
UNIT 1 ETYMOLOGY: DEFINITION AND SCOPE

Contents

- 1.0. Objectives
- 1.1. Introduction
- 1.2. Etymology of Metaphysics
- 1.3. Definition of Metaphysics
- 1.4. Scope of Metaphysics
- 1.5. Let Us Sum Up
- 1.6. Further Readings and References

1.0. OBJECTIVES

This unit explains to you:

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

1.1. INTRODUCTION

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

1.2. ETYMOLOGY OF METAPHYSICS

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

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

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

1.3. DEFINITION OF METAPHYSICS

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

It underlies all other departments: It underlies all other departments since its principles are the detached and disinterested drive of the pure desire to know. The unfolding of the pure desire to know takes place in the empirical, intellectual, and rational consciousness of the self-affirming subject. All questions, all insights, all formulations, all reflections, and all judgments proceed from the unfolding of that drive. Hence, metaphysics underlies logic, mathematics, and all other sciences.

It penetrates all other departments: For, other departments are constituted of the same principles as that of metaphysics. They are particular departments related to particular viewpoints. Yet, all departments spring from a common source and seek a common compatibility and coherence. Hence, they are penetrated by metaphysics.

It transforms all other departments: Metaphysics originates from the experience of something'. It is free from the realization of particular viewpoints. It distinguishes positions from counter-positions in the whole of knowledge. It is a transforming principle that urges positions to fuller development. By reversing counter-positions, it liberates discoveries from the shackles in which they were formulated.

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

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

Metaphysics as Science: Human is never permanently satisfied with a superficial knowledge of things. One seeks to penetrate the veil of phenomena and grasp the *noumena*. This is due to Human’s insatiable craving for knowledge. The increased knowledge in widely separated fields calls for unification and systematization of the scattered items of knowledge. This is the origin of science. According to its traditional meaning, science is the *sure and evident knowledge of things from their causes or systematic body of knowledge*. In this sense metaphysics seems to be supremely a science; for metaphysics arrives at the first efficient cause and the ultimate final cause of all things. From the viewpoint of causal explanation, metaphysics is the highest type of science. Its starting point that ‘there is something’ is immediately known. From its immediately known starting point the procedure of metaphysics is demonstrative with a further reflection on the sensitivo-rational experience of the being or ‘something’ of sensible things, which has both necessary and contingent characteristics. The reasoning of metaphysics bases itself only on the necessary features. The being of any sensible thing is necessarily dependent on a prior efficient cause, on the ultimate subsistent Being. Hence the reasoning of metaphysics is never based upon the accidental character of a sensible thing’s being. Of course, metaphysics lacks the incomparable advantage enjoyed by the experimental sciences, which is verification through further sensible experiences. For instance, molecules were reasoned to form transference of odours and diffusion of gases. Their activity was verified in numerous experiments, and in recent years very large molecules became visible through the electron microscope. No such double check for its conclusions is possible in metaphysics. It has only the much harder way of checking each link in the demonstration through reflection. Accordingly, the agreement among astronomers or chemists or physicists is enviable, while the agreement among metaphysicians at any historical period is notoriously lacking. Therefore, metaphysical doctrines are neither ‘theories’ in any modern acceptation of the term, nor are they

conjectured hypotheses proposed for experimental verification. In fact they are demonstrated conclusions resting solely but evidently upon the immediacy of their starting points and the cogency of reasoning processes which qualify them to be scientific. Metaphysics as science, which provides us with sure and evident knowledge of things from their causes, also has its own object, starting point, fundamental notions and principles, method, and justification.

1.4. SCOPE OF METAPHYSICS

The scope of metaphysics includes both its material and formal objects. Generally, matter (in philosophy) indicates the indeterminate but determinable element, and 'form' the determining element. These relative meanings of 'material' and 'formal' are also found in the theoretical sciences, especially when there are questions of the 'material object' and the 'formal object' of a science. *Material Object* is the definite realm or definite subject matter which a science deals with. For instance, man, inanimate matter, the stars, the earth, language, religion, law, etc. *Formal Object* is that special aspect of the material object which is under consideration or study. A definite material object that is taken as the general matter to be studied will have too many knowable aspects to be grasped fully in a single intellectual consideration. To arrive at a well-founded total view, one will have to approach it in quasi-partial studies, i.e., through formal and analytic abstraction of the various aspects of the object. The material object so considered in a definite aspect is thus called the formal object. *The material object of metaphysics* includes all things which fall under the notion of being, such as actual or possible, abstract or concrete, material or immaterial, finite or infinite. *The formal object of metaphysics* is the study of '*being as being*', *ens in quantum ens*. That is to say, metaphysics does not restrict itself to any particular being or part of that being, but rather treats what is *common to all beings*, namely Being which is the ground of beings since all beings are in Being. Being is not a particular thing though it embraces everything in itself. That which is not particular is still *something or in some way*. Hence, *Being is that which is in some way*.

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

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

Abstraction is the operation by which the mind leaves aside abstracts *from* certain aspects of a being. When the intellect abstracts it *out* of the whole complex of a being, it does so as it discovers that other beings also exhibit this same feature. The more the content of a thought is abstract and leaves aside more particular contents, the more does its extension become general, universal, and predicable of a large number. The opposite of abstraction is contraction, which is a process by which the mind again adds the aspects which were left behind through abstraction to the central characteristic of a being. Since this central feature was universal, contraction will limit a concept from the more universal to the more particular. Accordingly, an increase in comprehension is accompanied by a decrease in extension. The abstraction in question is generalizing abstraction, called '*total*' abstraction. It is a logical process in which one and the same concrete whole, e.g., John, is considered under an increasingly more general aspect, for instance, as human, sentient being, living being, or corporeal being. It means that the being from which the concept is abstracted is not expressed as to one of its parts only but as a whole: the totality is expressed but not totally. For this reason the concept obtained through total abstraction can be predicated of more particular concepts and of the individual being, e.g., John is a human, or a human is a sentient being. If we suppose that the concept of a being is the most abstract in the sense of total abstraction, it would retain only that in which the many beings agree, but leave aside that in which they differ. The differences would be expressed in differentiating concepts that stand independently alongside the notion of Being. They would have to be added to it through contraction, as positive enrichments of its content, if one wanted to arrive at the knowledge of the various beings. Thus there would be a plurality of concepts. Nevertheless, these many thought contents would have to constitute a certain unity, no matter how imperfect.

Hence the notion of Being and the differentiating concepts would have to show a certain similarity with one another. But then, this similarity itself through a process of abstraction could be isolated in a higher and more general concept and so on to infinity, without ever allowing us to reach the absolutely supreme and first notion. However, because of the unity of thinking as well as that of the thinkable, there has to be a supreme and all-embracing concept. Hence the most general concept cannot be obtained through abstraction which leaves aside the differences. Therefore, this concept is of another nature than abstract concepts. It has to also include the differentiating concepts, not merely potentially as in concepts that are obtained through total abstraction, but *actually*. Thus it is not possible to perform a perfect conceptual separation of that in which beings are similar, and that in which they differ. Otherwise, since they are similar in this that they all *are*, their dissimilarity would have to lie in something that is beyond *Being* i.e.,

in non-Being. But non-Being cannot be the foundation of a difference; for to differ is *to be* different, to be in a different way. Therefore, the various beings differ in *Being* itself. Accordingly, the differentiating concepts, which express the distinct modes of *Being* of the various beings, such as subsistent, accidental, material, or spiritual, do not contain absolutely anything. But in that case they are not additions to the notion of Being. Consequently, they must lie within the content itself of Being as its *immanent precisings*. Thus it follows that the notion of Being is not abstract in the proper sense of the term 'total abstraction.' The notion of 'Being' extends to all beings not only insofar as they are similar but also insofar as they are dissimilar, and contains them in all aspects. For this reason we call the notion of Being '*transcendental*'. It is not only the absolutely general concept, transcending all other concepts in extension, but it is at the same time absolutely all-embracing, inasmuch as it somehow includes all other possible thought content. Being transcends every genus and all differences: it contains in an eminent way not only the highest abstract concepts or genera but also the differentiating concepts, and therefore also the concepts of species.

Everything in every concept is permeated with the notion of Being. The term 'transcendental' is opposed to 'categorical'. A concept is 'categorical' insofar as it falls under one of the categories or predicaments which are the fundamental concepts. These are positively distinct and thus opposed to one another and do not agree in a higher general concept obtained through proper abstraction. It is to these categories that univocal concepts of genus and species are reduced. 'Transcendental' belongs first of all to 'Being'. For this reason we give the name 'transcendental properties of being' to the properties which flow from being as being. Such characteristics, flowing from the identity of Being with itself, are the following: unity, truth, goodness, and beauty. In a somewhat *broader* sense one may consider as transcendental properties those which pertain not to all beings but to beings having a higher mode of *Being*, inasmuch as they do not include any imperfection in themselves. 'Transcendental' in the Kantian sense is opposed to 'empirical', and applies to *knowledge* insofar as this knowledge is not concerned with objects but with the subjective *a priori* possibility of knowing objects. 'Transcendental' should also be distinguished from 'transcendent', i.e., what transcends a given order of *being* and is independent of it. With reference to the cognitive object, 'transcendent' means that which is above the cognitive immanence of the object. With respect to the world of experience, it indicates what lies beyond the world of experience. And with regard to the finite, it applies to what transcends everything finite. Accordingly, the difference between the transcendental notion of Being and abstract general concepts lie in this: 'Being' belongs to a being not only because of its similarity but also because of its dissimilarity with the other beings; whereas the unity of the abstract-general concept results from its abstraction.

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

behind but yet does not say everything explicitly. Thus there is need for other concepts. However, these concepts are not wholly and entirely different, but only more explicit renderings of what is already contained in the notion of Being. Accordingly, the development of thought consists in an immanent / explicit rendering of the notion of Being. Thus in an increasingly more adequate way, everything which through *Being* is possible and all its realizations are brought to explicit knowledge in more determined concepts. It is only in this way that the full richness of the notion of 'Being' reveals itself. The transition from the confused notion to the explicit grasp of 'that which is' depends on experience and the insight contained in it. It is only through experience that we are placed in the presence of the various modes of *Being*, which we cannot immediately deduce from the general notion of Being itself. If Being is the absolute general notion, it belongs to everything. But if at the same time it is transcendental, and thus contains not merely potentially but actually the differentiating concepts, how can it be predicated of the various beings and aspects of *Being* in the same undifferentiated sense? In other words, the notion of Being is predicated of many, in a sense that is neither absolutely the same nor entirely different. It has a unity of meaning because its sense reveals not an absolute but a *relative similarity* in the judgments we make about different beings commonly called '*analogy*'. The function of the starting point of metaphysics is to supply the basic data concerning the object of metaphysics, i.e., science of being as being (which is also analogous).

The scope of metaphysics also includes its starting point. A science is always a logically ordered system, i.e., the various parts of a science are logically coherent; one part is justified by another. Scientific statements are deduced from another. However, this process cannot go on to infinity. Ultimately one must arrive at premises that no longer are conclusions of a reasoning process within the limits of a given science, but have their truth established through direct observation by the senses or their foundation in another science. Somehow every science is bound to have fundamental data that can serve as the starting point. In other words, the function of the starting point is to supply the basic data concerning the object considered in the science.

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

The question about the starting point of metaphysics comes at the beginning of metaphysics itself. The starting point must be that which comes first before everything else, and from which we begin. We can already identify some significant views on the starting point of metaphysics among the metaphysicians. Some of them are the following:

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

Every particular act of knowledge reveals a characteristic duality when it is expressed in a judgment: *reference and assertion*. Knowledge always refers to something or someone and makes an assertion about this something or someone in either an affirmative or a negative way. To know something or someone always means to know it or one as being this way or that way, or not this

way or that way, i.e., as *judgment*. *Judgment* is an act of the intellect in which we say something of an object by way of affirmation or denial. Every particular judgment may be considered as a reply to the question: Is the being in question as it is asserted to be in the proposition? This question is raised on the basis of a series of previously accepted suppositions. For instance, if the question refers to the 'what' or 'how' of a person or a thing, it presupposes that they *are*. If it is concerned with the actual occurrence of a particular event, it assumes a framework of successive events. If it aims at essential relationships, e.g., between certain numbers, it assumes that a world of numbers is possible. All such presuppositions when put into the form of questions again, allow more profound assumptions to reveal themselves. Ultimately, they all point to one and the same most fundamental presupposition which excludes all other suppositions: *something* (no matter what) *is* (no matter how).

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

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

'Human Questions': Question is something final and irreducible. Every attempt to question the question is itself another question. This question is a metaphysical question. The metaphysical question is the reflexive articulation of the question about Being, which pervades the ground of human existence itself. In this way, it is the transcendental question which does not merely place something asked about in question, but also the one questioning and his question itself. It is the starting point of metaphysics. One can ask oneself whether the question concerning the starting point of metaphysics is itself a starting point which does not make any further logical and critical presuppositions. This turns the question back upon itself and discloses that the question in the beginning is unavoidable, and that at least questioning in itself is given as an unavoidable and non-arbitrary beginning. For if the question concerning the starting point was itself improper or meaningless, then questioning the meaninglessness of the question concerning the starting point of metaphysics would be another question. *Objection*: No one can raise a question about something of which one does not know anything at all, as question is the quest for the unknown from the known. Every question presupposes some knowledge of the questioned, and at least some ignorance of it. Knowledge and ignorance imply affirmation and negation (denial) which are the characteristics of

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

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

Being is the objective of the pure desire to know. The *Desire to know* is the dynamic orientation manifested in question for intelligence and for reflection. It is the inquiring and critical spirit of man. It moves man to reflect, to seek the unconditioned. It prevents him from being content with untested theories and legends. By raising questions for intelligence and reflection, it excludes complacent inertia. For, if the question goes unanswered, man cannot be complacent; and if the answers are right, man is not inert. The *Pure Desire to Know* differs from other desires. This pure desire is to be known by giving free rein to intelligent and rational consciousness, and not by comparing with other desires. It compels assent to the unconditioned. *This pure desire has an objective.* The objective of the pure desire to know is the content of knowing and not merely the act of knowing, i. e., *what* is to be known (that which is to be known). The fact of asking or questioning results from the *pure desire*. (Pure desire is prior to questioning and judging—the starting point of metaphysics). Hence, Being is all that is known and all that remains to be known. It is at the root of all that can be affirmed or conceived. It underlies all judgement and formulation, all questioning and the desire to question. In this way it is all-inclusive. *Objection:* The objective of the pure desire to know is Being. Being is the motivating force of the desire. The pure desire already presupposes Being, which is known and remains to be known. Hence the pure desire to know cannot be that which comes first before everything else, and from which we begin.

Experience of Something as the Starting Point of Metaphysics

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

Hence it is certain that everyone has this experience of ‘something’. This experience of ‘something’ is an inescapable experience. One may escape from a particular experience, but one cannot escape from experiencing something. The most fundamental and radical question one can raise is this: Is there anything at all? The answer can either be a negation or an affirmation. If it is a negation it should be thus: ‘There is nothing’. Such an answer is self-contradictory as the answer affirms a negation which is again ‘something’. Hence absolute negation is impossible. For, paradoxically, every absolute negation presupposes an absolute affirmation upon which the negation rests. An

affirmative experience of 'something' is not 'that which is not' but 'that which is' or 'Being'. Thus, experience of 'something' or Being is the ultimate starting point of metaphysics manifest in other forms too.

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

Check Your Progress

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

- 1) Explain the etymology of metaphysics and define it.

- 2) What is the scope of metaphysics?

1.5. LET US SUM UP

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

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

1.6. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 2 FUNDAMENTAL NOTIONS AND PRINCIPLES

Contents

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

2.0. OBJECTIVES

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

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

2.1. INTRODUCTION

A science is always a logically ordered system, i.e., the various parts of a science are logically coherent. One part is justified by another. Scientific statements are deduced from another. However, this process cannot go on to infinity. Ultimately one must arrive at premises that no longer are conclusions of a reasoning process within the limits of a given science, but have their truth established through direct observation by the senses or their foundation in another science. Somehow every science is bound to have fundamental principles that can serve as the foundation stones. In other words, the function of the fundamental notions and principles is to supply the basic premises necessary for further development of a science.

2.2. FUNDAMENTAL NOTIONS AND PRINCIPLES (WESTERN)

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

There are three basic notions: Notion of Being, Notion of Action or Operation, and Notion of Self. *Notion of Being*: Being is that which is in some way or something. That which is in some way or

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

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

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

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

Principles of non-contradiction and excluded middle: An affirmative judgment is a reply to a question regarding a proposed situation, a proposition. But a question allows two possible answers: connecting and separating, yes or no. The point is whether the judgment which affirms the connection includes a negation of the separation. The reply is that connection and separation of one and the same thing in the same respect, i.e., the same mode of Being, cannot go together; for only one of the two is true. This logical principle is based on the general ontological insight that *whatever is*, insofar as it is, *is not not*, i.e., it cannot not-be, and *is not what it is not*. This principle is based on the all-embracing nature of Being. Outside Being there is only non-Being, but non-Being cannot be. Therefore, Being extends to everything. It is impossible to predicate not-to-be of any being as being. Accordingly, the all-embracing affirmation implies the impossibility of the all-embracing negation. It is absolutely impossible that there would be nothing. Hence a thing cannot *be* and *not-be* at the same time under the same respect. The distinguishing mark of the principle is the phrase: *at the same time under the same respect*. It means: from the same standpoint, in the same circumstances, and under the same conditions. For instance, the statement, 'it is possible for rain to fall and not to fall' could be true if we refer to different localities, but it could not be true about the selfsame rain in the selfsame locality. It is also true that 'a boy can be a man', if we mean that he can be a man at a later period of his life; but a boy cannot be a man while he is still a boy. The validity of this principle is a pre-condition for all knowledge. However, the principle is not a mere negation. For in a genuine negation the subject is never the total unity of 'whatever is' but always a particular being. What is denied is not the Being of the subject in the absolute sense but always a particular mode of Being. I first affirm being as being and then judge that certain modes of Being are not included and perhaps even positively excluded. In this way there arises the distinction between the *one* and the *other*. Since negation always implies affirmation, human thought will be inclined to consider the principle of non-contradiction as its central principle. Just as negation implies affirmation and the quality of all-embracing, so also the principle of non-contradiction implies the principle of identity as prior 'in itself'.

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

Principles of causality and relation: *The Principle of causality* states: 'whatever happens or becomes must have a cause for its happening or becoming'. The expression '*whatever happens*'

means 'whatever begins to be or to exist'; '*becomes*' means 'whatever passes from potentiality to actuality'. Hence the principle can be reformulated as follows: *Whatever passes from a state of non-existence into a state of existence must have an efficient cause for its existence.* **Principle of Relation:** Relation comes from the Latin word, *referre* which means bring back, the reference of one thing to another, and mutual inter-directedness. It is defined as *the bearing* (reference, respect, attitude, ordination) *of one thing to something else*. 'To be is to be related'. Being is the Being of beings. As Being is the Being of beings, it is always related to beings and all beings are also simultaneously and radically related to Being (hence relative to Being).

2.3. FUNDAMENTAL NOTIONS AND PRINCIPLES (INDIAN)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Aum

That is fullness

This is fullness

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

Aum, peace, peace

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Check Your Progress

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

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

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

2. 4. LET US SUM UP

We have just reflected on the most important fundamental notions and principles. The most important notions are the notion of Being, notion of action, and notion of self. Notion is a vague and imperfect concept. Notions are of simple mental content. Principles are of complex mental contents. The main fundamental principles are the principles of truth and affirmation, identity and distinction, non-contradiction and excluded middle, and causality and relation. These different fundamental notions and principles, looked at from both the Western and India perspectives, are all complementary and not contradictory.

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UNIT 3 BRIEF HISTORY OF WESTERN METAPHYSICS

Contents

- 3.0. Objectives
- 3.1. Introduction
- 3.3. Survey of Major Metaphysicians
- 3.4. Let Us Sum Up
- 3.5. Further Readings and References

3.0. OBJECTIVES

This unit is designed to:

- Survey the major developments in Western metaphysics
 - Highlight the relevant metaphysical reflections
 - Enable the students to think for themselves by reflecting on these insights
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3.1. INTRODUCTION

Western metaphysics has the most diverse and complicated development among the three traditions (Indian, Chinese, and Western). In the West, one system grew out of another, as development, or as criticism, or as both. Because of the Greek legacy of free thought rooted in the purely rational and human approach to various problems, every metaphysician in the West developed a somewhat distinct standpoint and system, thereby contributing to the total understanding of reality. Like every other metaphysical tradition in the world, Greek metaphysics grew out of religion. This development is generally divided into two periods: the pre-Socratic and the post-Socratic. There are some scholars who consider the former period as more important; for it was more scientific in that the philosophers adopted a kind of naturalistic or even mechanistic view of reality, treating the source of reality as water, air, fire, atoms, etc., and thus laid the foundation of science and metaphysics, while the latter period introduced much confusion into thought by mixing the ethical and religious problems with the scientific and metaphysical. We can undoubtedly trace the early travails of a sound metaphysics in Heraclitus, a prominent pre-Socratic.

3.2. SURVEY OF MAJOR METAPHYSICIANS

Heraclitus (C. 500 B.C.E.E)

For Heraclitus, the fundamental thought is that the universe is in a state of ceaseless change. "One cannot step twice into the same river," for other waters are ever flowing on. To signalize the notion of incessant activity, Heraclitus chooses the ever-living fire which is the vital principle in the organism and the essence of the soul, as his first principle. The fire of Heraclitus is not the abiding substratum of his predecessors, but that which is constantly being transformed into other things. It changes into water and then into earth, and the earth changes back again into water and fire. Things seem to be permanent because we do not perceive the incessant movements in them. Everything is changed into its opposite and everything, therefore, is a union of opposites. Nothing remains permanent by virtue of its qualities. Everything both is and is not. This view is opposed by Parmenides who interprets reality to be permanent without any change.

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

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

Plato (428-348)

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

Aristotle (384-322)

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

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

Augustine (353-430)

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

Aquinas (1225-1274)

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

Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

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

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

Christian Wolff (1679-1754)

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

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

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

Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814)

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

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

Friedrich Von Schelling (1775-1854)

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

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831)

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

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938)

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

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

Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947)

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

Henri Bergson (1859-1941)

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

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

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

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

Jacques Maritain (1882-1973)

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

Etienne Gilson (1884-1978)

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

Joseph Marechal (1878-1944)

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

Maurice Blondel (1861-1949)

For Blondel action is a complex term that stands for the entire human experience conceived within the framework of human's basic needs and tendencies. It is the activity of the whole human, the synthesis of thought, will, and being itself. The greater and the nobler human's activity, the greater and the nobler is one's action. Action is the most universal and unavoidable fact in human life. It is also a personal obligation that may demand a hard choice, a sacrifice, and even death. Suicide itself is an act. Act is essentially an act of the will. This is Blondel's message to his contemporaries: *human has a fundamental tendency towards the infinite*. For Lonergan the most fundamental tendency is the pure desire to know.

Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984)

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

Karl Rahner (1904-1984)

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

Emeric Coreth (1919 - 2006)

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

Check Your Progress

Note: Use the space provided for your Answers.

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

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

3. 4. LET US SUM UP

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

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

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

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

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

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UNIT 4 BRIEF HISTORY OF INDIAN METAPHYSICS

Contents

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

4.0. OBJECTIVES

The present unit is oriented to:

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

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

4.2. THE VEDAS

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

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

4.3. THE UPANISADS

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

4.4. THE BHAGAVAD GITA

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

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

4.5. METAPHYSICAL SYSTEMS

Nyaya

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

Vaisesika

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

Samkhya

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

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

Yoga

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

Mīmāṃsā (Purva Mīmāṃsā)

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

4.6. VEDĀNTA

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

Saṃkara (c. 788-820 C.E.)

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

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

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

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

Ramanuja (1017 – 1137 C.E.)

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

Madhva (1197-1276)

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

4.7. BUDDHISM

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

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

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

4.8. JAINISM

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

4.9. SAIVISM

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

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

4.10. SIKHISM: GURU NANAK (1469-1539)

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

4.11. CONTEMPORARY INDIAN METAPHYSICS

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902)

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

Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938)

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

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

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

M. K. GANDHI (1869-1948)

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

KRISHNACHANDRA BHATTACHARYA (1875-1949)

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

SRI AUROBINDO (1872-1950)

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

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

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

S. RADHAKRISHNAN (1888-1975)

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

JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI (1895-1986)

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

RICHARD DE SMETH (1916-1997)

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

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

RAIMON PANIKKAR (1918-2010)

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

Check Your Progress

Note: Use the space provided for your Answers.

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

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

4.12. LET US SUM UP

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

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

4.13. FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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