
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 is 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. Throughout the western philosophy, one form or other skepticism has become 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 is 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

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2) Distinguish the main differences between the Atomist and Pluralist

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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: *Irony*- 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

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2) Define Epicurean Ethics

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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 "*scholeion*" 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

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is Scholasticism?

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2) Define the Scholastic Method

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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?

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2) Define the Two Schools of Modern Thought

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3) Define Renaissance Humanism

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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 meaninglessness 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 phenomenologist 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?

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2) Explain the features of the Continental school

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3) Define Phenomenology

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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
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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, Berkeley, 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.

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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

3.8. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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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 *Nicomachean 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 Metaphysics 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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