the one hand, there seemed to have no limits to the technological conquest of the nature. But science had to reconcile to the human finitude. Several theories in mathematics, science and philosophy during the first half of 20th century pointed to the human finitude: Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy, Skolem's and Godel's theories on mathematics, Heidegger's philosophy in his *Being and Time*, Spengler's prophecy in his *The Decline of the West*, etc. When events run parallel this way independently of each other, we can conclude that they are not meaningless coincidences, but meaningful symptoms of humans becoming convinced of their finitude. All these thoughts shed light on the sad plight of the Western humans, and point to the impending finale.

Thus, the two deep experiences of the Western people—that of 'nothingness' and of 'finitude'—have touched their inner being, and from out of this experience the new school of existentialism was born. In this new thought-pattern 'nothingness' and 'finitude' found themselves at home.

2.3 SOURCES OF EXISTENTIALISM

After having seen the events and contexts that gave rise to existentialism, we take a journey back to see its sources. The little source that began from the Old Testament period gradually gathered momentum, and became a powerful movement in the 20th century.

Hebraic Source

Existentialism can be traced as far back as Hebraism—the life and thought of the Hebrews or Jewish people. There is a clear contrast between Hebraism and Hellenism, the two rival forces that influence and move our world, at least in the West. The Hebrews are concerned about practice and right conduct, whereas the Greeks, with knowledge and right thinking; duty and conscience for the Hebrews, and intelligence or reason for the Greeks. The Hebrews see the human in his/her feebleness and finitude as creatures, standing naked in the presence of God. The Greeks keep all the difficulties and contingencies out of view in their life and thought.

The Jewish community was held together not so much by law, as with 'faith.' Faith is well depicted in the book of Job. In the experience of extreme difficulties, Job in his whole person meets God; it was a confrontation or meeting between two persons in the fullness and violence of his passion, with the unknowable and overwhelming God. The relation between God and Job was one of I and thou. It is not a confrontation between two rational minds, demanding an explanation that will satisfy the reason. They meet on the level of 'existence' and not of 'reason'. Job's relation to God remained one of faith from start to finish although it took on the varying shapes of revolt, anger, dismay and confusion. In this personal relation the meaning of faith takes its shape. Faith here is not a propositional one, but personal trust. This trust embraces the whole man, his anger and dismay, his bones and bowels, his flesh and blood. No separation of body and soul is made. As a person of flesh and blood, the Hebrew is very much bound to the 'earth,' the 'dust,' a creature of time. The human is a 'nothing' before one's Creator; one's temporal existence is compared to wind, shadow or bubbles. Hebraism contains no eternal realm of essences, as an intellectual deliverance from the evil of time. In short, the Hebrews emphasized the contingent and finite individual, standing naked before God in personal trust and faith. The approach taken by the Hebrews is very much existential.

The Hebraic approach can be better seen in opposition to the Hellenistic one. Among the Greeks we note a different picture. The Greeks achieved victory of reason over mythology—victory of *logos* over *mythos*. In the period between 480 and 322 BCE (from Heraclitus to Aristotle) the human enters history as 'rational animal.' From Heraclitus Plato learned that there is no escape from death and change. Tormented by this vision, Plato desired at all costs a refuge in the eternal realm from the insecurities of time. Only the eternal is really real. For him the individual is less real. This is totally against the existentialist approach that seeks to establish the importance of the individual. Plato's was a philosophy of essence, and not of 'existence.' With Aristotle philosophy became purely theoretical and objective discipline. For him reason is the highest part of our personality. The primacy of reason is rested on the fact that everything has a 'reason,' i.e., everything is rationally explicable. Thus the Greeks touched nothing of human finitude, but rather they made an exaltation of human reason.

The emphasis on the personal dimension, as opposed to the rational, made Hebraism to be the very first source from which existentialism began its flow of thought.

Christian Sources

The distinction between Hebraism and Hellenism continued to show itself in Christianity in the form of faith and reason. Christianity belongs to the Hebraic rather than to the Hellenistic side of

human's nature, since it is based on faith rather than reason. Christian faith is more intense in the sense that it is beyond and even against 'reason.' The opposition between faith and reason is the one between the vital and the rational. The question is as to where the centre of human personality is to be located: St. Paul places in faith, Aristotle in reason. Christian faith is paradoxical since Christianity is foolishness to the Greeks and scandal to the Jews, because the Greek demand 'wisdom,' and the Jews, sign.' Christian faith is not based on either.

Although Christianity has been on the side of faith rather than reason, there were varying emphases on one or the other even in Christianity itself. Tertullian is one of the precursors of existentialism who stresses the violence of the conflict between faith and reason. Augustine, with his existentialist bend of mind, asks 'who am I?,' rather than 'what is man?' as did Aristotle. This is well expressed in his *Confessions*. He looks at the human not with a detached reason but from personal experience. As a theologian he was trying to harmonize faith and reason. Thomas Aquinas took the theoretical intellect as the highest human faculty, following the example of Aristotle. According to him the end of the human is beatific vision of God's essence. Dun Scotus insisted on the primacy of will and love. Thus the problem between faith and reason reappeared in the form of a controversy between voluntarism and intellectualism. We may put it thus: a controversy between the primacy of the thinker over his thoughts, and thoughts over the thinker. The source of existentialism that started with Hebraism, continued with faith, and then with voluntarism of the Franciscan school in the middle ages.

Blaise Pascal (1623-62) is uniquely different from other philosophers of his time with his existentialist type of thinking, and thus he too is referred to as a source of existentialism. He was living in a world of science, especially of astronomy. Pascal spoke about the homelessness of the human in the infinite space. Reason cannot help this homelessness of the human. Faith takes up where reason leaves off. One has to search and find the sign-posts, that would lead the mind in the direction of faith, in the radically miserable condition of the human. Religion is the only cure for this desperate condition of the human that is inadequate, empty, and impotent. Living in an age of science, he experienced the feebleness of human reason as well. Reason cannot deal with God or Religion as its objects. Hence his famous outcry: "not the God of philosophers, but the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." He also is said to have said: "The heart has its reason that reason does not know." He has expressed very powerfully about the radical contingency that lies at the heart of human existence. He could find 'the contingent' in the apparently insignificant in human existence: in the length of Cleopatra's nose that marked the destinies of mark Antony and of Roman Empire; in the grain of sand in Cromwell's kidney, that put an end to his military dictatorship. 'Nothingness' for Pascal opens both downward and upward. He lives in the age of microscope and telescope, when the finite cosmos is expanded in both the direction, toward the infinitesimally minute and the infinitely great, and the human occupying a mid-position between both. This mid-position is the perfect image of human finitude, invaded from both sides by nothingness. The short duration of our life is swallowed up in the eternity before and after. Such thoughts of Pascal make him an existentialist, and gave rise to the existentialism of the 20th century in full vehemence.

2.4 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism does not refer so much to a particular philosophical system as to a movement in contemporary philosophy. Since it includes several philosophies with opposing characteristics, it is difficult to show any set of clearly defined characteristics that will mark off existentialism

from all other forms of philosophy. All the same, we can still point to certain general characteristics of existentialism.

The first characteristic of existentialism is that it begins philosophizing from human being, rather than from reality in general. The human being that is referred to in existentialism is a *subject* that *exists*, rather than an *object* that *is*. Formerly the human has been submerged in the physical cosmos as just one of the items in nature. The existentialist subject is not the epistemological subject—the subject that stands apart as the knower to the known, rather it is the ontological subject that exists. Here the term ‘to exist’ has a meaning, more comprehensive than the term ‘to be.’ The term ‘existence’ has to be taken in the dynamic and active sense of the ‘act of being,’ rather than the mere ‘fact of being;’ and it implies a width of meaning that includes the human as the centre of feeling, of experience, of freedom, of actions and thought, and thus an incarnate being-in-the-world. Such a subject is passionately involved in the actualities of existence, and philosophizes not merely with reason, but the whole person with one’s feelings and emotions, with will and intellect, with flesh and bones, philosophizes. Thus existentialism begins with the human as existent.

Although existentialism begins with ‘existence,’ it does not take ‘existence’ as a notion, but as experienced by oneself. Thus we can say that existential philosophy arose from the existential experience of existence. Different philosophers has had varying experience of existence, and it is with one’s basic experience of existence that each philosopher carries out one’s philosophizing: in Jaspers it was an awareness of the brittleness of being, in Heidegger, Dasein as being-towards-death, in Sartre, the experience of existence as nauseating and superfluous, in Marcel and Buber, the experience of the ‘I’ as necessarily related to a ‘thou’, in Levinas, the experience of the epiphany of the other and of one’s ethical responsibility in the face of another, etc.

Existentialism can be described as an attempt to philosophize from the stand point of ‘actor’ rather than of ‘spectator.’ The attitude of Aristotle was that of a spectator, looking at the world impersonally. Kierkegaard on the other hand philosophizes from his own personal experience. Philosophy arises as a response to the questions, to be met on the existential level, rather than on the conceptual level. The existentialist does not stand back from the problems as an impersonal analyst or spectator, but grapples with them as one who is involved in them. The questions are not matters of ‘intellectual curiosity’ but of ‘vital concern.’ Marcel’s distinction between *mystery* and *problem* corresponds to ‘actor’ and ‘spectator.’ The problem lies over against me to be analyzed by me as an epistemological subject. I do not approach the problem with my uniqueness, but as an impersonal I, that could be replaced by anyone, even by a machine. A mystery, on the other hand, is a question which involves the very ‘being’ of the questioner. The problems can be solved and an exhaustive solution can be given; but no solution can be given for a ‘mystery.’ The standpoint of an ‘actor’ is found in all the existentialist thinkers. Marcel and Kierkegaard were personal thinkers, who reflected on questions arising from personal experiences. There is a close relation between biography and philosophy in the case of Kierkegaard. For Marcel philosophy was part of his spiritual itinerary.

Another characteristic of existentialism is that it functions as a corrective to the traditional tendency of engulfing the human in the physical cosmos. It stands as a protest against all that threatens human’s unique position as an ‘existent.’ This is why Kierkegaard revolted against the Hegelian exaltation of the absolute at the expense of the individual. He was also against submerging the individual in the collectivity or universality. Heidegger calls the human from being the ‘they-self’ (*das Man*) to one’s ownmost self. Sartre wants the human to take over one’s freedom in good faith rather than to evade it in bad faith; in short, existentialism asserts the

human freedom, and calls the human to appropriate it; thus existentialism functions as a corrective to the traditional tendency of depersonalization and of reduction of the human in collectivity.

If existentialism has been a corrective to the traditional way of thinking, then its advent was taken as a ray of hope to the humans in a situation of strangled thought. In various respects the humans have been strangled. To the religionless human, cut off from the divine, hope is given with a person-centred religion. To the humans who are unable to find in themselves the answers to the problems that beset them, the message of existentialism seems to be addressed. Jaspers shows that even in the face of earthly disasters, the human can still affirm one's relationship to the transcendent. Heidegger speaks to the human thrown into the world, that s/he is faced with the possibility of choosing the authentic self.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your Answers.

1. Briefly describe the historical background for emergence of Existentialism.

2. Discuss the characteristics of Existentialism

2.5 IMPORTANT THEMES IN EXISTENTIALISM

It is impossible to give an exhaustive list of all the themes in existentialism. But there are certain outstanding themes that often recur in most of the existentialists. We tabulate them into different families.

Existence, Individuality, Freedom, Choice, Creativity, Possibility

Existentialism is centred on the human, characterized by existence, and it insists on a return to the concrete, individual existent as against the essence and nature of things. It emphasizes the primacy of existence over essence. For most of the existentialists the essence of the human consists in one's existence. Existence is a dynamic notion that implies a constant attaining of the self in the self-directed life of the individual. To exist as individual means to become individual in freedom and choice. As existent, the human creates oneself. By virtue of one's freedom the human is not only what one has become, but also what one can become. To escape into the crowd is same as running away from one's responsibility to exist as an individual. It is uncomfortable to stand alone in one's uniqueness; hence it needs courage to exist, to assert oneself as an individual. In a widely growing situation wherein anonymity is the saving virtue, numerical superiority is the decisive consideration and mass opinion is the criterion of truth, all the existentialists call on the human to exist, to become, to choose as an individual in freedom and courage.

Finitude, Death, Guilt, Anxiety, Nothingness

Although humans are primarily free and self-creative, their quest for authentic personal being meets with resistance, and sometimes even frustration. Humans' ability to choose is restricted by

their ultimate possibility, death, that places a limit to their choice, and on which they have no choice. As the ultimate possibility and facticity, death surrounds human existence with the boundary wall, revealing humans' *limit-situation*. The human experiences the presence of the 'not' (nothingness) in one's being; and before this existential awareness of one's finite freedom, one experiences dread or anxiety. Anxiety is had before the nothingness of human existence. The presence of nothingness in the human is same as human finitude or ontological guilt, that makes guilty action possible.

Authenticity and Inauthenticity

In the face of one's finite freedom, humans have the possibility to be *authentic* or *inauthentic*. These terms (authenticity and inauthenticity) are mainly employed by Heidegger, but others too make the distinction between what the human should be (authenticity), and what one is prone to be normally (inauthenticity). Both theists and atheists make this distinction. Different philosophers propose different ideals as the authentic mode of existence. Thus for Kierkegaard, authenticity consists in making a leap of faith, and in becoming totally committed to a life of subjectivity and truth. For Heidegger, the authentic Dasein has to choose to be itself in the face of the temptation to be the they-self. For Buber and Marcel authenticity is grounded in communion and intersubjectivity. The I-thou relation between two human beings bestows authentic existence upon them as they reach out to the absolute and eternal thou. For Sartre authentic human is one who accepts one's freedom in good faith. For Camus, authentic existence is a life of resistance amidst the absurd. It demands a rejection of the physical and the philosophical suicide.

Community, Intersubjectivity, Love, Commitment, Faith

The themes of togetherness, I-thou, being-with, etc., are fundamental to Marcel, Buber, Levinas, etc. No existentialist considers oneself to be solipsist. Even Sartre accepts the presence of the other, though with a hateful stare. Thus even Sartrean notion of hatred is a mode of intersubjectivity. The I is necessarily related to a thou. Those who take the positive aspect of intersubjectivity, consider that this relation is characterized by availability, fidelity, commitment etc. The other is a genuine means of enriching one's existence. Marcel and Buber speak of the I-thou relationship. The other is not an object, a problem, an it, or a functionary, not even a 's/he' but a 'thou,' a subject with whom I communicate. Heidegger speaks of the essential character of Dasein as being-with. According to Levinas, the face reveals the indubitable presence of the other. Even in later Camus, a sense of togetherness and community become the dominant theme. When this relation of commitment is extended to the Transcendent being, it is referred to as 'faith.'

Absurdity, Homelessness, Rootlessness, Meaninglessness

To the contemporary human, absurdity or meaninglessness has become a catch-word. It stands for humanity's plight as purposelessness in an existence out of harmony with its surroundings. The 20th century neurosis is the neurosis of purposelessness, valuelessness, hollowness and emptiness. Most people continue with the business of living in it, but the existentialists cry out in anguish that they are gratuitous in an impossible world. The main spokespersons for human absurdity are Sartre and Camus. For Sartre 'absurdity' is the awareness of oneself as superfluous. One finds oneself as unnecessary, and thus there is no reason for one to exist. Camus considers absurdity as an awareness of oneself as condemned to tragic purposelessness. He traces to absurdity the dilemma of modern human, groaning under the structures of organized injustice and hypocrisy. In this tragic situation the human should not try to run away from it by suicide, rather one should accept it as a rebel. The fate of meaningless existence becomes tragic when

one is conscious of it. The tragic hero of the *Myth of Sisyphus* bears his burden without joy of hope, refusing any of the palliatives offered by religion or philosophy, and without distractions of pleasure or ambition.

Depersonalization, Dehumanization, Objectification, Functionalization

Existentialism made its origin as a reaction to the reduction of the human to a mere object in the universe. Marcel and Buber fight against treating the human as an 'it' rather than a 'thou'. The disproportionate growth of 20th century technology is instrumental to the frightening erosion of human values and dignity by the use of strict 'scientific method' in investigations, and functional approach in dealings. The human is made an 'object' of analysis, and a commodity of transactions. As against this calculative approach, the existentialists suggest that the other be considered as a 'thou,' as another existing subject. Depersonalization can be present in two ways: (i) by keeping the human in an impersonal collectivity of anonymity, mediocrity and facelessness. People are regimented and packed together in the service of the powerful, or (ii) by reducing the humans as mere objects for one's purpose. This is what takes place in the so-called free situation of capitalism and globalization.

2.6 LET US SUM UP

As a philosophical movement, existentialism is based on phenomenology initiated as a method for the first time by Husserl. This does not mean that the existentialists merely copied what Husserl proposed; far from it. In fact the existentialist thinking is centered on existence, bracketed by Husserl. But the underling basic inspiration that guides the type of thinking in phenomenology and existentialism is the same.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your Answers.

1. Explain the understanding of Existentialists on human relationship.

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2. Discuss the 'limit situations' of human existence.

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2.7 KEY WORDS

Intersubjectivity: Theme of togetherness, I-thou, being-with, etc., a relation that is characterized by availability, fidelity, commitment etc.

Dasein: Heidegger speaks of the essential character of being as being-with.

2.8 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 3 HERMENEUTICS AND POSTMODERNISM

Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Basic Description of Hermeneutics and Postmodernism
- 3.3 Hermeneutics: Major thinkers and their contribution
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- 3.6 Primary themes within postmodernism
- 3.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.8 Key Words
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3.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will feature the following topics:

- A basic description of hermeneutics and postmodernism
- Major thinkers and their contribution in both these fields
- Primary features or aspects of hermeneutics and postmodernism

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Hermeneutics and postmodernism are movements which are in continuity with the reaction against the Enlightenment criterion of neutral, objective and universal *reason* as the ultimate arbiter of truth and meaning. The field of hermeneutics has to do with interpretation, and more specifically the interpretation of texts. Hence hermeneutics in itself is a very old field, as there have been numerous interpretations of literary, legal and religious texts from time immemorial. However, philosophical hermeneutics, which has to do with the *principles* involved in the interpretation of texts, arose as a discipline only during the 'Modern Period' of Western Philosophy. These hermeneutical principles were found to involve not just universal or objective reason, but other influences such as subjective interests, particular cultural standpoints, aesthetic sensitivities, etc. In a similar vein, postmodernism grew as a reaction against *epistemic certitude* which was both the presupposition and the goal of Modern Philosophy. Much of scientific progress is based on the deductive logic and systematic investigations which arose from the rational and empirical moorings of Modern Philosophy. But the presuppositions, logic, investigative methods and goals of philosophical and scientific rationality have been called into question by postmodern theorists, who point out severe gaps or problematic areas within these apparently sure-footed fields of knowledge and progress. We will first familiarize ourselves with a basic description of these contemporary philosophical fields. Then, in each subsection we will first outline the more significant insights presented by key theorists in these respective fields and then focus on major themes within these philosophical disciplines.

3.2 BASIC DESCRIPTION OF HERMENEUTICS AND POSTMODERNISM

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics, or ‘the theory of interpretation,’ is a field in Contemporary Western Philosophy which deals with principles and processes instrumental in the course of interpretation, especially the interpretation of texts. There has been a long history of the interpretation of a wide variety of texts, mainly featuring scriptural exegesis, jurisprudence and literary analysis. What philosophical hermeneutics has contributed is the formulation of principles and processes which are applicable in textual analysis in general. These principles and processes pertaining to interpretation are especially relevant within the fields of the humanities and the human sciences. But the theory of interpretation may equally well be applied to any natural or social phenomena, to the extent that these are expressed and understood cognitively or textually.

The word ‘hermeneutics’ comes from the Greek ‘hermeneuein’ (to make intelligible), derived from the Greek God ‘Hermes’ who interpreted the messages of the Gods for human beings. Unlike epistemology, which presupposes objectivity in knowledge and is primarily concerned about the adequacy of ‘truth-claims,’ contemporary hermeneutics is more concerned about the significance of ‘meaning-claims.’ This is because in contemporary hermeneutics the understanding of any aspect of reality is a relational process, wherein both knower and known—or subject and object—are necessarily intertwined within a contextual matrix. This matrix involves not only the use of reason but also other elements which come into play, such as subjective interests, aesthetic sensitivities, cultural conditions, economic and political factors, etc.

Some hermeneutical thinkers like Schleiermacher and Dilthey give more importance to the personal creativity of the individual author of the text or creator of the work of art, while others like Gadamer and Ricoeur stress the ‘autonomy of the text’ from the ‘intention of the author.’ This latter position leaves more room for creative contemporary interpretations, which may go much beyond what the author intended, or what the text meant in the past. Postmodern thinkers dissolve the text completely in favour of a variety of possible interpretations. According to Roland Barthes, “the author must die so that the reader may live.” ‘Critical theorists’ like Habermas question the innocence of texts, and stress the need to read texts in the light of personal and social forces which may contain dysfunctional or dominating mechanisms.

Postmodernism

The word ‘postmodern’ itself indicates a discontinuity with whatever was mainly construed with the term ‘modern.’ Modern Philosophy largely adopted the programme of Descartes, which was the establishment of clear and distinct ideas, arrived at by using rigorous methodological investigation. The belief that language—theoretical, technical and practical—corresponded to or represented (mirrored) reality was taken for granted as self-evident, as it served as the foundation for philosophical, scientific and moral discourse. A gradual outcome of the ‘modern’ way of looking at things was the growing ascendancy of scientific discourse and technological progress, which soon led to the dominance of a ‘secular’ mindset as being more true to reality, as opposed to an earlier more traditional and faith-related worldview. All of this led to the belief that Western culture was more developed and superior to other cultures and worldviews. Another

significant presupposition concerned the human 'subject' as an independent centre of rational and moral consciousness, i.e., a separate 'self,' independent of one's tradition and community, which possessed consciousness, responsibility and creativity. This understanding of the self fuelled the growth of individualism in the West.

The 'postmodern' way of thinking was opposed to all of these features of Modern Philosophy, and manifested itself not only in philosophy, but also in literature, art, architecture and in a new way of life in general. According to this new perspective, language and knowledge processes do not lead us to a greater awareness of how reality is structured, as there is a fundamental gap between language and reality. Every language and culture is a relatively unique and 'constructed' set of epistemological, metaphysical, moral and aesthetic beliefs and claims, and there is no universal vantage point by which one may adjudicate which is better or worse. There is no privileged culture or system of thought—no 'centre' of meaning and purpose—as each of these social constructions have their own strengths and weaknesses. This gives rise not only to a greater appreciation of difference and plurality, but more radically to an all-pervasive, comprehensive and consistent 'relativism' which is the hallmark of postmodernism. Furthermore, the individual 'subject' of Modern Philosophy is only a nodal point within a larger matrix of cultural meaning. Thus linguistic and cultural structures determine personal consciousness, identity and agency.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is common to hermeneutics and postmodernism?

.....

2) Give a basic description of both hermeneutics and postmodernism.

.....

3.3 HERMENEUTICS: MAJOR THINKERS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION

The age of the Enlightenment witnessed a gradual preference for rationally-based interpretation as opposed to traditionally and faith-based interpretation. Among the first thinkers who developed a methodological theory of understanding and interpretation in this age are Johann Chladenius, Georg Meier, Friedrich Ast and Friedrich Wolf. But hermeneutics as a philosophical discipline came into its own mainly as a reaction to the over-emphasis on rationality which dominated the Modern Age. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who may be considered to be the 'father of contemporary hermeneutics' stressed the 'Romantic' aspect of the imaginary,

creative, and affective (emotional) dimensions which come into play in the articulation and interpretation of texts. Schleiermacher elevated the theory of interpretation from its particular or regional fields of application (exegesis, philology and jurisprudence) to a generalized theory of understanding as it is applied to texts. Furthermore, with Schleiermacher, hermeneutics became a properly philosophical discipline governing the nature, scope and function of the process of understanding itself. Interpretation became the art of avoiding misunderstanding so as to understand the text correctly. Schleiermacher's philosophical hermeneutics had two aspects: a subjective or 'psychological' aspect and an objective or 'grammatical' aspect. In his earlier works, he seemed to have given more importance to the 'grammatical' features of interpretation which have to do with aspects of discourse related to a particular culture. However, the later Schleiermacher seemed to increasingly favour the dominance of 'psychological' concerns in the process of interpretation. The next significant contributor was Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), who unlike Schleiermacher, was influenced by the positivistic spirit of the late nineteenth century, and was inclined to elevate history to the same level of exactness as the positive or natural sciences. It was Dilthey who distinguished between the knowledge of the natural and the human sciences: nature needed to be *explained*, while history needed to be *understood*. He hoped to formulate systematic rules for understanding *social* (especially historical) phenomena, just as the natural scientists had formulated systematic rules for explaining *natural* phenomena. However, by subordinating hermeneutics to the young science of psychology, Dilthey too, like the later Schleiermacher, began to view the meaning of a text largely in terms of the intention of its author.

In *Being and Time* (1927), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) viewed understanding as a foundational aspect of one's contextual situatedness or 'being-in-the-world.' Opposing the subject-object dichotomy found in epistemology and scientific methodology, Heidegger presented the process of understanding in terms of a projection of ontological possibilities rather than a static cognitive correspondence with ontic reality. This projection of possibilities does not start from nowhere, as there is already an understanding as such that is operative in human consciousness. Heidegger's epistemology is thus an existential one. We always already find ourselves in a world of meaning, in a world always already imbued with pragmatic projects: we are 'beings-in-time.' However, this world of meaning is not a predicative, but rather a pre-predicative, *a priori* existential world of meaning, which Heidegger refers to as 'understanding.' Upon this primordial level of consciousness or understanding is founded a multi-layered level of interpretation, from the least conscious (e.g., using a hammer without explicitly being aware of it) to the most conscious (reflection over the nature and function of the hammer). Discourse arises from the most conscious level of interpretation, and one can see that it has only a derivative status, as it is based upon deeper levels of interpretive meaning, and a still deeper level of understanding. Hermeneutics, then, for Heidegger, is clearly dependent upon the two pre-predicative, pre-discursive levels of understanding and interpretation. Hence texts both arise from and are interpreted from a projective exercise based upon one's being-in-the-world. This is why Heidegger's contribution to hermeneutics is rightly called 'ontological hermeneutics.'

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) continues the ontological hermeneutics of Heidegger and makes it more concrete in the importance he gives to tradition and its cumulative historical efficacy in terms of creating specific ontological 'prejudices' or a foundational perspective which form the bedrock for interpretation. In his major work, *Truth and Method* (1960), Gadamer

clearly gives priority to ‘truth’ and has serious problems in the use of ‘method’ in the process of interpretation, because methodology implicitly presupposes a perspective-free objectivity which Gadamer argues is impossible. What really happens in a process of interpretation or in any encounter with a phenomenon is an understanding which takes place via a fusion of horizons between the worlds of the interpreter and that which is interpreted. Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) is indebted to both Heidegger and Gadamer, but makes space for the use of method in the process of interpretation. Ricoeur would agree that there is always a ‘surplus of meaning’ in the text which resists explanatory reductionism leading towards a univocal understanding of the text. However, rather than employ a dialogical model with the text which Gadamer prefers, Ricoeur argues that a process of objective distanciation which allows for textual exegesis is possible and even necessary, if one is to arrive at a deeper and better interpretation. In his later works, Ricoeur creatively expands the scope of hermeneutical theory to include the interpretation of human actions and narratives, to the extent that they have cognitive and communicative value.

3.4 PRIMARY THEMES WITHIN HERMENEUTICS

There are **three primary dimensions of interpretation, viz., explanation, understanding and application**. The focus in explanation is on the *validity* of textual meaning, viz., the ‘behind’ and the structure of the text, rather than the possibilities for textual *significance*, viz., the ‘forward’ or applicative value of the text. In explanation, the text is treated more like a *window*, whereby one sees *through* a text in order to explore its nature and origins, rather than like a *mirror*, wherein one stands *before* a text in order to understand it from within a particular context and guided by personal and social interests. Schleiermacher and Dilthey tend to focus on the ‘behind’ of the text so as to arrive at textual meaning in terms of the original intention of the author. In contrast to this position, Gadamer focuses primarily on the ‘forward’ of the text, or how it may be understood by various readers in various contexts. Ricoeur partially combines both of these positions. In making room for a vigorous structural investigation of the text, he gives importance to the role of ‘explanatory’ procedures—such as structuralism and by extension, historical-critical methods—in textual research. However, in line with many contemporary literary theorists, he does not give much significance to the original intention of the author. A comprehensive interpretation of the text, however, would necessitate the adoption of a variety of focuses: the ‘behind,’ the ‘forward’ and the structure or nature of the text itself. Such a comprehensive methodology is necessary, because unless one subscribes to interpretive ‘relativism,’ there is a need to establish valid argumentative grounds in order to justify a particular interpretation. These grounds would not have the rigidity of the natural and even the social sciences, but they would at least help us to determine the *probability* of the validity of the interpretation being claimed. Ricoeur argues that explanation and understanding need to be dialectically engaged, for understanding without explanation would be blind, whereas explanation without understanding would be empty. The recognition that there is a significant difference between a naïve and a more refined or critical understanding of a text reveals the importance of providing an ‘explanation’ of a text. Ricoeur rightly asserts: “to explain more is to understand better.”

A second theme of significance within interpretation theory is that of the contrast and dialectic between the hermeneutics of trust and the hermeneutics of suspicion. The hermeneutics of trust—or affirmation or retrieval—operates from an ‘understanding’-based standpoint. The

hermeneutics of suspicion operates from the perspective of critical theory, and the ‘masters of suspicion,’ according to Ricoeur, are Marx (1818-1883), Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Freud (1856-1939). Each of them attempts a radical questioning and even a rejection of what is commonly accepted as normative for rationality and communication. Marx exposed unequal economic power relations which lie at the basis of ideology; Nietzsche argued that a natural will to power is repressed in the name of conventional morality; and Freud demonstrated that the repression of primal forces in civilized society could lead to psychological disorders. All of them led us to suspect what is superficial in terms of social communication. However, Ricoeur argues that these thinkers are not only destructive but also constructive in their critique. Marx invites us to transform unjust economic processes in order to create a more equal society. Nietzsche and Freud help us to overcome unnecessary repressive strategies so as to live authentic, creative and free lives. In his debates with Gadamer, the neo-Marxist critical theorist Jürgen Habermas (1929-) expressed a concern about the radical conservatism which may result from the hermeneutical approaches of Heidegger and Gadamer. This is because they do not adequately provide normative explanatory and critical criteria which are integral to any process of understanding. To avoid this limitation, Habermas—and Karl-Otto Apel (1922-)—developed normative regulations that govern speech acts, including acts of textual interpretation. According to them, every ideal communicative claim or interpretation entails statements that are understandable, aimed at the truth, expressed truthfully and in an appropriate manner. These four criteria help to expose distorting and inhibiting forces which may be part of traditional and dysfunctional interpretations.

A third theme concerns the **nature of the hermeneutical circle or spiral**. The most common demonstration of the operation of a circular movement in interpretation is that one cannot understand the whole text unless one becomes familiar with individual parts of the text, and one cannot understand the parts unless one has a sense of the whole. This circle becomes a spiral when a progressive interplay between the whole and the parts leads to a better understanding of both. This happens when one moves from a prior understanding of a text through explanations of the text—questions, hypotheses, answers—towards a refined understanding of the text, etc. In other words, this happens when one moves from a guess reading through a process of validation, towards a more probable reading which may still be in need of further validation, etc. From a subject-object based epistemological perspective, any form of ‘preunderstanding’ in the process of knowing the text would imply a vicious circle, wherein the ‘preunderstanding’ would be identified as an epistemological prejudice which interferes with a reading of the text. But Heidegger argues that this is not the case: one cannot get out of the circle to attain objectivity; rather, one must know how to enter into the circle—i.e., ask questions of a text or phenomenon—in a skillful manner. The circle is also operative within the dialectic between the hermeneutics of trust and suspicion. One moves from a tradition-based sense of trust, through a moment of reflective, critical distancing, towards a new level or paradigm of trust. Once this new level of trustful ‘belonging’ gets stabilized, it would then constitute what Ricoeur calls a ‘second naïveté.’

A final theme has to do with the **relevance of hermeneutics in terms of contemporary contextual applications**. Interpretation is a widespread phenomenon which takes place at both the theoretical and practical levels of human existence. For example, developing a scientific theory entails a process of the interpretation of natural or social phenomena by means of which

one may understand empirical data in a systematic and productive manner. At the practical level, interpretation takes place in a wide variety of fields: arriving at an ethically appropriate decision, engaging in responsible financial speculation, providing professional medical prognostication, etc. In all of these fields, one needs to be familiar with procedural or operational principles which serve as constraints or interpretive controls. Without such constraints, guiding principles or explanatory procedures, the process of interpretation would become mere guesswork and sophistry. With regard to the Indian situation, hermeneutics has much to offer by way of complementing our predominantly oral tradition with the strengths of the Western written tradition. In an oral tradition, less attention tends to get paid to the text and more to the living interpreter of the text in the form of the teacher, guru or resource person. In keeping with this traditional approach, there is much more of an emphasis paid to the role of 'understanding' rather than that of 'explanation.' Consequently, there is less scope for the employment of historical-critical methods and critical theory in textual study. A balanced hermeneutical approach would employ both explanation and critique in order to arrive at more accurate, meaningful and just interpretations of the text and of social phenomena in general.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1). What are the main hermeneutical insights of Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur?

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2) What are some of the key themes within hermeneutical theory?

.....

3.5 POSTMODERNISM: MAJOR THINKERS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION

Postmodernism, a contemporary form of philosophical skepticism, only finds expression in the second half of the twentieth century. However, there are a number of influential thinkers and movements which have influenced postmodern thinkers. One of the 'hermeneuts of suspicion,' namely, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), radically proposed that "there are no truths, only interpretations." Later the postmodernists will stress the reality of diverse interpretive frameworks rather than the validity of universal standpoints, systems or rationality itself. Nietzsche further argued that human beings are fundamentally driven by a "will to power," which is subtly suppressed by different social mechanisms, including religion. Postmodernists highlight the role of power which is latent in the way language and consciousness are constructed. Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) radically overturned the subject-object epistemology at the basis of much of the Western rationalist and scientific outlook. For Heidegger, both subject and object entail one another, so that human knowledge is always a situated, contextual, limited and existentially-based knowledge. As a consequence of this, the Cartesian ego or independent,

autonomous subject—sacrosanct in Modern Philosophy—could no longer retain its status as the source and origin of meaning and purpose. Instead, it was one's *Sitz im Leben* or situation in life which determined the contents of consciousness. This radical subversion of the subject in favour of a community-constituted consciousness was to become one of the main tenets of postmodern belief. Postmodernism was also influenced by the 'structuralism' of the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss. Saussure drove a wedge between the world of 'signifiers' (words, images, signs) and the world of the 'signified' (the conceptual reality they refer to), by arguing that signifiers are arbitrary and do not have a specific or necessary relationship with the concepts signified by them.

Poststructuralists like Jacques Derrida (1930-2004)—one of the foremost postmodern thinkers—would take structuralism to its logical conclusion by arguing that there is a perpetual differentiation between words. In *Of Grammatology* (1967), Derrida argues that a word necessarily refers to another word for its meaning (this constitutes 'différance' or a difference between words). But when this happens, meaning is always deferred or postponed (this constitutes 'différance' or a perpetual suspension of meaning). All of this makes it impossible for oral or written communication to successfully represent any state of reality in an objective and universal manner. Furthermore, any articulation, either at the level of language (*langue*) or speech (*parole*)—a distinction made by Saussure—if not 'deconstructed,' would likely contain within itself oppressive cultural binary opposites, which in turn would lead to dysfunctional social relationships. Examples of such binary opposites are: soul versus body, male versus female, white versus coloured, clear versus ambiguous, Western versus Oriental, etc. These binary terms are not only opposed to one another but also contain implicit or explicit value-judgements which place one term above the other. Furthermore, Derrida argued against the privileged position which living speech enjoyed against the status of a written text. Living speech was thought to bring about the 'presence' of the matter under consideration, while writing was considered vague, subject to interpretation, and hence incapable of representing reality. Derrida's intention was to demonstrate that speech or discourse or even written texts cannot represent reality—a presupposition that he termed 'logocentrism'—as there will necessarily be a 'slippage' or ambiguity of meaning even in speech. Indeed, the role of the postmodern approach is to deconstruct texts—starting with philosophical texts which assumedly deal with truth and reality—in order to show that there is no exact correspondence between the world of linguistic signs and the posited real world.

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) carried on this project of deconstruction by demonstrating that specific knowledge structures ("the order of things") are not neutral representations of truth, but instead have overt or covert power equations inbuilt within them. Foucault demonstrated the power of deconstruction by analyzing different social structures and mechanisms in different historical epochs and contexts. He showed how institutional parameters have changed in different historical contexts, especially in the areas of crime, psychological disorders ('madness') and sexual mores. Foucault first presented the 'archeology'—an objective and descriptive examination—of these systems, especially in his works on madness, e.g., *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), and on knowledge in general, e.g., *The Order of Things* (1966). Then, following Nietzsche, who tried to outline the genealogy of morality, he adopted the genealogical approach—tracing the evolution of knowledge systems—in which he showed how one system metamorphosed into another. This he did mainly in his works on crime and punishment, e.g.,

Discipline and Punish (1975), and on sexuality, e.g., *The History of Sexuality* (1976), showing how standards changed, but still managed to retain their controlling or disciplinary mechanisms.

Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1998) wrote more consciously about the programme of postmodernism in *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), especially its vocation to expose the latent violence within 'knowledge/power' dynamics. Unlike Bacon's dictum that 'knowledge is power,' i.e., that the possession of knowledge (or rational skills) gives one power (e.g., over nature), Lyotard's dynamic phrase of 'knowledge/power' connotes an intrinsic relationship in which one terms entails the other, and the goals of each domain involves the employment of the other. Hence Lyotard writes against the fundamental malaise within any knowledge system or operation, as it takes for granted or assumes certain discrepancies or injustices which are inbuilt at the levels of both ends and means of the system. These strategies of inbuilt inequality and domination need to be made transparent or 'deconstructed.' While there is much in common with critical theory in this approach, unlike Marxian or other forms of critique, there is no final goal or utopia which is proposed. Rather, the project of deconstruction entails a continual purification of linguistic and cultural works. Lyotard is also famous for his definition of postmodernism as an "incredulity towards metanarratives." This phrase entails a critique of all 'totalizing' systems of thought, including capitalism—and globalization—because of its presupposition of economic and cultural development, and to a lesser extent Marxism, because of its theory of (necessary) historical development towards utopia.

Other postmodernists include Gilles Deleuze, who wrote on the nature and role of 'difference' in *Difference and Repetition* (1968); Roland Barthes, who wrote a seminal essay on "The Death of the Author" (1968); Richard Rorty, the American pragmatist who wrote against epistemological foundationalism in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979); Jean Baudrillard, who wrote on the 'simulacrum' or a copy without reference to an original in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981); and Frederic Jameson who expounded on Postmodernism as an historical epoch in *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991).

The postmodern contribution to philosophy has been challenged on a variety of issues: How can postmodernism account for the validity of its own discourse? If reality cannot be understood by language, and if communication is always in danger of 'slippage of meaning,' then how seriously is one to take the claims of postmodern literature? If all cultures and systems of meaning (the various 'Others') are equally valid (the position of 'relativism'), then what is the rational basis for the opposition to injustice within and between systems? If individual human consciousness is simply the byproduct of cultural influence, then why should one give significance (including intellectual property rights) to individual postmodern thinkers who propose seminal insights? If there is no scope for the notion of progress, then is human endeavour mostly an exercise in futility? These, and many more questions, pose serious challenges to a wider acceptance of postmodern thinking in philosophical and secular discourse.

3.6 PRIMARY THEMES WITHIN POSTMODERNISM

From clarity to ambiguity (a new epistemology): The clarity of Modern Philosophy is replaced with the ambiguity of Postmodernism. The metaphysics of transparency and presence, in which words could capture reality and represent it via concepts was replaced with ambiguous

language or texts [overcoming 'logocentrism'], in which there is no direct relationship between the signifier and the signified. Instead, the world of both the signifiers and the signified is an entirely socially constructed world, and furthermore, features a continual 'difference,' in the manner in which a dictionary contains words which only make sense in relationship to the other words in the dictionary. Thus, 'truth' and 'objectivity' are no more goals to aspire towards, as there is a tendency of linguistic slippage of meaning, in which one cannot totally convey what is meant, but only roughly or functionally. There is no ideal, universal, objective rationality.

From the human subject as the centre of interest to 'language' as the centre of interest (a new anthropology): The human phenomenon becomes replaced with language. Likewise, the focus on individual consciousness (the Cartesian 'subject') which dominated Modern philosophy gets replaced by a new focus on linguistic and cultural systems or structures of meaning (an objective and impersonal structure), within which the individual finds a place. Individual moral and personal responsibility gets replaced by attention to a larger world of linguistic meaning in which the individual is only a nodal point of creative expression. Thus, for example, according to Heidegger, the origin of the work of art is not the individual artist but 'art' itself.

From knowledge to knowledge/power (a new socio-political philosophy): There is a need to overcome binary thinking, which favours the rational over the emotional, the mind (or soul) over the body, clarity over ambiguity, unity over diversity, the male over the female, the Western over the non-Western, and the supernatural over the natural. Universal or 'totalizing' metanarratives which have a linear understanding of history and progress and which favoured Western cultural dominance become replaced with smaller and more local narratives which need not have a 'progressive' view of history and time.

From universality to plurality (a new metaphysics):

There are as many worlds of reality as there are cultural communities. Instead of one centre of meaning and purpose, in the decentred world of postmodernism there are various centres of power. The rationality of the 'Other' (culture, knowledge system) needs to be recognized as a distinct system of knowledge and value. What we have are various constructions of knowledge systems, the products (discourse and texts) of which are in continual need of 'deconstruction' in order to become purified of inconsistencies and latent power interests.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What are some of the most significant contributions of Derrida, Foucault and Lyotard towards the postmodern way of thinking?

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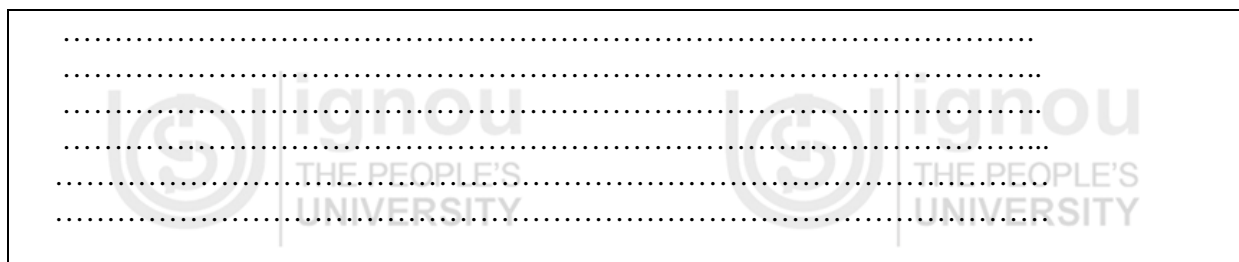
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2) What are some of the key themes or features of postmodernism?



3.7 LET US SUM UP

Both Hermeneutics and Postmodernism are reactions against the emphasis in Modern Philosophy on reason and neutral objectivity alone as the ultimate norm for truth and meaning. Hermeneutics points to other features like personal creativity, aesthetic and affective factors, individual interests, cultural influences, social forces and a variety of applications, both in the construction and the interpretation of texts. Hence texts—and human phenomena which share features of textuality—have a “surplus of meaning,” in the words of Paul Ricoeur, which allows for a variety of ways of creating and understanding them.

While ‘structuralism’ pointed to the arbitrary nature of signifiers (words, images, signs) as well as their differential nature with respect to other signs, ‘poststructuralists’ went beyond that to argue for the arbitrary and differential nature of the world of the signified (concepts, ideas) as well. ‘Postmodernism’—a development of such thinking—argued that reality cannot be grasped and controlled by language, even though every knowledge and cultural system tries to do so, and in the process lands up playing power games. In reality each system and product of knowledge is a limited and internally-dependent cultural and linguistic mechanism, which is in need of constant purification of inconsistencies and dysfunctional assumptions via the process of deconstruction.

3.8 KEY WORDS

Author intention: The original motivation and reason with which a text is constructed. (For some theorists, the meaning of a text has to be reduced to what the author intended. For most theorists, the meaning of a text goes beyond this intention).

Hermeneutic circle: To understand a part of the text one needs to understand the whole, but to understand the whole text one needs to understand the parts. The circle becomes a productive spiral when one starts with a guess reading, then seeks for better explanations, and arrives at a more sophisticated understanding, and so on.

Poststructuralism: Since the world of signifiers (signs, words, images) is arbitrary, inter-dependent, and differential (perpetually postpoing their meaning in reference to other signs), there is no direct relationship between signifiers and signified (concepts, ideas). As the world of the signified is also arbitrary, inter-dependent and differential, there is no way that language can connect us to the way things are in reality.

Deconstruction: The method used to uncover hidden or suppressed meanings of a discourse or text, which may include ambiguities, inconsistencies, contradictions and dominating or oppressive tendencies.

3.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 4 NEO-SCHOLASTICISM AND FEMINISM

Contents

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Traditional Elements
- 4.3 Adaptations to Modern Needs
- 4.4 Prominent Neo-Scholastics
- 4.5 Feminist Philosophy: Introduction
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- 4.8 Some Feminist Philosophers
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- 4.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.11 Key Words
- 4.12 Further Readings and References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

- To introduce the students to the need of neo-scholastic philosophy.
- To acquaint them with some key notions of neo-scholasticism.
- To provide them with some elementary ideas of feminism.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Scholasticism is the system of theology and philosophy taught in medieval European universities, based on Aristotelian logic and the writings of the early Church Fathers and having a strong emphasis on tradition and dogma. This philosophy (or theology) which originated in the 9th century, was a medieval Christian school of philosophy and theology whose high point coincided with the rise of universities during the 12th and 13th centuries. The name was derived from the fact that those involved were the "Schoolmen" who taught at cathedral schools and universities. These philosophers sought to organize and systematize every aspect of Christian belief.

Saint Bonaventure (1221 –1274) Bonaventure, Saint Thomas Aquinas, (1225 –1274), John Duns Scotus (c. 1265 –1308) and William of Ockham (c. 1287-1347), were the great philosophers of High Scholasticism.

Neo-Scholasticism is the development of the Scholasticism of the Middle Ages during the latter half of the nineteenth century. It is not merely the resuscitation of a philosophy long since defunct, but rather a restatement in our own day of the philosophia perennis which, elaborated by the Greeks and brought to perfection by the great medieval teachers, has never ceased to exist even in modern times. It has some times been called neo-Thomism partly because St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century gave to Scholasticism among the Latins its final form, partly because the idea has gained ground that only Thomism can infuse vitality into twentieth century scholasticism. But Thomism is too narrow a term; the system itself is too large and comprehensive to be expressed by the name of any single exponent. This unit will

deal with the elements which neo-Scholasticism and the main features of it (De Wulf 1911).

4.2 TRADITIONAL ELEMENTS

Neo-Scholasticism seeks to restore the fundamental organic doctrines embodied in the Scholasticism of the thirteenth century. It claims that philosophy does not vary with each passing phase of history; that the truth of seven hundred years ago is still true today, and that if the great medieval thinkers - Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Duns Scotus - succeeded in constructing a sound philosophical system on the data supplied by the Greeks, especially by Aristotle, it must be possible, in our own day, to gather from the speculation of the Middle Ages the soul of truth which it contains. Following De Wulf (1911) these essential conceptions may be summarized as follows:

(1) God, pure actuality and absolute perfection, is substantially distinct from every finite thing: he alone can create and preserve all beings other than Himself. His infinite knowledge includes all that has been, is, or shall be, and likewise all that is possible.

(2) As to our knowledge of the material world: whatever exists is itself, an incommunicable, individual substance. To the core of self-sustaining reality, in the oak-tree for instance, other realities (accidents) are added - size, form, roughness, and so on. All oak-trees are alike, indeed are identical in respect of certain constituent elements. Considering this likeness and even identity, our human intelligence groups them into one species and again, in view of their common characteristics, it ranges various species under one genus. Such is the Aristotelean solution of the problem of universals. Each substance is in its nature fixed and determined; and nothing is farther from the spirit of Scholasticism than a theory of evolution which would regard even the essences of things as products of change. But this static world requires as its complement a moderate dynamism, and this is supplied by the central concepts of act and potency. Whatsoever changes is, just for that reason, limited. The oak-tree passes through a process of growth, of becoming: whatever is actually in it now was potentially in it from the beginning. Its vital functions go on unceasingly (accidental change); but the tree itself will die, and out of its decayed trunk other substances will come forth (substantial change). The theory of matter and form is simply an interpretation of the substantial changes which bodies undergo. The union of matter and form constitutes the essence of concrete being, and this essence is endowed with existence. Throughout all change and becoming there runs a rhythm of finality; the activities of the countless substances of the universe converge towards an end which is known to God; finality, in a word, involves optimism.

(3) Man, a compound of body (matter) and of soul (form), puts forth activities of a higher order - knowledge and volition. Through his senses he perceives concrete objects, e.g. this oak; through his intellect he knows the abstract and universal (the oak). All our intellectual activity rests on sensory function; but through the active intellect (*intellectus agens*) an abstract representation of the sensible object is provided for the *intellectus possibilis*. Hence the characteristic of the idea, its non-materiality, and on this is based the principal argument for the spirituality and immortality of the soul. Here, too, is the foundation of logic and of the theory of knowledge, the justification of our judgments and syllogisms. Upon knowledge follows the appetitive process, sensory or intellectual according to the sort of knowledge. The will) in certain conditions is free, and thanks to this liberty man is the

master of his destiny. Like all other beings, we have an end to attain and we are morally obliged, though not compelled, to attain it. Natural happiness would result from the full development of our powers of knowing and loving. We should find and possess God in this world since the corporeal world is the proper object of our intelligence. But above nature is the order of grace and our supernatural happiness will consist in the direct intuition of God, the beatific vision. Here philosophy ends and theology begins.

4.3 ADAPTATION TO MODERN NEEDS

The neo-Scholastic programme includes, in the next place, the adaptation of medieval principles and doctrines to our present intellectual needs. Complete immobility is no less incompatible with progress than out-and-out relativism. To make Scholasticism rigid and stationary would be fatal to it. The doctrines revived by the new movement are like an inherited fortune; to refuse it would be folly, but to manage it without regard to actual conditions would be worse. With Dr. Ehrhard one may say: "Aquinas should be our beacon, not our boundary". We have now to pass in review the various factors in the situation and to see in what respect the new Scholasticism differs from the old and how far it adapts itself to our age.

Elimination of False or Useless Notions

Neo-Scholasticism rejects the theories of physics, celestial and terrestrial, which the Middle Ages grafted on the principles, otherwise sound enough, of cosmology and metaphysics; e.g. the perfection and superiority of astral substance, the "incorruptibility" of the heavenly bodies, their external connexion with "motor spirits", the influence of the stars on the generation of earthly beings, the four "simple" bodies, etc. It further rejects those philosophical theories which are disproved by the results of investigation; e.g. the diffusion of sensible "species" throughout a medium and their introduction into the organs of sense. Even the Scholastic ideas that have been retained are not all of equal importance; criticism and personal conviction may retrench or modify them considerably, without injury to fundamental principles.

Study of the History of Philosophy

The medieval scholars cultivated the history of philosophy solely with a view to its utility, i.e. as a means of gathering the deposit of truth contained in the writings of the ancients and, especially, for the purpose of refuting error and thus emphasizing the value of their own doctrine. Modern students, on the contrary, regard every human fact and achievement as in itself significant, and accordingly they treat the history of philosophy in a spirit that is more disinterested. With this new attitude, neo-Scholasticism is in full sympathy; it does its share in the work of historical reconstruction by employing critical methods; it does not attempt to condense the opinions of others into a syllogism and refute them with a phrase, nor does it commend the practice of putting whole systems into a paragraph or two in order to annihilate them with epithet or invective. Neo-Scholasticism, however, does not confine its interest to ancient and medieval philosophy; its chief concern is with present-day systems. It takes issue with them and offsets their theories of the world by a synthesis of its own. It is only by keeping in touch with actual living thought that it can claim a place in the twentieth century and command the attention of its opponents. And it has everything to gain from a discussion in which it encounters Positivism, Kantianism, and other forms or tendencies of modern speculation.

Dialogue with the Sciences

The need of a philosophy based on science is recognized to-day by every school. Neo-Scholasticism simply follows the example of the Aristotelean and medieval philosophy in taking the data of research as the groundwork of its speculation. That there are profound differences between the Middle Ages and modern times from the scientific point of view, is obvious. One has only to consider the multiplication of the sciences in special lines, the autonomy which science as a whole has acquired, and the clear demarcation established between popular views of nature and their scientific interpretation. But it is equally plain that neo-Scholasticism must follow up each avenue of investigation, since it undertakes, as Aristotle and Aquinas did, to provide a synthetic explanation of phenomena by referring them to their ultimate causes and determining their place in the universal order of things; and this undertaking, if the synthesis is to be deep and comprehensive, presupposes a knowledge of the details furnished by each science. It is not possible to explain the world of phenomena while neglecting the phenomena that make up the world. "All that exists, as contemplated by the human mind, forms one large system or complex fact. . . . Like a short-sighted reader, its eye pores closely, and travels slowly, over the awful volume which lies open for its inspection. . . . These various partial views or abstractions . . . are called sciences . . . they proceed on the principle of a division of labour. . . . And further the comprehension of the bearings of one science on another, and the use of each to each, and the location of them all, with one another, this belongs, I conceive, to a sort of science distinct from all of them, and in some sense, a science of sciences, which is my own conception of what is meant by philosophy." There is, of course, the pedagogical problem; how shall philosophy maintain its control over the ever-widening field of the various sciences? In reply, we may cite the words of Cardinal Mercier, a prominent leader in the neo-Scholastic movement: "As a matter of fact", he declares, "the difficulty is a serious one, and one may say in general terms, that it is not going to be solved by any one man. As the domain of fact and observation grows larger and larger, individual effort becomes less competent to survey and master it all: hence the necessity of co-operative effort to supply what is lacking in the work of isolated investigators; hence too the need of union between the synthetic mind and the analytic, in order to secure, by daily contact and joint action, the harmonious development of philosophy and science.

Innovations in Doctrinal Matters

Once it turned its attention to modern fashions of thought, neo-Scholasticism found itself face to face with problems of which medieval philosophy had not the slightest suspicion or at any rate did not furnish a solution. It had to bear the brunt of conflict between its own principles and those of the systems in vogue, especially of Positivism and Criticism. And it had to take up, from its own point of view, the questions which are favourite topics of discussion in the schools of our time. How far then, one may ask, has neo-Scholasticism been affected by modern thought? As to metaphysics: in the Middle Ages its claim to validity met with no challenge, whereas, in the twentieth century, its very possibility is at stake and, to defend it against the concerted attack of Hume and Kant and Comte, the true significance of such concepts as being, substance, absolute, cause, potency, and act must be explained and upheld. It is further needful to show that, in a very real sense, God is not unknowable; to rebut the charges preferred by modern philosophers against the traditional proofs of God's existence; to deal with the materials furnished by ethnography and the history of religions; and to study the various forms which monism or pantheism nowadays

assume. Cosmology can well afford to insist on the traditional theory of matter and form, provided it pay due attention to the findings of physics, chemistry, crystallography, and mineralogy, and meet the objections of atomism and dynamism, theories which, in the opinion of scientific authority, are less satisfactory as explanations of natural phenomena than the hylomorphism of the Scholastics.

Neo-Scholasticism proceeds by analysis and introspection it states the problem in the terms which, since Kant's day, are the only admissible terms, but as against the Kantian criticism it finds the solution in a rational dogmatism. Its aesthetics holds a middle course between the extreme subjectivism of many modern thinkers who would reduce the beautiful to a mere impression, and the no less extreme objectivism which the Greeks of old maintained. It is equally at home in the field of experimental psychology which investigates the correlation between conscious phenomena and their physiological accompaniments. The laws and principles which the modern science of education has drawn from experience find their adequate explanation in neo-Scholastic doctrine; thus, the intuitive method, so largely accepted at present as an essential element in education, is based on the Scholastic theory that nothing enters the intellect save through the avenue of sense.

As regards the relations between philosophy and religion, there are important changes to note. For the medieval mind in the Western world, philosophy and theology were identical until about the twelfth century. In the thirteenth the line of demarcation was clearly drawn, but philosophy was still treated as the preliminary training for theology. This is no longer the case; neo-Scholasticism assigns to philosophy a value of its own as a rational explanation of the world, on a par in this respect with Positivism and other systems; and it welcomes all who are bent on honest research, whether their aim be purely philosophical or apologetic. Parallel with these modifications are those which affect the pedagogical phase of the movement. The methods of teaching philosophy in the thirteenth century were too closely dependent on the culture of that age; hence they have been replaced by modern procedures, curricula, and means of propagation. It would be ill-advised to wrap neo-Scholastic doctrine in medieval jargons. In this connexion, the use of living languages as a means of exposition has obvious advantages and finds favour with many of those who are best qualified to judge.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) How does Neo-Scholasticism adapt to modern needs?

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2) Does Neo-Scholasticism take science seriously?

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4.4 PROMINENT NEO-SCHOLASTICS

Jacques Maritain

Jacques Maritain (1882–1973), French philosopher and political thinker, was one of the principal exponents of Thomism in the twentieth century and an influential

interpreter of the thought of St Thomas Aquinas. Raised as a Protestant, he converted to Catholicism in 1906. An author of more than 60 books, he helped to revive St. Thomas Aquinas for modern times and is a prominent drafter of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Pope Paul VI presented his "Message to Men of Thought and of Science" at the close of Vatican II to Maritain, his long-time friend and mentor. Maritain's interest and works spanned many aspects of philosophy, including aesthetics, political theory, the philosophy of science, metaphysics, education, liturgy and ecclesiology.

Joseph Maréchal (1878 - 1944) was a Belgian Jesuit priest, philosopher and psychologist at the Higher Institute of Philosophy of the University of Leuven who founded a school of thought called Transcendental Thomism, which attempted to merge the theological and philosophical thought of St. Thomas Aquinas with that of Immanuel Kant. Maréchal joined the Jesuits in 1895 and after a doctorate in Biology in Leuven (1905) he specialized first in Experimental Psychology, spending some time in Munich with Wilhelm Wundt (1911). Till the end of his life Maréchal would say that his real interest was rather in Psychology than Philosophy. Prompted by the call of Pope Leo XIII to revitalize Thomist theology, he started studying in depth the works of St Thomas Aquinas in order to understand the inner coherence of his system, along with the works of other scholastic thinkers, modern philosophers and scientists of the day. From this (and in particular from influences from Kant's transcendental idealism) emerged a new and more dynamic Thomism, recapturing the union of 'act and power' of the original thinker. The development of his thought can be grasped in the five 'cahiers' (see bibliography) in which after exposing the weaknesses of traditional Thomism he evaluated Kant's Philosophy (3d cahier) with whose help he proposes a modernized Thomism in the 4th and 5th cahier. The work of Maréchal had a great influence on such contemporary theologians and philosophers as Gaston Isaye, Joseph de Finance, Karl Rahner, Bernard Lonergan and J.B. Lodz. He proceeded in the same way in his study of the psychology of the mystics. Till his death (11 December 1944) he taught Philosophy and Experimental Psychology at the Jesuit house of Studies in Leuven.

Karl Rahner, SJ (1904 —1984) was a German Jesuit and theologian who, alongside Bernard Lonergan and Hans Urs von Balthasar, is considered one of the most influential Roman Catholic theologians of the 20th century. His theology influenced the Second Vatican Council and was ground-breaking for the development of what is generally seen as the modern understanding of Catholicism.

Bernard J.F. Lonergan, SJ (1904 –1984) was a Canadian Jesuit Priest. He was a philosopher-theologian in the Thomist tradition and an economist from Buckingham, Quebec. He is the author of *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (1957) and *Method in Theology* (1972), which established what he called the Generalized Empirical Method (GEM).

Emerich Coreth SJ (1919 - 2006) was an Austrian Jesuit deeply making Scholastic thought relevant through his metaphysics. Following insights from Kant and Heidegger, he tried to present a philosophy (especially metaphysics and anthropology) that is consistent with the Christian vision.

4.5 FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY: INRODUCTION

Feminist philosophy emerged in the US in the 1970s following only a decade behind the rise of the US women's movement in the 1960s. Although Simone de Beauvoir published her now highly influential *The Second Sex* in 1953, it would take at least a decade for women in the US to begin to organize around the injustices Beauvoir identified, and even longer for feminist philosophers in the US to turn to her work for inspiration.

Although feminist philosophies are common in US, it is important to stress that it is still evolving, especially in India. Feminist philosophies have histories that date back historically at least to the early modern period, and have different genealogies in different geographical regions. Understanding the emergence of feminist philosophy in the U.S. requires an overview of at least two contexts — the political context of what came to be called the “second wave of the woman's movement” and the nature of philosophy in U.S. academies.

4.6 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMINIST THOUGHT

Feminism is, in fact, a collection of movements aimed at defining, establishing and defending equal political, economic, and social rights and equal opportunities for women. Its concepts overlap with those of women's rights. Much of feminism deals specifically with the problems women face in overcoming social barriers, but some feminists argue that gender equality implies a necessary liberation of both men and women from traditional cultural roles, and look at the problems men face as well. Feminists—that is, persons practicing feminism—may be persons of either sex (Wikipedia).

Feminist philosophy emerged from these feminist movements and includes general theories and theories about the origins of inequality, and, in some cases, about the social construction of sex and gender, in a variety of disciplines. Feminist activists have campaigned for women's rights—such as in contract, property, and voting—while also promoting women's rights to bodily integrity and autonomy and reproductive rights. They have opposed domestic violence, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. In economics, they have advocated for workplace rights, including equal pay and opportunities for careers and to start businesses.

Today's feminists seek access to education through fair consideration for women for scholarships, inclusion in athletic programs, and equal treatment in the classroom; to economics through equal access for women to jobs and careers, equal pay, and equal consideration for promotions and career enhancement as well as family-friendly and flexible workplaces with less hierarchical management structures; and to politics through a 50% voice for women in decision making at all levels of government and power structures (Harlan 1998).

Feminists also seek a change in control over reproduction through reproductive freedom for all women, including maintaining legal access to abortion and unhindered sex education and access to birth control. They seek control over sexuality through the right of all to define their own sexuality and the freedom to practice it without discrimination, either overt or subtle. They seek an end to violence through ending control over women's mobility and personal freedom, ending domestic violence, sexual harassment, and rape, and limiting the prevalence of pornography which leads to violence against women. They seek a change in control over society through transformation of social institutions which perpetuate inequality of the sexes and values genders differently.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) Who is Emerich Coreth?

.....

2) Give some general characteristics of feminist thought

.....

4.7 HISTORICAL DEFINITIONS

The following definitions given by Judith Harlan (1998) give a rough idea of the growth of feminist thought, especially in the United States.

Wave Feminists

The feminists who fought for suffrage in the United States and beyond, beginning with the meeting in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 and culminating in the right to vote in 1920, are today call the 'first wave'. These were the women who broke through the barriers of their day to speak in public, to demand property rights, and to claim a political voice (Harlan 1998).

Second Wave

Taking up the cause of women's rights in the early to mid-1960s, these feminists founded feminist organizations and raised the consciousness of the women and men of the country, focusing on winning pay equity for women, access to jobs and education, recognition of women's unpaid labor in the home, and a rebalancing of the double workload of family and outside work for women in the paid labor force. The wave began with the founding of women's liberation groups that took New Left political groups such as the Students for a Democratic Society as their models, joined soon after by other groups that sought political change within the system and through political organizations of their own, forming feminist groups and the mass of the second wave. This second wave is usually considered to have begun about 1963 and run until the backlash of the 1980s, when feminism is seen to have stagnated.

Third Wave

The third wave consists of many of the daughters and sons of the second wave, as well as the second wavers themselves. These feminists grew up with many of the advantages that the second wave fought for, and their issues are today's issues - parental leave and day care for the children of working parents, gaining decision-making positions in corporate and governmental high offices, worldwide sustainable development, and a global awareness of feminist causes. The third wave is a global surge, and in the US is multi-cultural and inclusive, supporting women of all heritages as well as the rights of lesbian women and gay men.

Some of these third-wave feminists are issuing a challenge to the older feminists, seeing feminist rhetoric as entrenched in victimization, with an emphasis on the oppression engendered by a patriarchal system. They grew up in a country transformed by second-wave feminist leaders, with established equal employment and education laws, access to birth control and legal abortion, support within police departments for prosecution of rapists, and women holding a vocal presence in politics. Many third wavers see women as fundamentally strong, confident, brave

individuals. They seek to establish that image of women within the public consciousness, and they look for greater integration of women into politics, economics, and social forums.

Liberal (Equality) Feminism

Liberal feminists are individualists who stress the importance of freedom, especially the freedom to choose. They see more similarities between women and men than differences and envision a community of equitable opportunity for both sexes. They also see most stereotypically masculine or feminine traits as culturally imposed. They view choice as an absolute right, and they seek control over the body and social circumstance. They strive to avoid the imprint of gender codes and the gender socialization of children, looking instead for an authentic, unengineered, and individual approach to life. Some of today's liberal feminists describe themselves as equality feminists and see a link between themselves and first-wave or early second-wave feminists.

Cultural (Difference) Feminism

Emerging in the 1970s and becoming a strong voice by the 1980s, cultural feminism attempts to revalue the feminine aspects that have been devalued by society. It celebrates all things female, whether these derive from social, class, or biological circumstances of women's lives. Difference feminists see many gender traits as biological, or at least deeply structured cultural, traits. They celebrate the differences between women and men, seeing feminine qualities as a source of personal strength and pride and providing affirmation that women occupy the moral high ground. Instead of political change, cultural feminism focuses on cultural transformation, stressing the role of the nonrational, intuitive, collective side of life. This thread of reasoning can be traced through feminists history to first-wave debates within feminist circles.

Those debates centered on the need for women's input in government as guiding, moral voices - the conscience of the nation.(First-wave difference feminists also argued for protective labor legislation for women).

Radical Feminism

Also stressing the differences between females and males, radical feminism values women and likens males to a separate species. Whether the difference is biological or gendered by society is not at issue; the results of male difference and dominance are. According to the radical feminist ideology, the violence of the heterosexual male has led to the patriarchal and hierarchical cultures of today. Further, the male as oppressed and victimized the female through pornography, violence, and the militarization of the world.

Marxist and Socialist Feminism

Feminists who agree with the tenets of Marxist and socialist feminism believe women are seen as a sex class, gendered by society into a secondary position through a systemic sex gender system that dictates social roles, purposes, and norms. These feminists believe that women are exploited as both a sex and a class, and that women are consigned to reproduction and their natures tethered. Men take the roles of goods production and potentially reach freedom. To change this situation, Marxist and socialist feminists seek an end to gendered socialization, and alliance of oppressed groups, and a beginning of a sharing of the wealth.

Ecofeminism

Growing from the idea of women's values as separate from men's and also closer to nature, Ecofeminism revalues and defines feminine traits. Women are seen as in tune

with nature and seeking to work in conjunction with it; men have a hierarchical relationship to nature and seek to control it. This view poses the idea that men's control of nature up to now has created a crisis, and ecocide, in much of the world. Ecofeminists look for life-affirming and nonviolent solutions to world problems. Ecofeminists see feminine values as virtues needed by the world's patriarchy to survive and evolve. Ecofeminists may also subscribe to liberal, radical, or Marxist/socialist thought, but focus on ecology, both of nature and human systems.

Black Feminism

Though African American feminists may not have been included in early mainstream second-wave feminism, they have always been a vocal presence in feminist criticism and ideology. Racism, they have said, is a problem that lives alongside sexism. And so is classism (the hierarchy created by a caste-like economic and social class system). They have demanded that feminists consider the problems of racism and classism along with sexism; further, they have explained the interlacing interconnections from racism to sexism to classism. Sexism cannot truly be understood without understanding its racist undertones; by the same token, racism embodies sexism.

They have refuted the stereotypes of black women as matriarchs and superwomen and have spearheaded movements to gain economic and political clout for women of color. African American women support numerous feminist and women's issues organizations, some of them chiefly for women of color. They are also part of the general feminist movement and leadership, both in the United States and globally.

Male Feminists

Men have been allies, mentors, and supporters of feminism from the beginning of the women's movements. They may consider themselves to be Ecofeminists, cultural feminists, liberal feminists, and so on. Usually, their goal is to see beyond the accepted stereotypes of males that they have grown up with, to create nonsexist relationships, to join in the battle to end violence against women, and to develop partnerships with women instead of hierarchies.

4.8 SOME FEMINIST PHILOSOPHERS

Simone de Beauvoir

Simone-Ernestine-Lucie-Marie Bertrand de Beauvoir, often shortened to Simone de Beauvoir (1908 -1986), was a French existentialist philosopher, public intellectual, and social theorist. She wrote novels, essays, biographies, an autobiography in several volumes, and monographs on philosophy, politics, and social issues. She is now best known for her metaphysical novels, including *She Came to Stay* and *The Mandarins*, and for her 1949 treatise *The Second Sex*, a detailed analysis of women's oppression and a foundational tract of contemporary feminism. She is also noted for her lifelong polyamorous relationship with Jean-Paul Sartre.

Julia Kristeva (1941) is a Bulgarian-French philosopher, literary critic, psychoanalyst, sociologist, feminist, and, most recently, novelist, who has lived in France since the mid-1960s. She is now a Professor at the University Paris Diderot. Kristeva became influential in international critical analysis, cultural theory and feminism after publishing her first book *Semiotikè* in 1969. Her immense body of work includes books and essays which address intertextuality, the semiotic, and abjection, in the fields of linguistics, literary theory and criticism, psychoanalysis, biography and autobiography, political and cultural analysis, art and art history. Together with

Roland Barthes, Todorov, Goldmann, Gérard Genette, Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Greimas, and Althusser, she stands as one of the foremost structuralists, in that time when structuralism took a major place in humanities. Her works also have an important place in post-structuralist thought.

Mary Daly (1928 – 2010) was an American radical feminist philosopher, academic, and theologian. Daly, who described herself as a "radical lesbian feminist", taught at Boston College, a Jesuit-run institution, for 33 years.

4.9 NEED FOR INDIAN FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

While Western feminists and Western theoretical models of feminism have done a commendable job of deconstructing several age-old binaries that have characterised dominant philosophical and political thinking on gender, what is remarkable is the continued existence of the dichotomy of the West and ‘the Rest’ in their discourse. Books on feminist theories, even if they claim to give ‘multicultural’ or ‘global’ perspectives on women’s studies, are still dominated by Western classifications.

In such books, feminist perspectives from Asia or India, if included at all, are usually relegated to one chapter. The implication is that there is uniformity or even agreement on what feminism means in these very diverse cultures of Europe and India . They bring together different geographies and histories until difference is lost and one world feminism’ becomes interchangeable with another. Maitrayee Chaudhuri’s collection *Feminism in India* challenges this reduction of local feminisms.

Tracing the history of the concept of feminism from colonial times to contemporary India, Chaudhuri explores the infinite variety of Indian feminisms and their characteristics. Chaudhuri tries to give a broad picture of feminist thought in India and its development. Some of the ‘Challenges to Feminism’ in India described in this book are the politics of the Hindu Right, the Hindutva movement and globalisation,

Another distinguished Indian feminist writer, novelist, and author of several short story anthologies, Sarojini Sahoo, through her blog, “Sense & Sensuality,” explores why sexuality plays a major role in our understanding of Eastern feminism. To the question, “Is feminism in India different from feminism in the West?” she answers: “At one time in India - in the ancient Vedic period - there were equal rights between men and women and even feminist law makers like Gargi and Maitreyi . But the later Vedic period polarized the sexes. Males oppressed females and treated them as 'other' or similar to a lower caste.” She holds that patriarchy is just one of the hierarchies which keep females down, oppressed by the traditional system.

Madhu Kishwar is a fearless and provocative thinker, unafraid to ride against the wave. She holds that “Feminism is inviting such disdain and backlash in India because it lacks both fighting power and integrity. In the west at least, women fought bitter battles. Here, men led the way. The Gandhis, the Phules. I’m not ashamed to acknowledge that.” (Tehelka series on public intellectuals.) Thus India badly needs an Indian feminist philosophy, which is in the making.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) What is radical feminism?

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2) Who was Simone de Beauvoir?

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4.10 LET US SUM UP

We have studied in this unit some of the elementary notions of neo-scholasticism and feminism.

4.11 KEY WORDS

Beatific vision: In Christian theology, the beatific vision (Latin: visio beatifica) is the eternal and direct visual perception of God

Hylomorphism: The metaphysical view according to which every natural body consists of two intrinsic principles, one potential, namely, primary matter, and one actual, namely, substantial form.

Ecofeminism: It is a social and political movement which points to the existence of considerable common ground between environmentalism and feminism, with some currents linking deep ecology and feminism

4.12 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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