
UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION TO THEISM

Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Types of Theism
- 1.3 Kinds of Theism
- 1.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.5 Key Words
- 1.6 Further Readings and References

1.0 OBJECTIVES

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

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

1.1 INTRODUCTION

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

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

1.3 TYPES OF THEISM

Monism

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

Monotheism

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

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

Polytheism

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

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

Henotheism

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

Kathenotheism

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

Monolatry

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

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

Pantheism

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

Panentheism

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

Deism

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

Autotheism

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

1.4 KINDS OF THEISM

Classical theism

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

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

Existential Theism

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

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

Empirical Theism

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

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

Idealistic Theism

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

Pragmatic theism

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

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

1.5 LET US SUM UP

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

1.6 KEY WORDS

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

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

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UNIT 2 ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Contents

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Earlier Arguments on the Existence of God
- 2.3 Scholastic Arguments on the Existence of God
- 2.4 Other Arguments for Existence of God
- 2.5 Modern Philosophers on Existence of God
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 Key Words
- 2.8 Further Readings and References

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

2.1 INTRODUCTION

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

2.2 EARLIER ARGUMENTS ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Augustine

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

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

Anselm

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

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

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

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

2.3 SCHOLASTIC ARGUMENTS ON EXISTENCE OF GOD

Aquinas

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Therefore, the universe has a cause of its existence.

Sub-argument:

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

This is an accurate picture of God.

Therefore, God exists.

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

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

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

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

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2) What are the different types of Cosmological Arguments?

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Bonaventure

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

John Duns Scotus

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

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

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

2.4 OTHER ARGUMENTS FOR EXISTENCE OF GOD

Moral Argument

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

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

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

Argument From Religious Experience

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

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

2.5 MODERN PHILOSOPHERS ON EXISTENCE OF GOD

Descartes

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

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

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

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

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

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

Spinoza

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

Leibniz

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

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

Hume

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Philosophy of irreligion

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

Kant's Idea of God

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

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

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

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

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

Checking the progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your Answers.

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

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

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

2.6 LET US SUM UP

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

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UNIT 3 PROMINENT THEISTIC PHILOSOPHERS OF INDIA

Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Sankara (788-820)
- 3.3 Ramanuja (1017-1137)
- 3.4 Madhva (1238-1317)
- 3.5 Nimbarka (1130-1200)
- 3.6 Aurobindo (1872-1950)
- 3.7 Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886)
- 3.8 Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950)
- 3.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.10 Key Words
- 3.11 Further Readings and References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

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

3.1 INTRODUCTION

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

3.2 SANKARA (788 – 820)

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.3 RAMANUJA (1017-1137)

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

Main Tenets of Ramanuja's Philosophy:

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

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

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

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

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

A few Objections of Ramanuja to Adi Shankara:

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

3. The grounds of knowledge of avidya: No *pramana* can establish *avidya* in the sense the Advaitin requires. Advaita philosophy presents *avidya* not as a mere lack of knowledge, as something purely negative, but as an obscuring layer which covers Brahman and is removed by true *Brahma-vidya* (knowledge of Brahman). Avidya is positive nescience not mere ignorance. Ramanuja argues that positive nescience is established neither by perception, nor by inference, nor by scriptural testimony. On the contrary, Ramanuja argues, all cognition is of the real.
4. The locus of avidya: Where is the avidya that gives rise to the (false) impression of the reality of the perceived world? There are two possibilities; it could be Brahman's *avidya* or the individual *jiva*. Neither is possible. Brahman is knowledge; *avidya* cannot co-exist as an attribute with a nature utterly incompatible with it. Nor can the individual *jiva* be the locus of *avidya*: the existence of the individual *jiva* is due to *avidya*; this would lead to a vicious circle.
5. *Avidya*'s obscuration of the nature of Brahman: Shankara would have us believe that the nature of Brahman is somehow covered over or obscured by *avidya*. Ramanuja regards this as an absurdity; given that Advaita claim that Brahman is pure self-luminous consciousness, obscuration must mean either preventing the origination of this (impossible since Brahman is eternal) or the destruction of it – equality absurd.
6. The removal of avidya by *brahma-vidya*: Advaita claims that *avidya* has no beginning, but it is terminated and removed by *brahma-vidya*, the intuition of the reality of Brahman as pure, undifferentiated (*nirguna*) Brahman, arguing that whatever exists has attributes: Brahman has infinite auspicious attributes. Liberation is a matter of divine grace: no amount of learning or wisdom will deliver us.
7. The removal of *avidya*: For the Advaitin, the bondage in which we dwell before the attainment of Moksha is caused by *maya* and *avidya*; knowledge of reality (*brahma-vidya*) releases us. Ramanuja, however, asserts that bondage is real. No kind of knowledge can remove what is real. On the contrary, knowledge discloses the real; it does not destroy it. What exactly is the saving knowledge that delivers us from bondage to *maya*? If it is real then non-duality collapses into duality; if it is unreal, then we face an utter absurdity.

Some of Ramanuja's most important philosophical works include:

- Sri-bhasya (a commentary on Vedanta Sutras),
- Vedanta Sara (essence of Vedanta),
- Vedartha Sangraha (a resume of Vedanta)
- Vedanta Dipa (the light of Vedanta)
- Gita-bhasya (a commentary for the Bhagavad-gita).

Check your progress I

Note: Use the phase provided for answers.

1) How does Ramanuja differ from Adi Shankara?

2) Explain critically the basic philosophy of Ramanuja.

3.4 MADHVA (1238-1317)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Starting with the five principles, Madhva focused his attention on three areas:

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

He further affirmed that:

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

Check your progress II

Note: Use the phase provided for answers.

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

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

3.5 NIMBARKA (1130-1200)

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

Basic Philosophy of Nimarkacarya:

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

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

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

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

Five Sadhanas:

Sri Nimbarka propounded five methods of salvation:

1. Karma (ritual action)

This is performed conscientiously in a proper spirit, with one's *varna* (caste) and *ashrama* (phase of life) thereby giving rise to knowledge which is a means to salvation.

2. Vidya (knowledge:) This is not a subordinate factor of karma but also not as an independent means for everyone; only for those inclined to spending vast lengths of time in scriptural study and reflection of deeper meanings.

3. Upasana or dhyana (meditation): It is of three types. First is meditation on the Lord as one's self that is meditation on the Lord as the Inner Controller of the sentient. Second is meditation on the Lord as the Inner Controller of the non sentient. Final one is meditation on Lord Himself, as different from, the sentient and non-sentient. This is again not an independent means to Salvation for all, as only those qualified to perform the *upasana* (with *Yajnopavitam*) can perform this *Sadhana*.

4. Prapatti (surrender to the Lord): This is devotion and surrender to the lord God as Shri Radha Krshna. This method of attaining Salvation, known as Prapatti Sadhana, contains elements of all the other means, and is most importantly, available to all. This is Sadhana and this in turn leads to Para Bhakti – the highest devotion characterized by Madhurya Rasa – the sweet emotions of devotion experienced by those perfected in Sadhana Bhakti.

5. Gurupasatti: This is the devotion and self surrender to guru. Best realized as a part in Prapatti, and not as an independent means, although it can be so.

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

Check your Progress III

Note: Use the phase provided for answers.

1. What is the basic philosophy of Nimbarka?

2. Develop philosophically his five Sadhanas.

3.6 AUROBINDO (1872-1950)

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

Basic Philosophy of Involution and Evolution

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

Aurobindo's Philosophy of Reality

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

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

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

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

Aurobindo's Philosophy of Human Being

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

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

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

3.7 RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA (1836-1886)

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

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

Teachings

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

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

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

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

The four key concepts in Ramakrishna's teachings were the following:

- The oneness of existence
- The divinity of human beings
- The unity of God
- The harmony of religions

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

3.8 RAMANA MAHARSHI (1879-1950)

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

Basic Teachings of Ramana Maharshi:

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

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

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

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

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

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

His method of teaching was characterized by the following:

He urged the people who came to him to practice self-enquiry;

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

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

Check your Progress IV

Note: Use the phase provided for answers.

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

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

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

3.9 LET US SUM UP

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

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

3.10 KEY WORDS

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

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UNIT 4 PROMINENT THEISTIC PHILOSOPHERS OF THE WEST

Contents

- 4.0. Objectives
- 4.1. Introduction
- 4.2. Ancient Western Philosophy
- 4.3. Medieval Western Philosophy
- 4.4. Modern Western Philosophy
- 4.5. Contemporary Western Philosophy
- 4.6. Let Us Sum Up
- 4.7. Further Readings and References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

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

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

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

4.1 INTRODUCTION

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

4.2 ANCIENT WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Plato (428-348 BCE)

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

Aristotle (384-322 BCE)

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

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

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

Plotinus (c. 204/5-270 CE)

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

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

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

4.3 MEDIEVAL WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Augustine (354-430 CE)

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

Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109 CE)

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

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

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

Aquinas (1225-1274 CE)

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

4.4 MODERN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Descartes (1596-1650 CE)

For Descartes, there are three substances: self, world, and God. Substance is that which needs nothing else to exist. In the strict sense, there is only one substance which is totally independent, i.e., God. However, Descartes avoids pantheism by adding that we could also be called created substances that exist by the help of God. Proving God's existence is basic in Descartes' search for certainty. Descartes gives three arguments for the existence of God. *Argument from the Idea of the Perfect Infinite*: I conceive of God as “an infinite, independent, all-knowing, all-powerful substance, by which I myself and all other things, if they actually exist, have been created;” I, therefore, have the idea of the infinite. But the idea of infinity could not have been produced in my mind by the other ideas (of self and world too) which are finite. It is not by removing the limits that I form the idea of infinity, but it is by limiting the positive idea of infinity that we form the idea of the finite. Consequently, before I form any other idea I have the idea of infinity, which is a clear and distinct idea. It is as obvious or more so than the idea of the thinking self, because I cannot conceive of

anything finite unless I have an idea of the infinite. Therefore, since clear and distinct ideas must have objective value, there is actually something infinite which is perfect. Now this perfect being must exist, how else would I explain the origin of this idea in me? In other words, neither the external world nor am I perfect. The external world is not perfect because it is corporeal and changeable. I am not perfect because I doubt. Therefore, there must exist a perfect being who has put in me this idea of himself. *Argument from Contingency of the Thinking Self*: I must conceive of the thinking self as contingent, i.e., as non-necessary; otherwise it would not be a doubting self. But I could not have the idea of a contingent being unless I had a previous idea of the necessary, because contingency is the negation of necessity. This previous idea of the necessary is not formed through the idea of the contingent self, but is presupposed by the idea of the self. Here again the idea of the necessary is clear and distinct and implies that there is something necessary. *Ontological Argument*: God is such a being that all perfections must be included in his essence. In other words, he must necessarily have all perfections. Since it is better to exist than not to exist, existence is a perfection which must be attributed to God. He, therefore, necessarily exists, in him essence and existence are the same. Descartes did not add anything new to the ontological argument of Anselm, except that he called the idea of the greatest conceivable being, an innate one. And he added the simile of the valley and the mountain. "I cannot conceive a God unless as existing, any more than I can a mountain without a valley." For mountain and valley, whether exist or not, are inseparable. In the same way we cannot conceive God unless as existing.

Leibniz (1646-1716 CE)

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

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

4.5 CONTEMPORARY WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Whitehead (1861-1947 CE)

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

Marechal (1878-1944 CE)

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

Direct judgment is an act of the intellect in which we say something of an object as presented to (us) our sense. It is the immediate affirmation or denial that something does or does not exist. For instance, 'There is something,' is direct judgment. But 'God exists' or 'there is no such thing as a soul,' are not direct judgments for they are not immediate affirmations or denials. Rather, they are conclusions based on other more immediate affirmations or experience. Now, no one can deny direct judgments. To deny direct judgment would mean denying immediate affirmation which is impossible. For instance, if one says 'there is nothing,' at least that 'nothing' should be there which is again 'something.' Hence direct judgment of 'there is something' is an inescapable and undeniable fact of human experience.

Direct judgment is a movement, a dynamic process: In every judgment, my intellect goes beyond the finite to the infinite, beyond the relative to the Absolute, beyond beings to Being itself. Hence, my intellect and direct judgment are dynamic.

Affirmation in Direct Judgment Experiences a Limit: In every direct judgment as presented to our senses we affirm two kinds of things about something; what it is (its essence, its 'thisness') and that it is (its existence). I experience the 'is-element' as actually limited by the 'this' element (i.e., I experience the limitation of existence by essence). To be this means not to be that. For example, to be a cow means to be just a cow and not a non-cow. There are millions of things excluded by this restriction. Essence is, then, a limitation in itself. But 'to be' does not imply any limitation by itself: 'to be' means just to be and the only thing it opposes itself to, or cuts itself off from, is 'not to be,' nothing. When I make an existential judgment and say: 'This is,' what I am expressing, in effect, is that the unlimitedness of 'to be' is, in this situation, restricted to being the 'to be' of just this particular essence. In other words, the dynamic movement of my intellect experiences a limit, a check to its movement.

This means that my intellect, in every affirmation, is ultimately tending towards the unlimited Being. I do experience the limitation of existence. In experiencing the limitation, I do tend toward the unlimited existence. For, in recognizing a limit, one goes beyond that limit. Now, we have seen that existence does not imply a limitation in itself. If existence is limited, it is limited by something other than, outside of itself, i.e., essence. In other words, I am tending towards pure existence, absolute and unlimited existence, unrestricted by any essence.

The unlimited Being, ultimate end of my intellectual dynamism, really exists. We may establish it along three distinct paths: *Starting from the reality of the observable world around us:* We accept the world around us as real. If the world is real, then the ultimate end of this world should also be real. For, if one is willing to accept that the world (the immanent object) is real, one must accept logically and honestly the reality of the unlimited Being in as much as it is one of the constitutive conditions of our world or proximate object. *Starting from the fact that the unlimited being is not consciously sought:* My striving after the unlimited Being in all my intellectual activity is not a conscious or explicit desire. I am so unconscious of it that I need to undergo a long interior analysis and reflection before I become explicitly conscious of it. The fact that I am not explicitly aware of it is a fact that I did not fabricate it for myself. If its existence is not something I have fabricated and yet it attracts me, it must exist independently of me. *Starting from the fact that the unlimited Being can be no mere ideal:* Our analysis has deduced the possibility of the unlimited Being – not from a mere analysis of the concept of unlimited or perfect Being, but from an undeniable fact, the activity of my direct judgment, there

is a link of real dependence of the former on the latter. They depend, as beings, on the unlimited Being totally. *Something is Being and direct judgment is dynamic, a movement*: The unlimited being as transcendental means that which is present in each and every experience. Direct judgment of 'something' is transcendental in so far as it is present in all human experience, in so far as it is the *a priori* condition of further experience. *Transcendental is the unconditioned*: This transcendental dynamic process is the condition of further experience and advancement in knowledge. Since it is the condition of all other experiences, it must be unconditional. In this way it is the unconditioned condition of all other conditions. *The unconditioned is unlimited*: It is unconditioned, for there is no other condition to limit it. What is not limited by another condition is always the unlimited. *The unlimited is the Absolute*: What is unlimited does not depend on another for its existence. It is self-subsistent, i.e., it exists by itself. Such self-subsistent Being is the Absolute or God.

Paul Tillich (1886-1965 CE)

Tillich's fundamental approach to God seems to be ontological since both phenomenological and epistemological approaches presuppose the ontological. Phenomenologically God is human's ultimate concern. The divine is a matter of passion and interest for human, avoidable only by being completely indifferent. The epistemological approach consists in the search for truth in which the ultimate concern (God) is identified as the ground of truth.

According to Tillich, human thought begins with being and it cannot go behind it. Thought is founded on being. However, thought can imagine the negation of everything that is, and it can describe the nature and structure of being – ontological structure consisting of individuality and universality, dynamics and form, freedom and destiny – which give everything that is the power of resisting non-being. "If one asks why there is not nothing, one attributes being even to nothing." The question of being is the ultimate question raised by mythology, cosmology, and metaphysics. These have asked the question of being both implicitly and explicitly and have tried to reason it out. For, the world is a structured whole, which is objective reason; the self is a structure of centredness, which is subjective reason. "Reason makes the self a self, namely, a centred structure; and reason makes the world a world, namely, a structured whole." Being would be chaos without reason, without the *logos* of being. That is to say, being would not be being but only the possibility of it (*me on*). Where there is reason there are a self and a world in interdependence. The function of the self in which reason actualizes its rational structure is the mind, which is the bearer of subjective reason, and the world is reality, which is the bearer of objective reason. The dynamic character of being and reason implies that every being has the tendency to transcend itself and to create new forms. Nevertheless, everything tends to conserve its own form as the basis of its self-transcendence. It is impossible to speak of being without also speaking of becoming since every being tends to unite identity and difference, rest and movement, conservation and change. Becoming is as genuine in the structure of being as is permanence in the process of becoming.

The question of being implies the question of God. The finitude of being drives us to the question of God, which concerns human ultimately. Whatever concerns a human ultimately is God. The being of God is being itself, which does not mean 'highest being' as superlative places God on the level of other beings while elevating him above all of them. On the contrary, being

itself refers to the ground of being, the power of being, the power inherent in everything resisting non-being. Hence it is better to say that God is the power of being in everything and above everything, the infinite power of being. For if God is not being-itself he is subordinate to it. As being-itself God is beyond essence and existence. Logically, God as being-itself is 'before,' 'prior to,' the split which characterizes finite being. As power of being, God transcends every being and also the totality of being, namely, the world. Consequently, God cannot be objectified, cannot be brought into the subject-object structure of being. For, an object is that toward which the cognitive act is directed, be it God or a stone, be it one's self or a mathematical definition. The problem of logical objectification is that it never is merely logical as it carries with it ontological presuppositions and implications. God ceases to be the ground of being and becomes one among others if he is brought into the subject-object structure of being. God cannot but be the subject, even if he becomes a logical object, just as being itself is beyond every subject-object structure by going beyond finitude and infinity. Being-itself is beyond finitude and infinity; otherwise it would be conditioned by something other than itself and the real power of being may escape it. Being itself limitlessly transcends every finite being. On the other hand, finite being participates in being-itself and in its infinity. Otherwise the finite would not have the power of being, and it would be swallowed by non-being. This double relation of all beings to being itself provides being-itself with a double characteristics: creativity and 'abysmality.' Being-itself is creative as it enables every finite being to participate in the infinite power of being. Being-itself is also abysmal as it enables every finite being to participate in it in a finite way, i.e., all beings are infinitely transcended by their creative ground. God – being-itself or the absolute – is the creative ground of the ontological structure of being without being subject to this structure. That is, God is the structure that has the power of determining the structure of everything that has being.

Rahner (1904-1984 CE)

For Karl Rahner, Being (*esse*) is the 'wither' (*Worauf*) of the pre-apprehension which is the condition of the possibility of abstraction. Hence it is also the condition of the possibility of complete return which makes possible an objective knowledge. It follows from this that the 'wither' of the pre-apprehension as such is not an object of the first order. It is also not the object of a metaphysical intuition. For on the one hand, it is the wither of the pre-apprehension which describes its scope. It is given only in the consciousness of the pre-apprehension itself. On the other hand, it is not given as such in the finite real. But it is given and realized in the absolute Being. Here Rahner denies of Being both metaphysical intuition and objective or thematic knowledge. The only possibility is that of a pre-apprehension of Being in and against its own all-encompassing horizon which is the condition of the possibility of abstraction (hence of finite knowledge). Thus the pre-apprehension of Being is at the same time a pre-apprehension of the absolute. The pre-apprehension of Being would be impossible without this horizon. The pre-apprehension implies certain knowledge of that which is pre-apprehended, i.e., an unthematic knowledge of Being itself. Knowledge is already the Being-present-to-itself of Being. Being-present-to-itself is a self-realization. Therefore, Being realizes itself in its being pre-apprehended in the horizon of the absolute Being, i.e., God

4.6 LET US SUM UP

It is certain that everyone has an experience of 'something.' This experience of 'something' is an inescapable experience. One may escape from a particular experience, but one cannot escape from experiencing something. It can be further demonstrated in the following manner: The most fundamental and radical question which one can pose is this: Is there anything at all? The answer can either be a negation or an affirmation. If it is a negation it should be so: 'There is nothing.' Such an answer is self-contradictory as the answer affirms a negation which is again 'something.' Hence absolute negation is impossible. For, paradoxically every absolute negation presupposes an absolute affirmation upon which the negation rests. An affirmative experience of 'something' is not 'that which is not,' but 'that which is' or 'Being.' Thus, experience of 'something' or Being is the ultimate starting point of human thought. In other words, human thought begins with Being. However, there can be no realm of Being without the dialectical participation of non-being in Being. This dialectical participation through the categories unites Being with non-being and makes it finite. Although every finite being participates in the structure of Being, only the human is immediately aware of this structure; only the human is that being in whom all levels of Being are united and approachable; and only human is 'Dasein' in whom the structure of Being is disclosed and through whom the question of Being is raised. This question implies the question of God, which concerns the humans ultimately. If anything beyond a simple assertion is said about God, it would point to something beyond itself, i.e., it is *symbolic* (Paul Tillich). A symbol not only points to something beyond itself, but also participates in that to which it points. The symbol 'God,' points to something beyond itself, to the absolute reality to which it points, while participating in the power of the absolute reality itself. As this reality is absolute, it is the ultimate depth, the 'abyss,' which includes within it, everything that is not absolute. The finite beings have no existence apart from this ultimate depth. This ultimate depth 'underlies, penetrates, transforms and unifies' (Bernard Lonergan) every segment of the finite, elevating it to the realm of the divine. It follows that every attempt to separate the finite from the power of the infinite absolute is futile (as attempted by the atheists). There is no finite without the infinite. Thus we can say that finite is essentially and inevitably in the infinite. Human, 'a being-in-the-world' (Martin Heidegger), is essentially and fundamentally a being-in-God too. Hence, human should no longer strive to 'prove' the existence of God, but to realize the meaningfulness of one's own existence, along with other non-human beings, in the all-encompassing power of the being of God, who is the absolute ground and goal of one's own existence.

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