
UNIT 1 PRAMANAS – I

1.0 OBJECTIVES

- To familiarize the students with the sources of knowledge (*Pramanas*) from Eastern and Western perspectives.
 - To encourage them to explore the various issues connected to perception.
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1.1 INTRODUCTION

After asking , “Can I know?” the next question is obviously “How do I know?” or the sources of knowledge. Obviously the external world is the primary source of our knowledge, which does not rule out the role of the knower. This complex issue of how we come to know has been treated insightfully and comprehensively in Western Philosophy. Indian Philosophy speaks of the sources of knowledge (or *Pramanas*), which are meant by which we can come to know and to know what.

We shall, however, overlook the controversy in Indian philosophy regarding their number, whether one could them as one (as in Carvakas), two (as in Buddhism and Vaisesika), three (as in Samkhya), four (as in Nyaya), five (as in Mimamsa), six (as in Vedanta and Kumarila’s Mimamsa, etc., upto no less than ten. Whether a way of arriving at knowledge is to be considered genuine or not is certainly not an idle question, but whether such a way is implied in another way is, according to us, not so important. Many schools differ from others regarding the number of such ways sometimes because they do not consider certain ways to be genuine, but, often times, because they consider certain ways to be implied in others and therefore not independent sources of knowledge. We shall consider only those ways which both in the West and in the East are consider to be really important. In this particular unit our main focus is on the first source of knowledge, that is, perception.

1.2 PRAMANAS AS SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

Pramana ("sources of knowledge," "measure") is an epistemological term in Indian and Buddhist philosophies referring to the means by which a person obtains accurate and valid knowledge (*Prama*, *pramiti*) of the world. In obtaining *Prama*, or correct knowledge, *Pramana* forms one part of a tripiti (trio):

Pramata, the subject, the knower

Pramaṇa, the means of obtaining the knowledge

Prameya, the object, the knowable

The three principal means of knowledge are perception, inference, and word. Perception (*pratyaksa*) is of two kinds, direct sensory perception (*anubhava*) and such perception remembered (*smṛti*). Inference (*anumana*) is based on perception, but is able to arrive at conclusions that may not be directly open to perception. The word (*śabda*) is, in the first place, the Veda, which is considered to be inherently valid. Some philosophers broaden this to include the statements of reliable persons (*apta-vakya*) in the concept of *śabda*, and add two more means of obtaining knowledge, analogy (*upamana*), which enables one to grasp the meaning of a word

by analogy of the meaning of a similar word, and circumstantial implication (*arthapatti*), which appeals to common sense.

Buddhism and Jainism also pursue an understanding of how correct knowledge can be obtained. While rejecting the authority given by Hinduism to the *Vedas*, they rely on religious texts of their own as a partial source of knowledge. In Buddhism, the two most important scholars of *Pramana* are Dignaga and Dharmakirti, author of *Pramana-varttika*.

As noted in *The New World Encyclopedia*, Advaita Vedanta, accepts various categories of *Pramanas*:

Pratyaksa—the knowledge gained by means of the senses

Anumana—(“measuring along some other thing,” or “inference”), the knowledge gained by means of inference

Upamana—the knowledge gained by means of analogy

Upamana (“comparison”), a means of having knowledge of something, in which observance of its similarities to another object provides knowledge of the relationship between the two. For example, when the meaning of a word is unknown, for example, “*gavaya*” (Sanskrit: “wild ox”), the similarity of the name to the word *gaus* (“cow”) will provide knowledge that “*gavaya*” is in the bovine family.

Arthapatti—(“the incidence of a case”), the knowledge gained by circumstantial implication, superimposing the known knowledge on an appearing knowledge that does not concur with the known knowledge,

Agama—the knowledge gained by means of texts such as *Vedas* (also known as *Aptavakya*, *sabda Pramana*)

So in this chapter we shall follow the order usually given by authors writing on Indian Epistemology, integrating theories and insights of Western Schools of Philosophy and adding our own comments and reflections. Note, in this respect, that where as we, in the first chapter, already made it clear that what we mean by ‘to know’ (or ‘knowledge’) is essentially to know truly and reasonably, Indian Philosophers distinguished between ‘*jnana*’ (or *Buddhi*) – unfortunately often translated into English as ‘knowledge’ – which can be either true or false, and ‘*Prama*’ which is necessarily true (and which, therefore, corresponds more to what we are calling ‘knowledge’). *Pramanas*, are therefore, strictly speaking, ways or means to obtain *Prama*, true knowledge. But, in point of fact, at is often meant by the term is ways and means, or source, of knowledge which can be either true or false. So to avoid confusion we shall reserve ‘knowledge’ only to essentially true knowledge (*Prama*) and use ‘cognition’ to stand for that which can be either true or false (*jnana* or *Buddhi*).

1.3 PERCEPTION (PRATYAKSA)

Sense-experience is certainly one of the ways of how we come to know. It is not only just one way, but certainly the chronologically first and most basic way of man's coming to know anything at all. Certain philosophers maintain that this is not the case since of certain things we have 'innate ideas' independently of any sense-experience. We shall discuss this topic later. Generally speaking all schools of philosophy, except for certain forms of Western Rationalism, accept sense-experience (perception) to be genuine means of knowledge – even though, dependently on their respective psychology, they explain its 'mechanism' differently. There are some who maintain that only sense experience is genuine source of knowledge, thus denying any knowledge of what is not sense-perceptible or at least, of what is not verifiable or falsifiable by sense observation (empiricism). Some others maintain that our knowledge of God, and religious language, though possible, take their origin from sense-experience. It is clear how both of these positions affect – though in a different way – our understanding of religious faith and belief! We shall limit ourselves to certain important points.

It is not difficult to say that since our senses often deceive us – a question already raised in the introduction – the senses, or sense-experience, are not always a reliable source of knowledge. The fact of this possible deception simply proves that it is not the senses which 'know,' it is humans who know, by means of their senses. We have already pointed out that knowledge, all knowledge, implies a judgment. And in passing this judgment, we can certainly err – not because, however of any radical unreliability of the senses but because of some extrinsic factors like hastiness in judgment, ignorance of some physical fact, etc. And what is more, even if we accept the fact that, contrary to what common sense-experience, qualities of objects (like colour and sound) are quantities (e.g. measurable wave lengths), the sense organs have still to be presumed to be reliable to produce regular wave-lengths (through the nerve systems) so as to be correctly 'interpreted' and known by the brain and to be 'measured' on the appropriate instrument!

But one big lesson we can learn from rationalism, especially of the idealistic type, is that sensations are not simply passive registering of the sense data. A lot of active 'interpretation' on the part of the knower – by his reasoning faculties – takes place in every act of perception. If, as we have just said, it is humans who know (and not the senses), all that goes into the making of humans, goes into perception, and understanding of the reality. Many things which we think are mere objects of sense (e.g. space!) is human 'construction'. They may be originating in the senses and from sense-experience, but they are, in fact, rationally 'built up'. And not only their reasoning faculties, but their emotions, etc., colour the picture they draw of the world around them. This is a very important point to be mentioned here.

1.4 THE SENSE-ORGANS AND PRATYAKSA

Indian Philosophy speak of external and internal senses. The external ones – to which correspond five kinds of external perceptions – are the visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory and gustatory. The internal one, in India Psychology, is the *Manas* or *Antahkarana*. It is the perception of myself seeing, of myself hearing, etc. it is operative also in the perception of external objects – when I perceive something, I perceive myself as perceiving the object – but the immediate object of perception by the *manas* is the 'myself'. Of course, those who deny a 'self' or those who reduce it simply to a chain of perceptions (empiricists of all kinds, both in the West and in the East) do not pose it such an internal sense. (This is an instance where one's epistemology is fashioned by one's psychology!) Those who do either posit it or account for the perception of the self either

through inference or some kind of higher perception. This internal sense corresponds to the 'central sense' in medieval Western Philosophy by which we are aware of ourselves and of our activities, are able to distinguish between our different sensations and activities and integrate the data of the external sense. In this way we can refer to a common, definite object of sense perception.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What are some of categories of *Pramanas* that Advaita Vedanta accept?

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2. What is 'manas' or 'antahkarna'?

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1.5 PRATYAKSA IN INDIAN TRADITION

According to the Carvaka school, *pratyaksa* or perception is the only source of knowledge; i.e., what cannot be perceived through the senses must be treated as non-existent. They refute all other sources of knowledge. They admit only four elements; i.e., earth, water, air and fire. We experience all the four through perception. So, perception is the only authority. There is no space because we cannot perceive any such element. The world of common sense perception is the only world that exists. Again, the physical body is the self of an individual. There is no mind, no consciousness, no soul, over and above the physical body. We do not perceive mind or soul. Hence they are unreal. Even consciousness is a by-product and epiphenomenon of matter. "Matter secretes mind as liver secretes bile." A particular combination of elements produces consciousness though the elements separately do not possess it. It is similar to the red colour being produced from the combination of betel leaf, areca nut and lime, none of which is red.

For the Jainas, Perceptual knowledge which is ordinarily called immediate, and admitted to be relatively so by Jainism and therefore included in mediate knowledge. Pure perception in the sense of mere sensation cannot rank the title of knowledge. It must be given meaning and arranged into order by conception or thought. Perceptual knowledge is therefore regarded as mediate since it presupposes the activity of thought. Mediate knowledge is divided into *mati* and *shruta*. *Mati* includes both perceptual and inferential knowledge. *Mati jnana* springs in the following order.

(1) *Avagraha*-Is the first kind of knowledge produced from the contact of sense organs with the objects.

- (2) *Iha*—This follows *avagraha* and in it the soul is able to appreciate the qualities of the visible object.
- (3) *Avaya*—In this we come to know definitely about the object
- (4) *Dharand*—In this the full knowledge about the object leaves an impression upon the mind of the man.

The Vaibhasikas accept the presence of the external things and conceive them as subject to perception. According to Vaibhasika that is *Pramana* by which direct knowledge is possible. The *Pramanas* are two types: *Pratyaksa* (perception) and *anumana* (inferential). Both these *Pramanas* are known as *samyagjnana* (right knowledge) and it is by these that all the *purusharthas* are attained. *Pratyaksa* is the knowledge devoid of imagination and error. This knowledge is of four types.:

- (1) *Indriya jnana*—This is the knowledge attained through senses.
- (2) *Mano vijnana*—in this knowledge there is the sensual knowledge in the form of *samanantara pratyaya* after the knowledge through senses. This *samanantara pratyaya* is a mental modification in the absence of which there is no knowledge even after continued seeing. Thus *mano vijnana* is born of both the object and the consciousness.
- (3) *Atma samvedana*—It is the manifestation of *chitta* and its *dharmas* are like pleasure and pain in their real form. This is attribute less, without error and of the nature of self-realisation
- (4) *Yogic jnana*—It is the ultimate knowledge of the things perceptible through various *Pramanas*. The object of *pratyaksa* is *svalaksana*. *Svalaksana* is that object in which there is difference in the form of knowledge by the presence and absence of its contact. It is by it that a thing has the capacity to do anything. Hence it is said to be *paramartha satya*.

The Sautrantikas do not admit that the external objects have no existence and all knowledge is in the consciousness. Nor do they believe like the Vaibhasikas that we know anything by direct perception. As opposed to Vaibhasikas, the Sautrantikas maintain that we have no direct perception of the external objects but only the knowledge of their appearance. It is by the distinction in these appearances which are the basis of the knowledge. Hence they are in the mind itself, though the things which they represent as external objects are not known by their perception, but by the inference based upon the mental modifications aroused by them. This view is known as *Bahyanumeyavad*. It is representationalism or indirect realism.

According to Yogachara the physical world has no existence apart from consciousness. Even if the existence of anything outside consciousness is admitted it cannot be known. Vijnanavadins believe that all things external to mind are mental modifications. Thus the knowledge of the external things is impossible. Hence the thing which appears to be external; should be taken as a mental concept.

Vaisesika recognises only two *Pramanas*- perception and inference and reduces comparison and verbal testimony to inference. For Nyaya philosophy, Perception is divided into ordinary (*Laukika*) and extra-ordinary (*Alaukika*). In ordinary perception knowledge results from the contact of the sense organs with the external objects (*bahya*). Extraordinary perception has three

distinctions - perception of classes (*samanyalakṣṇa*), complication (*jñāna lakṣṇa*) and intuitive (*yogaja*). The Naiyayika maintains two stages in perception- *Nirvikalpa* (indeterminate) and *Savikalpa* (determinate). Gautama, accepts this distinction of perception.

Sankhya believes in 'representative perception'. In knowledge the internal organ mediates the *purusa* and objects when an object comes within the range of vision, the internal organ is so modified as to assume the form of an object. The modification of the internal organ into an object is called *vṛtti* or mode. Knowledge means that mode as illuminated by the light of *purusa*. Illumination is a constant feature of perceptual knowledge. The mode vary in accordance with the objects presented.

According to Kumarila Bhatta, valid knowledge is that which provides the experience of an unknown object, that which is not contradicted by other knowledge and which is free from other defects. The Mimamsakas uphold *svataḥ pramāṇya vada* or self validity of knowledge. Knowledge is valid by itself. The conditions of freedom from defects and non-contradiction being satisfied, all knowledge arises as self-valid. Coherence and self-consistency is the nature of valid knowledge. Both Prabhakara and Kumarila regard knowledge itself as *Pramāṇa* or means of knowledge. Jaimini admits three *Pramāṇas*- perception, inference and testimony. Prabhakara adds two more –comparison and implication. Kumarila further adds non-apprehension.

According to Vedānta, there are three *Pramāṇas*- Perception (*pratyakṣa*), Inference (*tarka*), and Scripture (*śruti*). In perception the subject and object become identical because in fact both are the same consciousness. The subject and the object remain separate due to the covering of ignorance. But by the direct union of *Antakārana* through the sense it takes the form of the object and shines in the form of that particular object illumined by the self due to the removal of the covering of ignorance.

According to Advaita, in the perception of an external object, the mind goes out through the sense organ, say the 'eyes' and reaches the place of the object, say a 'pot' and assumes the shape of the pot which modifies into the thought 'pot'. This modification is known as *vṛtti*. The pervasion of *vṛtti* removes the veil of ignorance (*vṛttivyāpti*) and the pervasion of reflected consciousness illumines the object (*phalavyāpti*), which is expressed as 'This is a pot'. The capacity of the mind to illumine an object is because of the reflection of Consciousness (Brahman) in the mind. The knowledge of experiences like happiness, sorrow etc that occur in the mind without the aid of sense organs is known by the 'witness consciousness.' There is a mental modification internally that is expressed as 'I am happy' etc. The knowledge of self or Brahman cannot be gained by perceptual cognition since Brahman can never be objectified. When we say, words reveal Brahman, *vṛttivyāpti* alone functions and not *phalavyāpti*, since Brahman is self-evident luminous being, hence the knowledge of Brahman is known as *svarūpa-jñāna* or knowledge of nature of self as opposed to *vṛtti-jñāna* or empirical knowledge.

Theory of Erroneous perception

An object perceived differently is said to be invalid cognition in which again the three factors operate namely, the knower, the known and the instrument of knowledge. The famous example oft-quoted by Advaita School is one seeing rope as 'snake'. The reason for this erroneous perception may be due to defect in the perceiver, in the instrument of perception, in the environment (dim light), in the object etc. The analysis of the process of erroneous cognition by

Advaita School is known as 'Indescribable Error' (*Anirvachaniya khyati*). It is imperative to understand the mechanism of error, since for Advaita, bondage is an error superimposed on Brahman due to self-ignorance and hence knowledge alone is the means to liberation. Based on the indescribable theory of error, the rope-ignorance creates a 'snake' here ignorance is the material cause of 'snake'. The rope is the substratum on which 'snake' is superimposed and hence rope is the transfigurative material cause of 'snake'. The perceiver of 'snake' superimposes the characteristics of snake is frightened and tries to run away. On rise of rope-knowledge, the 'snake' vanishes and the person 'feels' saved. In this instance, there is no sorrow but still one experiences grief because of lack of knowledge of reality (rope-knowledge). Advaitin states, in the same manner, the world of plurality is superimposed on non-dual Brahman due to ignorance, plurality is cause of sorrow, on wake of Brahman-knowledge plurality vanishes (just as the 'snake' vanished) and one realises the non-dual nature of self and 'attains' bliss.

Ramanuja admits three *Pramanas*- perception, inference and verbal testimony. He rejects *nirvikalpa* stage of perception. In Dvaita epistemology the process of knowing is explained as a mode of the internal organ. Knowledge always points to a complex or qualified object. Truth is defined as correspondence with outside reality.

Indeterminate and determinate perception Indeterminate (*Nirvikalapaka*) and determinate (*savikalapaka*) perception are also spoken of by philosophers and mystics. We mention this distinction both because the terms often recur in Indian Philosophical literature and because it serves to bring out a point which we insisted upon earlier, namely, that every perception, indeed every act of knowledge (*Prama*) entails judgment. Unlike some commentators, we do not understand this to be a distinction between two kinds of perception but rather as an insightful analysis of the two stages in the process of any act of perception. At first I perceive something vaguely without being able to say what exactly it is that I am perceiving. This is the indeterminate perception. It is only when I perceive what the thing, when I am able to say what it is, that I can say that I am really determinately perceiving it. And this, of course, entails judgment. So normally perception starts off as indeterminate and ends as determinate.

1.6 NORMAL (LAUKIKA) AND SUPRA NORMAL (ALAUKIKA) PERCEPTION

This is a very intriguing distinction and it is worth giving some thought. Besides the normal perception, Indian philosophy speaks of a supranormal one. It is supranormal because where as the normal perception is due to the 'contact' (*sannikarsa*) of the sense organ with the object, the latter is not, and yet it is still considered to be a 'direct' apprehension of the object and therefore a perception.

This supranormal perception is of three kinds: the first is the (direct) apprehension of the 'universal' in the object, e.g. of the "cowness" in the cow. The second is the perception of an object which is not proportionate to the sense-organ by which it is normally perceived. For example, on a hot day I see a picture of the sea and I feel cool. Now the usual explanation given to this is that the sight experience is associated with a past experience of coolness so as to produce, as it were, a two-fold sensation (the visual and the tactile). Illusion, according to some, can be explained in this way. I see a rope in the dark and I perceive a snake. The presented object (rope) is mistaken for the represented object (the snake of a past experience) due to this association. In some mystical literature, we come across authors who speak of, for example,

‘touching’, ‘smelling’, and ‘tasting’ spiritual realities. Some commentators understand this as symbolic language, but others do not fail to speak, in this context, of ‘spiritual faculties’ – distinct both from mere intellectual knowledge on the one hand and from ordinary sense perception on the other.

The third is more intriguing! It is yogic (*yogaja*) perception to recondite or subtle things, in remote places or times including the past and future, due to an intense illumination of the mind obtained in deep concentration. It is intriguing because all schools of Indian philosophy, including the ‘heterodox’ ones, claim that such a supranormal perception is possible (it is *paramartika* perception of Jainism, the bodhi of the Buddhist, the *Kaivalya* of Samkhya – yoga and the *aparoksanubhuti* of Vedanta). It is interesting, in fact, to compare and contrast in this respect, for example what Patanjali and Christian mystic St. John of the Cross have to say on the matter. Both speak of the power of knowing and foretelling future events, of knowing the exact time of one’s death, of knowing and reading other people’s minds, and of a certain kind of “knowing all things”, etc. St. John of the Cross, speaking of the power of knowing events happening in one’s absence, remarks that such “knowledge derives from the illumined and purified spirit of those who have reached perfection or are close to it.”

We could interpret all this in a variety of ways – apart from dismissing it as “just talk”! We could, for example, interpret this kind of perception – together with other phenomena which, it is claimed, usually accompany it like supra human strength, ability to go without food or drink for an extraordinary length of time, etc., as a symbolic description of the powers of the perception of the deeper (or higher) levels of human consciousness. Today we often hear of a “sixth sense” or even, more generally still of “extra sensory perception” (ESP). Claims are being made that experiments scientifically conducted, are proving that the range of human perception is much wider and deeper than hitherto commonly supposed.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1. What determinate (*savikalapaka*) perception?

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2. What is supranormal perception?

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3. Which are the three kinds of supranormal perception?

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1.7 PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS FOR PERCEPTION

In the next section we elaborate on the philosophical basis for perception, as outlined in article in *Wikipedia* (2010). The philosophy of perception is concerned with the nature of sensory experience, the status of what is given in such experience, and in particular with how beliefs or knowledge about the (physical) world can be accounted for and justified on that basis systematically, internalist and externalist accounts can be formulated and distinguished.

Internalism assumes the objects or basis of perceptual knowledge to be aspects of an individual's mind, e.g. mental states, which in principle the individual can always have access to. In contrast, externalism states that this basis of perception need not entail mental states or experience at all, but is constituted by aspects of the world which is truly external to the individual.

A central question to the philosophy of perception concerns what constitutes the immediate objects of perception. Contrary to the position of naïve realism—which can be identified with the 'everyday' impression of physical objects existing independently of the observer and constituting what is perceived—certain observations are put forward which suggest otherwise. The latter comprise perceptual illusions, hallucinations, and the relativity of perceptual experience, but also insights from the field of science.

The most common belief about perception, probably universal in childhood, is naïve realism, in which people believe that what they perceive are things in themselves. Common people carry this belief into adult and professional life. In this form, naïve realism is not strictly a theory but rather an axiom on which our day-to-day thought and language is based. In a sense it is transparently clear. If I see a chair it is a chair that I see. When philosophers say that this may be, in fact, mistaken, there has been a subtle change in the meaning of the word see (or perceive) that is necessary for a scientific account of how the brain works but unfortunately is not made clear by new philosophical terminologies. This leads to talking at cross-purpose. That childhood naïve realism is indeed a belief that normally encounters a humbling experience of even showing the absurdity of such a belief. So philosophically, it is very difficult to sustain naïve realism.

However, outside philosophy modified forms of naïve realism maybe implicitly assumed and defended. Thomas Reid in the eighteenth century realised that sensation was composed of a set of data transfers but declared that these were in some way transparent so that there is a direct connection between perception and the world. This idea is called direct realism and has become popular in recent years. Direct realism does not clearly specify the nature of the bit of the world that is an object in perception, especially in cases where the object is something like a silhouette (*Wikipedia*). Wittgenstein's picture theory of language also points to such a direct realism.

Philosophically and neurologically, when we analyse the succession of data transfers that are involved in perception, we become aware of complex functions of the brain, where the final set of events occur. Perception would then be some form of brain activity and somehow some part

of the brain would be able to perceive signals provided by some other part of the brain. This concept is known as indirect realism or representative realism. According to this theory, we can only be aware of external objects by being aware of representations of objects in the brain. This idea was held by John Locke and Nicolas Malebranche. The common argument against indirect realism, as noted by *Wikipedia*, is that it implies a homunculus with an infinite regress (a perceiver within a perceiver within a perceiver...). However, as long as each stage of sensory processing achieves a different task a finite regress is perfectly possible. The real problem here probably relates not so much to issues of infinite regress as to basic ontological issues raised by Leibniz, Locke, Hume, Whitehead and others, which fall beyond the scope of this unit.

Direct realism and indirect realism are known as 'realist' theories of perception because they hold that there is a world external to the mind. Direct realism holds that the representation of an object is located next to, or is even part of, the actual physical object. On the other hand, indirect realism holds that the representation of an object is brain activity. Direct realism proposes some as yet unknown direct connection between external representations and the mind while indirect realism requires the resolution of the actual process of representation by the brain.

Apart from the realist theories of perception there are also anti-realist theories. There are two varieties of anti-realism: idealism and skepticism. Idealism holds that reality is limited to mental qualities and so is not real. Skepticism challenges our ability to gain knowledge of any reality external to our mind. So the question of the reality of the world outside just does not arise. One of the most influential proponents of idealism was Bishop George Berkeley who maintained that everything was mind or dependent upon mind. David Hume is probably the most influential proponent of skepticism.

A third theory of perception attempts to find a middle path between realist and anti-realist theories. Called enactivism, this theory posits that reality arises as a result of the dynamic interplay between an organism's sensorimotor capabilities and its environment. Instead of seeing perception as a passive process determined entirely by the features of an independently existing world, enactivism suggests that organism and environment are structurally coupled and codetermining.

In this section various ways of relating perception to the world outside are considered: internalism, externalism, naïve realism, direct realism, indirect realism, idealism, scepticism and enactivism. Rather than going into the merits of these theories, we limit ourselves to briefly describing them. Our main concern is that considering perception as the primary source of knowledge of reality, takes us to the philosophical question of the nature of reality.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1. What is naïve realism?

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2. What is enactivism?

1.8 LET US SUM UP

After understanding what *Pramanas* we have elaborately dealt with perception and then we have seen the philosophical basis for it.

1.9 KEY WORDS

Enactivism: The theory which posits that reality arises as a result of the dynamic interplay between an organism's sensorimotor capabilities and its environment.

Homunculus: A diminutive and fully-formed human. It is used, generally, in various fields of study to refer to any representation of a human being.

Naïve realism: The belief that what they perceive are things in themselves. In other words the simple belief that there is a reality outside and we can perceive it as it is using our sense organs.

Pramana ("sources of knowledge," "measure") is an epistemological term in Indian and Buddhist philosophies referring to the means by which a person obtains accurate and valid knowledge (*Prama*, *pramiti*) of the world.

Pratyaksa: Perception or knowledge through sense organs.

Qualia: a property (such as redness) as it is experienced as distinct from any source it might have in a physical object

1.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 2 PRAMANAS - II

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to give details of *pramanas* generally accepted by different schools of Indian philosophy. Each school have their own reasons to uphold different *pramanas* to suit to their metaphysical tenets. As a student of philosophy we make an effort to know them all to some extent, although we do not engage in validity of their arguments for one or the other means of knowledge. On the whole this unit would give a general picture of different means of knowledge accepted in the different schools Indian thought along with the validity and invalidity of knowledge as given in the schools of Indian thought.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The central questions of epistemology include the origin of knowledge, the place of experience in generating knowledge and the place of reason in doing so; the relationship between knowledge and the responsibility of error and changing forms of knowledge that arise from new conceptualisations of the world. All of these issues link with other central concerns of Indian systems. There are four factors involved in any knowledge

- (1) The subject who knows (*pramata*)
- (2) the object of knowledge (*prameya*)
- (3) the means of valid knowledge (*Pramana*)
- (4) the resultant of valid knowledge (*prama*)

Prama is valid knowledge. Knowledge can be valid or invalid, valid knowledge is called *prama* and non-valid knowledge is known as *aprama*. *Pramana* is valid means of knowledge and its important four means include perception (*pratyaksa*), inference (*anumana*), verbal testimony (*sabda*), and comparison (*upamana*). Different schools of Indian thought accept or reject different ones of these methods. All methods are accepted by Mimamsa; only perception, inference and testimony by Yoga; only perception and inference by Buddhism and Vaishesika ; and only perception by Carvaka.

2.2 ANUMANA - INFERENCE

Vaishesika recognises only two *Pramanas*- perception and inference and reduces comparison and verbal testimony to inference. But Nyaya system recognises all the four *Pramanas* namely perception, inference, verbal testimony, and comparison.

According to Nyaya philosophy, The term *anumana* literally means after knowledge i.e., knowledge that follows other knowledge. It is mediate and indirect and are arranged through the medium of some mark which is called '*hetu*' and bears the relation of invariable concomitance with the observed feature. The basis of the inference is invariable concomitance. The invariable relation between the *hetu* and the *sadya* is called *Vyapti*. The knowledge of the qualities of the '*paksa*' through the '*hetu*' is called *paramarsa*. Hence inference or *anumana* is said to be

knowledge gained through *paramarsa*, or in other words, the knowledge of the presence of *sadhya* in the *paksa* through the *linga*, which is in the quality of *paksa* and is invariably related by *Vyapti*.

This may be explained with the help of the typical example of inference, the presence of fire on the perception of smoke. When one sees smoke on distant hill one remembers one's experience of the universal concomitance (*Vyapti*) between smoke and fire and concludes that there is fire on the distant hill. The character which is inferred (fire) is called *sadhya*; the mark on the strength of which the character is inferred is the *hetu* (smoke); the subject where the character is inferred is *paksa* (hill). The three terms corresponds to the major, minor and the minor terms in the Aristotelian syllogism. The following is a typical nyaya syllogism.

1. This hill has fire (*pratijna*),
2. Because it has smoke (*hetu*),
3. Whatever has smoke has fire e.g. an oven (*udaharana*),
4. This hill as smoke which is invariably associated with fire (*upanaya*),
5. Therefore this hill has fire (*nigamana*).

The first, the *pratijna*, is the logical statement which is to be proved. The second is *hetu* or reason which states the reason for the establishment of the proposition. The third is *udaharana* which the universal concomitance together with example. the fourth is *upanaya* or application of the universal concomitance to the present case. The fifth is *nigamana* or conclusion drawn from the preceding propositions. These five members of Indian syllogism are called *Avayavas*.

Linga paramarsa: The Nyaya syllogism has five terms. Among them, middle term works as a bridge between the major and the minor terms. Therefore, the middle term has main responsibility to prove a syllogism valid or invalid. How a middle term is related to major term is *lingaparamarsha*. There are five characteristics of a middle term-

1. It must be present in the minor term (*paksadharmata*); e.g., smoke must be present in the hill.
2. It must be present in all positive instances in which the major terms is present; e.g., smoke must be present in the kitchen where fire exists (*sapakasattva*).
3. It must be absent in all negative instances in which the major terms is absent; e.g., smoke must be absent in the lake in which fire does not exist (*vipakasattva*).
4. It must be non-incompatible with the minor term; e.g., it must not prove the coolness of fire (*abadhita*).
5. It must be qualified by the absence of counteracting reasons which lead to a contradictory conclusion; e.g., 'the fact of being caused' should not be used to prove the 'eternality' of sound (*aviruddha*).

Hetvabhasa:-In Indian logic a fallacy is called *hetvabhasa*. It means that middle term appears to be a reason but is not a valid reason. All fallacies are material fallacies. We have mentioned the five characteristic of a valid middle term. When this are violated, we have fallacies. Five kinds of fallacies are recognised.

1. *Assiddha or sadhyasama*- This is the fallacy of unproved middle.
2. *Savyabhicara*- this is the fallacy of irregular middle.
3. *Satpratipaksa*- here the middle term is contradicted by another middle term.
4. *Badhita*- It is the non-inferentially contradicted middle

5. *Viruddha*- It is the contradictory middle.

According to Jainas, *Tarka*, Logic is the knowledge of *Vyapti* between *paksa* and *sadhya*. It depends upon the perception whether two things exist together or not in past, present, and future. *Vyapti* is of two kinds-- *Anavaya Vyapti* and *Vyatireka Vyapti*. In the former the concomitance of two things is established. In the latter *Vyapti* is shown in the absence. 'where there is fire, there is smoke' is an example of *Anavaya Vyapti*. On the other hand, 'where there is no fire, there is smoke', exemplifies *Vyatireka Vyapti*. The relationship of universal accompaniment-gradual or concurrent-exists in *Vyapti*. This relationship is ascertained by logic (*Tarka*). Inference (*anumana*)-It is the knowledge of *sadhya* with the help of *hetu*. This inference is either *svarthanumana* or *pararthanumana*. The former is the grasp for one's own self. Hence it needs no amplification. For example, the frequent visibility of fire under smoke together suffices to convince us of their concomitance. Afterwards, when we see smoke, we infer the existence of fire also with the help of *Vyapti*, which is already known to us. It is, *svarthanumana*. In it the place of smoke is *paksa*, smoke is *paksa dharma*. In *svarthanumana* both *Vyapti* and *paksa dharma* are essential. *Pararthanumana* is used for convincing others. So it must be more systematised and vivid. It is five-fold. In five fold *Pararthanumana* an inference is drawn in five sentences. These sentences are called the propositions (*avayava*) of inference, e.g.,

- (a) *Pratijna*-The hill is fiery,
- (b) *Hetu*-because of smoke,
- (c) *Drstanta*- Wherever there is smoke there is fire, such as in the kitchen,
- (e) *Upanaya*- The smoke, which does not exist without fire (*Vyaptivisistdhum*) is in the hill,
- (f) *Nigamana*-Therefore the hill is fiery.

Inference is twofold-(1) *Svarthanumana*-inference for one's own sake and (2) *Pararthanumana*-inference for the sake of others. The former is not expressed in the form of a syllogistic argument. The latter is a syllogism which helps to direct the mind of the listener to think in the required manner.

The validity of inference is rejected by Carvakas. Inference is said to be a mere leap into the dark. We proceed here from the known to the unknown and there is no certainty in this, though some inferences may turn out to be accidentally true. A general proposition may be true in unperceived cases. But there is no guarantee that it will hold true in even in unperceived cases. Deductive inferences is vitiated by the fallacy of *petitio principii*. It is merely an argument in circle since the conclusion is already contained in the major premise, the validity of which is not proved. Inductive inference undertakes to prove the validity of the major premise of deductive inference. But induction too is uncertain because it proceeds unwarrantedly from the known to the unknown. In order to distinguish true induction from simple enumeration, it is pointed out that the former, unlike the latter, is based on casual relationship which means invariable association or *Vyapti*. *Vyapti*, therefore is the nerve of all inference. But the Carvaka challenges this universal and invariable relationship of concomitance and regards it a mere guess work. Perception does not prove this *Vyapti*. Nor can it be proved by inference, for inference itself is said to presuppose its validity. Testimony too cannot prove it, for testimony itself is not a valid means knowledge. Secondly, if testimony proves *Vyapti*, inference would become dependent on testimony and then none would be able to infer anything by himself. Hence inference cannot be regarded as a valid source of knowledge. Induction is uncertain and deduction's argument in a circle. The logicians therefore find themselves stuck up in mud of inference.

The Carvaka position has been vehemently criticised by all systems of Indian philosophy all of which have maintained the validity of at least perception and inference. To refuse the validity of inference from the empirical standpoint is to refuse to think and discuss. All thoughts, all discussions, all doctrines, all affirmations and denials, all proofs and disproof are made possible by inference. The Carvaka view that perception is valid and inference is invalid is itself a result of inference. Carvaka Can understand others only through inference and make others understand him only through inference. Thoughts and ideas not being material objects cannot be perceived but can only be inferred.

For Vaibhashikars, inference is of two types: *Svartha* (for the self) and *parartha* (for others). In the former the *linga* is inferential, i. e., in the inference there is fire on the hill, the hill is *linga* and the fire is inferential. In it the *linga* remains in self side (*svapaksa*), just as the kitchen. The *linga* does not remain in the opposite side (*vipaksa*), e.g., a pool of water, etc. According to Sautrantikas they are subject to inference. There are four causes of knowledge.

- (1) *Alamban*—It is the cause of external objects like jug etc, because the form of the knowledge and born due to it.
- (2) *Samanantara*—This is so called because it is only after the previous mental stage that the following stage attains consciousness.
- (3) *Adhipati*—The senses have been called as the *Adhipati Pratyaya* of the knowledge. It is the normative cause. Without the senses there can be no external knowledge even after the presence of the first two causes.
- (4) *Sahkari Pratyaya*—these are the subsidiary conditions necessary for knowledge, e.g., light ,form, etc. Without which knowledge becomes almost impossible.

The knowledge of the external objects becomes possible due to the above mentioned four causes or conditions. The Sautrantikas do not admit that the external objects have no existence and all knowledge is in the consciousness. Nor do they believe like the Vaibhasikas that we know anything by direct perception. As opposed to Vaibhasikas , the Sautrantikas maintain that we have no direct perception of the external objects but only the knowledge of their appearance. It is by the distinction in these appearances which are the basis of the knowledge. Hence they are in the mind itself, though the things which they represent as external objects are not known by their perception, but by the inference based upon the mental modifications aroused by them . This view is known as *Bahyanumeyavad*. It is representationalism or indirect realism.

Vijnanavadins believe that all things external to mind are mental modifications. Thus the knowledge of the external things is impossible. Hence the thing which appears to be external; should be taken as a mental concept. It can be questioned here that if the object is a mere concept of the mind why does it not appear, disappear, and change as desired. To this the Vijnanavadins reply that the mind is a mere stream in which the past experiences remain in the form of expression and whenever there is favourable condition for a certain impression the same impression manifests and results into knowledge. From the multiple point of view Vijnanavadins admit two types of knowledge - *Grahana* and *Adhyavasaya*. *Grahana* is indirect and *Adhyavasaya* direct inference. The Vijnanavadins believe that the proof of things depends on something else. (*Parartah Pramanyavada*). They made two distinctions in the empirical truth – *Paratatra* and *Pari-kalpa*.

Generally, there are varieties of inference recognised . The first is syllogistic inference which is based on perception. The second corresponds to analogical reasoning in modern logic. Such

inference is called *samanyatodrsta*. For e.g., From the observed fact that an effect like a jar requires for its production, an agent like potter, it is concluded that the world also should have been brought into existence by a competent being God.

2.3 SABDA - TESTIMONY

Sabda is defined as the statement of a trustworthy person (*aptavakya*) and consists in understanding its meaning. It is based on the words of trustworthy persons, human or divine. A person is trustworthy if he knows the truth and conveys it correctly. *Sabda* is interpreted as *aptavacana*. Testimony is valid if the source is reliable. It may come not only from the scriptures, but also from persons who are trust worthy (*apta*). Testimony is of two kinds- *Vaidika* and secular (*laukika*). The *vaidika* testimony is perfect and infallible because the Vedas are spoken by God. Secular testimony, being the words of human beings who are liable to error and so no infallible.

For the Jainas, *sabda pramana* is called *Agama*. It is the knowledge of a thing through the words of reliable people. A person who knows things in their true form and express his views correctly, is reliable and *apta*. He is free from prejudice. His words befit the object which they are seeking to express. *Agama* is of two kinds-*Laukik* and *Alaukik*.

According to advaita, God is the author of Veda in a special sense. It is not His work in the literal sense. Like everything else, Veda also disappears at the end of the cycle and God repeat it at the beginning of the next cycle. So far as its substance is concerned, it is independent of God, i.e., Apuruscya. According to Nyaya, God is the sole author of Veda and according to Mimamsa, Vedas are self-existent. In advaita, we find a midway position between these two systems.

According to Ramanuja, all knowledge points to a complex or qualifies object. Knowledge never reveals anything as nirguna. According to Ramanuja, nirguna does not mean having no qualities at all but the absence of evil qualities. With respect to *sabda*, there are two points to be noted- (1) all sections of the Veda are equally important. There is no need to distinguish between the ritual portion and the knowledge portion as is done by Sankara. (2) Ramanuja gives much importance to the Agamas as to the Veda and to the Upanishads.

According to the Nyāya Philosophy, *sabda* (verbal testimony) is the fourth and last valid source of knowledge. ‘*Sabda*’ literally means verbal knowledge. It is the knowledge of objects derived from words or sentence. But all verbal knowledge is not valid. Thus, Nyāyikas expressed that *sabda* is a *pramāna* of valid verbal testimony.

Sabda is the instructive assertion of a reliable person. Now a question probably comes to your mind, i.e. who is a reliable person? A reliable person may be a risi, mlechha, arya who is an expert in certain matter and is willing to communicate his/her experience of it.

Example:

Suppose that a lady came to the side of a river to cross the river and can't ascertain depth of water in the river. In this case, she asked a fisherman who is fishing there that ‘can I cross the river?’ Since the fisherman is a local person over there and has no enmity with her replied that

you can cross the river easily. Here, the word of the fisherman man is to be accepted as a means of right knowledge called verbal testimony.

Types of Sabda

These are two different kinds of Sabda.

- a) i) Drustārtha
ii) Adrustārtha
- b) i) Laukika
ii) Alaukika

The former classification is made on the basis of objects of meaning and the later classification is based on the origin of words. Sabda deals with perceptible object is called drstārta, e.g. table is brown, grows is green etc. A sabda deals with imperceptible object is called 'adrsta', e.g. Duty is god, Truth is noble, etc.

Laukika sabda is known as secular whereas alukika sabda is known as divine or vaidika. The Vedas are spoken by god. This vaidika testimony is divine and perfect. According to Nyāyikas, since human beings are not perfect only the words of trust worthy person can be considered as laukika sabda.

The verbal testimony is defined as that 'sentence in which the relation among the meaning of words, that is the object of its intention, is not contradicted by any other means of valid knowledge'. According to Advaita, the purport of the scriptures is Attributless Brahman (*Nirguna Brahman*) which is known by scrutinizing the intention of scriptures based on six indicatory marks, they are, Introduction-Conclusion (*upakrama-upasamhara*), Repetition (*abhyasa*), Uniqueness (*apurvata*), Result (*phala*), Eulogy (*arthavada*) and Logical presentation (*upapatti*). A word can reveal its meaning in the primary sense and in cases where primary sense is unfitting, they are known by their secondary sense. Deriving the meaning of a word through its secondary implication is of three kinds, namely, Exclusive (*jahallakshana*), Inclusive (*ajahallakshana*) and Exclusive-Inclusive (*jahalajahallakshana*). The identity statements (*mahavakya*), according to Advaita, reveals the identity meaning by the application of exclusive-inclusive implication.

According to the Mimamsa philosophy, testimony is a reliable statement uttered by a trust worthy person similar to Nyaya Philosophy. It is stated that a sentence consists of a group of words, and a word is considered as an entity which has the power to express some meaning. Testimony is a valid knowledge, which is derived from word or sentence. But all words or sentences can't be treated as testimony because all verbal expressions are not necessarily regarded as valid knowledge. So, on the account of Mimansikas, sabda must be based on the verbal assertion of a trust worthy person who knows the truth and desires to speak the truth for the guidance of others. Verbal testimony is used as meaningful words or sentences. The mere combination of letters or the words don't provide a valid knowledge. Therefore, words and sentences must be used in a specific sense whose meaning will be clear, as a result, it would be treated as a valid pramana.

2.4 COMPARISON (UPAMANA)

It is knowledge derived from similarity. It has been defined as the knowledge of the relation between a word and its denotation

According to the Nyāya Philosophy, comparison (upamāna) is the third source of valid knowledge. The expression 'upamāna', is derived from two words, 'upa' and 'māna'. The word 'upa' means similarity or 'sādrusya' and the word 'māna' means 'cognition'. Thus, generally speaking, upamāna as a source of knowledge is derived from the similarity between two things/objects. It is a source of knowledge of the relation between a word and its denotation (what the word refers to).

Example of Upamāna:

A person does not know what a 'squirrel' is? S(he) is told by a forester that it is a small animal like rat, but it has a long furry tail and strips on its body. After some period of time, when s(he) sees such an animal in the forest, s(he) knows that it is a squirrel.

There are four steps involved in acquiring knowledge of an object in comparison (upamāna).

- First: We have an authoritative statement that a word denotes objects of a certain description.
- Second: When one observes any such objects she/he has the knowledge that it answers to the given description.
- Third: There is a recollection of the descriptive statement received from authority.
- Four/Finally: There is the resulting knowledge that, this kind of objects are denoted by the word is same.

Here, it is important to note that Buddhism (Buddhist philosophy) does not accept comparison as an independent source of valid knowledge. On their account, comparison can be reduced to perception and testimony. The Sāmkhya and the Vaisesika Philosophy believe that comparison can be reduced to inference.

Upamana is a pramana recognized by the Mimamsikas as similar to Nyayikas' views. In upamana, knowledge of an object is determined by comparing it form other similar kinds of objects. Thus roughly it is treated as analogy. For example, assume a situation where a man has not seen a gavaya or a wild cow and doesn't know what it is. A forester told him that a wild cow is an animal like a country cow but she is more furious and has big horn in her forehead. In a later period he comes across a wild cow in a forest and recognizes it as the wild cow by compairing the descriptions made by the forester. This knowledge is possible due to the upamana or comparison. Thus, upamana is the knowledge of the relation between a name and the object it denotes by that name.

2.5 ARTHAPATHI (PRESUMPTION)

According to Kumarila Bhatta, valid knowledge is that which provides the experience of an unknown object, that which is not contradicted by other knowledge and which is free from other defects. The Mimamsakas uphold *svatah pramanya vada* or self validity of knowledge. Knowledge is valid by itself. The conditions of freedom from defects and non-contradiction being satisfied, all knowledge arises as self-valid. Coherence and self-consistency is the nature of valid knowledge. Both Prabhakara and Kumarila regard knowledge itself as *Pramana* or means

of knowledge. Jaimini admits three *Pramanas*- perception, inference and testimony. Prabhakara adds two more –comparison and implication. Kumarila further adds non-apprehension.

Prabhakara and Kumarila both, admit *Arthapathi* as an independent means of valid knowledge. Through this *Pramana* we discover a fact as a result of a contradiction between two facts already known to be well established. A common example is- Devadutta does not take his food during day time. Yet he is quite strong and fat. We presume that he must be taking food at night. The assumption of Devadutta eating at night is a postulation . We have never seen him eating his food at night. Hence the knowledge gained by postulation is not perception. This kind of knowledge is a peculiar or unique kind of knowledge and it has to be considered separately. But some Indian logicians bring this *Pramana* under inference-disjunctive inference .

All fat persons who do not eat during day are persons who eat during night.

Devadutta is a fat person what does not eat during day

Therefore Devadutta is a fat person who eats during night.

2.6 POSTULATION (ARTHAPATI)

This is a unique source of valid knowledge upholds by the Mimansikas. In other words, the Mimansikas expressed arthapati as a valid method of cognition. The expression “arthapati” is a combination of two words namely ‘artha’ and ‘apatti’. The term artha means fact and apatti means ‘kalpana’ which is understood as ‘supposition’ in English. Thus, etymologically speaking, arthapati is that knowledge which resolves the conflict between two facts. It entails a presupposition which solves the problem that occurred between two facts.

Arthapati is the assumption of an unperceived fact in order to reconcile two apparently inconsistent perceived facts. When a known fact can’t be accounted without another fact, we have to postulate the existence of third fact. The valid and justified knowledge of the third fact is known as arthapati.

For example, Devadatta is a fat man by fasting in the day. In this proposition we find two facts. One, Devadatta is a human being alive and he is fat. Second, he is not eating in day time. In order to resolve this conflict, i.e. how a person will be fat and not eating anything in day time, we postulate the existence of third fact, i.e. he must be eating in the night. Another example, “John is living and who is not in home”. The problem observed here is how John alive and is not found in his home. To resolve this conflict, we postulate the fact, i.e. he may be staying in a rented house outside his home. Thus, postulation or presumption is a valid source of knowledge.

It is presumption of an explanatory fact (*upapadaka*) from knowledge of the thing to be explained (*upapadya*). The knowledge of the thing to be explained is the instrument, and the knowledge of the explanatory fact is the result. This is explained by the well-known example of ‘Devadatta’. Devadatta does not eat during the day time, he is fat, these are known facts. If one does not postulate that ‘Devadatta eats at night’ the seen fact remains unexplained. Postulation, according to Advaita, also proves falsity of the world. The scriptural statement ‘*the knower of self transcends sorrow*’ reveals falsity of world by application of postulation. Here, the word

‘sorrow’ indicates bondage which can be removed by self-knowledge, since the statement says ‘knower of self’; if the falsity of bondage is not postulated then removal of bondage by knowledge cannot be said. Hence, bondage or world as false is known by postulation. In postulation, we presume something present elsewhere; there cannot be anything else to arrive at Brahman by postulation.

2.7 ANUPALABDHI (NON-APPREHENSION)

Anupalabdhi is the immediate knowledge of the non-existence of object. Kumarila admits this but Prabhakara rejects it. It is related to the category of *abhava*. For e.g., an umbrella which is expected to be seen in a particular corner of a room is not seen there. We know about the non-existence of the umbrella through a separate *Pramana*, *anupalabdhi*. Nyaya, though it accepts non-existence as a category has no separate *Pramana* to understand it. According to them, the non-existence of an object can be known by perception itself as in the case of perceiving the bare floor. But according to Mimamsa since there is no sense object contact, we require a new *Pramana* to know the non-existence of an object. This is a unique feature of Mimamsa epistemology.

This is an independent source of valid knowledge subscribed by the Mimamsa Philosophy. Non-apprehension is the immediate knowledge of the non-existence of an object. An object doesn’t exist in a particular place and a particular time. But it exists elsewhere. To perceive the non-existent of that particular object in a given situation/place is known as *anupalabdhi*.

For example, ‘there is no book on the table’. Here, an individual does not perceive the book directly through his/her sense organs. But the knowledge of the absence or non existence of the book on the table arises because of the non-perception of the perceivable object. The absence of an object from the situation in which it should be available is said to be its non-existence. And, to possess the knowledge of non existence of objects in an existence form is called as *anupalabdhi*.

The means of valid knowledge known as non-apprehension is the extraordinary cause of that apprehension of non-existence which is not due to knowledge as an instrument. A thing can be known by non-apprehension which has the capacity to be apprehended at a different time. For instance, one can understand the absence of a pot in a place, since pot as an object is apprehended previously or at a later period. Here, non-existence of a thing is known and Brahman being ever existent (*Sat*) it is never available for non-apprehension.

2.8 LET US SUM UP

2.9 KEY WORDS

Pramana: Criterion of valid knowledge.

Syllogism: It is the inference of one proposition from two premises.

Fallacy: Any error of reasoning.

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UNIT 3 JUSTIFICATION: CLASSICAL APPROACH

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

To familiarize the students with the four main issues of truth and justification from Eastern and Western perspectives.

To encourage them to question the sources of justification and certitude in knowledge.

To make the students realise the different types of certitudes possible.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to understand justification of knowledge, we begin with certitude. Then we speak of the traditional ways of justifying knowing by using evidence.

3.3 KNOWLEDGE AND CERTITUDE

During the course of our reflections so far we have often had to raise the question about 'certitude' (or 'certainty'). Thus when we explained what we meant by 'knowledge' and how in our understanding of the term 'truth' and 'reasonableness' were essential characteristics of it, we had already to raise the question whether, if such were the case, it would be possible to say that we 'knew' anything for sure, i.e. with certainty. Again, when we discussed the validity of 'inference' we referred to the empiricist's understanding of it as yielding only pragmatic probability but not 'certainty'. Again, when we discussed 'testimony', we conclude that 'belief' could certainly be considered as 'reasonable' but left the question of 'certainty' till later. The problem of certitude became more acute, of course when we discussed 'truth'. It is clear that it is one thing to say what 'truth' is and what it is not, it is quite another to say whether, and to what extent I can be sure (certain) of the 'truth' (no matter how it is understood). Some Indian schools of Philosophy (e.g. samkhya) too characterize true cognition as 'certain' (*asamdigdha*) – i.e. as subjectively certain and not only objectively 'uncontractible' (*Abadhita*).

The notion of ‘certitude’

The scholastics generally define ‘certitude’ as ‘the firm assent of the mind to the truth, based on evidence’. This definition is certainly a good one, but we prefer to explain ‘certitude’ in our own way. And the way we understand it is simply this: “the conviction that such and such is (is not) the case”. The following explanations will hopefully make things clear.

i. Conviction

In our understanding of the term, ‘knowledge’ is ‘the awareness that such and such is (is not) the case’. The notion of ‘certitude’ as ‘conviction’ adds to the notion of ‘awareness’ the scholastic ‘firm assent’ but not so much as an act performed here and now but rather as a psychological state of mind resulting from it. (This is partly determined by the usage in modern English of the terms used here, like ‘assent’). Another word for ‘conviction’ is ‘persuasion’. I can be aware of something, that such and such is (or is not) the case but depending on what the case is (as we are going to see) I can be more or less convinced or persuaded that that is so. This can even be made clearer if we compare and contrast other possible psychological states with regard to whether such and such is (is not) the case, as follows:

ii. Conviction and evidence

What makes all the difference between that state of mind when one ‘doubts?’ Or that state of mind when one simply ‘thinks’ that such and such is the case, and that state of mind when one is ‘convinced’ (‘persuaded’, ‘certain’) that that is so? In ‘doubt’ one has reasons for and reasons against that such and such is or is not the case. One is in decisive, wavers, between two reasons, or sets of reasons. When one ‘thinks’ that such and such is, or is not, the case, one is inclined towards one side more than to the other. One has formed a ‘probable opinion’ about the matter but still hesitates to say definitely, unwaveringly, that it is so. Notice that this admits a range of degrees – depending precisely on the force of the reasons towards which he is inclined to accept. It is only when one definitely decided for or against one side then he is convinced. When he is no longer afraid that there can any reasonable room for doubting and therefore that he can be mistaken, that one is convinced and says that he is sure, certain, that such and such is or is not the case. And the reasons because of which he is moved to take such a step or to find himself in such a state of mind – are precisely what we have previously called the ‘evidence’. This is merely an analysis of the psychological process involved. In actual life, it is often gone through spontaneously, unreflectively.

iii. Conviction and truth

‘Conviction’ refers to a state of mind, ‘truth’ refers to the correspondence itself between what is asserted or denied about whether such and such is, or is not, the case. ‘Conviction’ is ‘subjective’, ‘truth’ is ‘objective’! one can, in other words, be convinced that such and such is, or is not, the case and if this does correspond to what in fact the case is, one is right; otherwise one is wrong. In the latter case his conviction is erroneous.

3.4 KINDS OF CERTITUDES POSSIBLE

We are going to touch here on a very important question. In fact, many every day doubts regarding the possibility of being ‘sure’ (‘certain’) about different things- including, for example, moral and religious matters – can and in fact does lead to a certain kind of scepticism, if not about the possibility of being sure of anything at all, at least about the possibility of being sure of certain matters. We have already raised so many questions in this regard in our very

introduction! Often we become aware of so many opinions given on certain matters, one saying this and another saying completely different and contrary to the first that one is tempted to despair of 'knowing what to believe any longer'! An analysis of the different kinds of certitude which are possible and reasonable – but only reasonable! – are to be expected in different matters can help us sort things out.

In a sense, it is true, one is either certain (convinced) or one is not. Strictly speaking, it would make no sense to say that I am 'more or less' convinced. What I am really saying is that I have a strong opinion on the matter but I am not yet convinced. And we have distinguished between the state of mind implied by saying that one has an 'opinion' and that implied by saying that one is 'convinced' ('certain'). Generally scholastics point out that the difference between the possible kinds of 'certitude' is not due to the degree of 'firmness' of assent, nor is it due to the difference in the fields of knowledge, but on the kind of evidence available according to the case. Strictly speaking, this is, according to us, correct. But following our own line of exposition, and keeping to our own understanding of the terms ('knowledge', 'truth', 'certitude', 'evidence' we, here again, proceed in our own way.).

If certitude is based on evidence, we prefer to distinguish between the different kinds of possible and expected certitudes on the basis both of the different fields of knowledge and consequently of the different kinds of evidence.

3.5 LOGICAL CERTITUDE

Here we are in the field of 'formal' field of knowledge, the realm of pure ideas and the relationships between them - as in Logic and mathematics. The evidence of the truth of the propositions is obtained by analysis of the terms and the definitions used. No other means of verification is needed – or indeed possible. Here the truth is expressed in analytical propositions which are therefore 'necessary true' propositions (or 'tautologies') and can be seen to be such even before ('a-priori') their application to other fields of knowledge. And the certitude thus based on such kind of evidence, admitting of no possible or conceivable exception, can be called 'absolute'. I am absolutely certain (by a kind of 'logical certitude') that if $A = B$, and $B = C$, then $A = C$. I am similarly certain that $2 + 2 = 4$. Again I am similarly certain that it is either raining or not raining. Similarly with definitions: I am certain, in the same way, that if I define a 'rational animal' as man, then that man is a rational animal is for me absolutely certain!

3.6 ONTOLOGICAL CERTITUDE

Here we are in the field of the 'informal' knowledge of being as being, the realm of visible and tangible realities but considered from the point of view of those characteristics which they have in common to the extent that they are beings, existents. This realm could be considered as the counterpart, as it were, of the Logical realm – if we are prepared to admit, as we pointed out before, that the 'laws of the mind' (the logical realm) are based on the 'laws of being itself' (the ontological realm). The evidence of the truth of the judgments is obtained, certainly first from general experience (including sense-experience, but more directly from a reflection on the nature of the judgment itself as judgment. Of course, there can be other methods, but ultimately certain laws of being itself can be 'insightfully' discovered – what we have called 'first principles' – which not only are self evident (cannot be denied without contradiction but also serve as the ultimate basis for any further knowledge of reality. The 'self evidence' in question here, however, is not merely logical but ontological, and the contradiction would not be one of the terms (contradiction in terms) but a judgmental one (an exercitive contradiction). Here the truth is expressed in 'synthetic – a-priori judgments (in our sense, not necessarily Kant's). And the evidence thus based on such kind of evidence, again admitting of no possible or conceivable

exception, can also be called 'absolute'. Thus I am absolutely certain that I exist, that I can know at least something for sure, that what is and cannot not to be at the same time, etc.

As we know, Sankara (and advaita in general) says that 'maya' can be said neither to be 'real' nor 'unreal' nor 'both real and unreal'. In terms of 'logical values', advaita, unlike Western Logic does not operate with a 'two-valued logic' (i.e. 'true' and 'false') but with a 'three-valued' one, i.e. true (real), false (unreal) and 'indescribable'. Hence the relation between 'true' and 'false' is not a contradictory one but only a contrary one. That is to say, if 'p' (standing for a thing, concept or proposition) is false, one cannot infer that therefore 'non-p' is true (for it can be neither false nor true) – or in other words, to say that 'Maya' is not real (false), one cannot infer that therefore it is real (true). But does all this really disprove the Law of Non-contradiction and the Law of Excluded Middle. We think not. (Later on, however, we shall try and explain that these laws – and a 'two-valued' – operate only when what is asserted or denied are understood in a univocal sense. When we apply it to religious language, they have to be applied in a qualified way.) Even a 'three-valued Logic' can be ultimately reduced to a 'two-valued Logic': either what you are saying is true (that a 'three-valued Logic' is possible and valid) or it is false!

A similar position is held by the Buddhist Nagarjuna (and Madhyamika in general). Of no object whatever can we say that it is 'real' (for 'real' means 'existent in its own right, non-related and non-originated), or 'unreal' (for somehow it exists, it appears), or 'both real and non-real' or 'neither real nor unreal' (for in these two latter cases, that would be more gibberish). This is the famous way of arguing according to the four 'categories of thought and speech' (catuskotis). Notice, first of all, that Madhyamika makes use of this destructive dialectic not to deny the empirical value of Logic, truth and knowledge, but simply to show that from an 'ultimate point of view', the phenomenal world is not the 'really real' – which is indescribable and beyond these categories of thought and speech. Secondly it is clear from the third and fourth category, the statements would be gibberish precisely because they would express contradictory propositions! Only if 'real' and 'non-real' were understood in an analogical sense, would the statement be intelligible. So, once again the catuskoti logic does not disprove the Principle of Contradiction and that of the Excluded Middle, as we understand them. But from this Madhyamika Logic a lot can be learnt with respect to the use of logical language to speak about reality 'from an ultimate point of view'.

Again, something similar (but not quite similar) is found in the Jain doctrine regarding the 'indeterminate' and 'multi-faceted' reality (*Anekantavada*). No one thing can be understood thoroughly for that would require that one knew it from all points of views and in all its relations. Only from an 'ultimate point of view' can one know everything (*Kevalajnana*). So, from the everyday and empirical point of view, we have always to qualify our judgments as 'somehow' ('syat') true or 'somehow' false. (This is the Jain '*syadvada*' theory of knowledge)

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1. What is the scholastic definition of certitude?

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2. How do we obtain the evidence of the truth of propositions in logic?

3.7 PHYSICAL CERTITUDE

Here we are in the field of the knowledge of the things, of their properties and ways of acting, the realm therefore of Science. The evidence of the truth of the laws of Nature is obtained by, first of all, sense-perception, verification or falsification by laboratory-conducted experiments of hypotheses formed, etc. here, the opposite of a given law is not, at least theoretically inconceivable. Its truth is subject to our further understanding of how nature works, so to say. In this field the only possible certitude we can have – and the only one to be expected is ‘physical certitude’. It is not ‘absolute’ but ‘hypothetical’ – in the sense that I can say, “Yes”, I am sure on the possible evidence given so far”. Hence I can say I am sure, certain, that the sun will rise from the east, that action and reaction are equal and opposite, that the volume of a gas at constant temperature varies inversely with the pressure, etc. (We need not to have recourse to the possibility of ‘miracle’ to explain the hypothetical kind of ‘physical certitude’. The language of modern scientists about the ‘provisional’ character of all scientific laws is enough.)

3.8 MORAL CERTITUDE

Please note that here we have to be careful for unlike the previous usages of the term ‘certain’ (or sure) which is a philosophical technical one, the usage of the term ‘to be morally sure’ is also an everyday common one. We often use such expressions as, “I am morally sure that the exam is postponed till next month” – by which is meant that “I am pretty sure that...”, “I have good strong reasons to believe that ...”, etc. So we have distinguished between at least three meanings of ‘moral certitude’ :

‘Certitude’ in the field of knowledge of Ethics which studies how we should behave, the general norms and principles which should help him judge what is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ both in general and day-to-day situations, especially in ‘conflict-situations’ etc. we are aware how, especially today, how certain questions regarding the moral justifiability of certain actions (e.g. nuclear warfare, capital punishment, abortion, birth control, etc.) are debated. We are all aware too that certain ways of behaviour or of action which in the past were normally justified, today they are morally condemned (e.g. slavery), or vice-versa (e.g. exacting interest on loans). This uncertainty can lead one to say that no certitude at all can be had in ‘moral matters’ and each one is to let himself be guided either by one’s conscience or, at most, by the current customs of one’s people. The disastrous consequences of such a position can easily be ascertained. The thing is that people expect a kind of certitude in ‘moral matters’ which is neither possible nor even to be expected.

So, how is the 'evidence' of the truths in moral matters obtained? Here, of course, different methods can be and are used. If one based one's Ethics on the immediate data of (moral) consciousness – which, as we said, can be seen to be self-evident' (e.g. the good is to be done, evil to be avoided; if an ought to do what is right, he can do what is right; man ought to fulfill himself as a man; etc.), then some truths in moral matters can be known with absolute certainty. This part could be considered as a part of Ontology itself and thus of these ontological certitude is possible. But as for the rest, evidence is obtained by good arguments – which bring us to the third meaning of 'moral certitude'. We shall examine second meaning first.

A second meaning of 'moral certitude' is that which can be had in the field of knowledge of human nature, its psychological make-up, human's social relationships and history. This is the realm of the Human (Social) Sciences. What kind of evidence can be obtained for the truths of these Sciences? Naturally much depends on each Science. Sociology or Psychology use different methods than that of History, for example, depending on the way evidence is obtained, the kind of certitude possible would be different. But both Sociology and Psychology study, certain human behaviour constants. These, of course, are different for those constants studied and formulated as 'physical laws' – for here man is, because of his freedom, less predictable than things. But if I am told that "an exploited class will sooner or later revolt", that "a given culture is largely determined by its economy", that "the population growth is inversely proportionate to technology and urbanization", what evidence can I have for that and how do I obtain it? It is clear that the evidence here is obtained through observation (which today is conducted on very scientific basis). The certitude based on such evidence cannot amount to 'physical certitude' – the field of knowledge, to start with, is different, and consequently the kind of evidence obtained in both is different. Precisely because this evidence, in most of the Social Sciences, is based on the observation of the usual ways of human behaviour ("*mores*"), the certitude which is only possible here is 'moral certitude' (in this second sense).

A third meaning (and the fourth one which follows) meaning of 'moral certitude' is taken more from the everyday usage of the term and has nothing to do with any particular field of knowledge. Whenever the only evidence I have for a given truth is 'testimony' (witness, the spoken or written word of a reliable person) the only certitude which is possible and to be expected here is 'moral certitude' in this third sense. And no matter what the field of knowledge is. About a given law of nature, the scientist can have 'physical certitude' but a non-scientist, who relies on his competence and reliability, can only have about the same matter 'moral certitude'. We spoke at some length about this kind of knowledge based on 'testimony' and its 'reasonableness' and how, in point of fact, most of our knowledge is thus based on it. We need not repeat all that here.

A fourth meaning, important to bear in mind, of 'moral certitude' is when the evidence, no matter what the field of knowledge is, is based on good reasons. 'Testimony' may be one – but if it is only one, then we have 'moral certitude' in the third sense. Here one has to have more than that. Notice that even in Science, the scientist may start by having good reasons to form a hypothesis. At that stage he has moral certitude about the truth of his hypothesis, by further research, moral certitude can become physical certitude. But in Human Sciences, the greater amount of reasons makes the truth more probable, never a physical one (unless one proves that the question at issue is a physical phenomenon!) When we spoke of 'moral matters' we said that apart from a small amount of truths, the greater part are based on good reasons. Of these we can

only have ‘moral certitude’ in this fourth sense. This need not dismay us. On the contrary this should liberate us from that anxiety to look for absolute certitude where such a thing is neither possible nor to be expected.

In fact, ‘moral certitude’ in the fourth sense is ‘stronger’ than the one in the third sense. Actually, ‘moral certitude’ in the third sense is the weakest of the lot, but still it could, given the nature of the case (i.e., How can I be sure who my parents are?), or the actual conditions of the knower (i.e., How can I be sure that there are a North and a South Pole?), it is the only ‘moral certitude’ to be expected. But notice that often moral responsibility demands that, given the nature of the case and the actual conditions of the knower, the latter should not content himself with it, e.g. the doctor in the exercise of his duties with the patients, the counsellor with the counselee. Hence the distinction between ‘ignorance’ (absence of that knowledge and moral certitude expected) and ‘nescience’ (absence of that knowledge and moral certitude not expected from one.)

3.9 RELIGIOUS CERTITUDE

Here we are in the field of religious knowledge. But a lot has first to be said before we can adequately tackle the nature of religious certitude, the kind of evidence on which it is based, how we go about obtaining such evidence, the nature of religious truth and the kind of language it is expressed in. All we have said so far in this section is meant to clear the ground for the religious epistemological question!

But by way of anticipation, lest we should leave the question of ‘religious certitude’ hanging in the air, so to speak, we could from now pass the following remarks. In our way of proceeding where we are distinguishing meanings of certitudes (or kinds of certitude) on the basis of both of the field of knowledge and, consequently, on the kind of evidence possible in that field, it is already to be foreseen that the kind of religious certitude possible and to be expected, given the specificity of the field of knowledge concerned – will be specifically different, at least at some stage or level of the process by which one obtains it, from every other kind.

It is an observable fact that most people ‘inherit’ so to say, religious beliefs from their parents, educators, etc. Hence the conditioning factor here wrought by ‘society’ on one’s religious beliefs (and for that matter on other beliefs of his political, social and other fields). This, of course, raises the question whether and to what extent such conditioned religious knowledge is genuine knowledge. But that is not what concerns us here directly. What concerns us here is to observe that at the beginning – and in most cases, throughout one’s life – man’s religious belief is based on the witness, testimony, of others. We discussed the conditions under which it could be considered ‘reasonable’, but, at any rate, the ‘certitude’ based on it can only be ‘moral certitude’ in the third meaning of the term explained above.)

Even at a higher (or deeper) level, when one starts thinking out for oneself, if his religious beliefs remain based on the evidence of his respective scriptures (“written testimony”), his certitude can only be ‘moral certitude’ – and his religious beliefs remain ‘beliefs’. Still if at this stage, one sees more and more reasons to confirm, corroborate, justify, his religious belief – indicating the reasonableness of his act of believing in those particular Scriptures and in their contents, answering difficulties which may arise in a reasonable way, showing the untenability of opposite beliefs in a fairly convincing way etc. – then he can be said to be ‘morally certain’ in the fourth

sense of the term. A ‘convergence of probabilities’ (Newman), in this respect, can even amount to something like, but perhaps not quite, ‘ontological certitude’ – if, that is, this convergence can be seen to point to, or to be finally based upon, a ‘self-evident truth’ insightfully intuited.

Many great philosophers, who were at the same time great religious men, claim something further – and herein lies, according to us, the specificity of ‘religious certitude’. And this is the more noteworthy since these men belong to different religious traditions. They claim a direct perception of supra-sensible Reality, of reality in its ultimate significance, in its Ultimacy (or ultimate causes). Hence they distinguish two levels of reality (the empirical and the transcendental) two levels of experience (the vyavaharika-drsti, and the paramartika-drsti, according to Vedanta, Jaina and Buddha and the rational and sapiential according to Christianity), and hence two levels of knowledge and of certitude.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1. Briefly speaking, what is the second meaning of ‘moral certitude’?

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2. What is the specificity of religious certitude?

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3.10 TOWARDS OF JUSTIFICATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Our next set of topics will be about a set of questions concerning knowledge and its justification. Distinguishing the skeptical questions from “Socratic” questions, we will dwell on what justification of knowledge implies. Some background knowledge and specially on propositional knowledge may be useful (Feldman 2010). The traditional, tripartite understanding is that knowledge is justified true belief. This implies that what is needed in addition to true belief is traditionally said to be “good reasons” or “evidence” or “justification”. So, the traditional analysis of knowledge holds that knowledge is justified true belief, having good evidence. In other words

S knows that p if and only if

- i) S believes that p;
- ii) it is true that p;
- iii) S is justified in believing that p.

3) These three conditions must all be satisfied independent if in the case of a justified true knowledge. If only any two of the above conditions are satisfied then we assure that the knowledge is not fully justified.

3.11 SOME ISSUES ON JUSTIFICATION

1) Justification of knowledge needed for epistemology requires very strong reasons. There can be reasons that make belief more reasonable than denial or suspension of judgment, but still fall short of reasons good enough for knowledge. E.g., weather forecasts, election forecasts, etc. (Feldman 2010)

2) But in many cases knowledge does not always require absolute certainty. Perhaps we can have something like evidence that puts the proposition beyond all reasonable doubt, though not beyond all possible doubt. Eg., All lights are on in my room, water freezes at 00 C (under normal conditions), etc.

3) A related idea is that justification does not guarantee truth. Victims of perfect hallucinations, or extremely well-done deceptions, may have justified but false beliefs, but may be rarely false.

4) Evidence and practical reasons: There is a big difference between having evidence for the truth of a proposition and a motivation for believing it. Thus justification need not always lead to practical consequences. This is because there are difference between reasons for belief and reasons for acting.

5) Sources of justified belief (and knowledge) are perception, introspection, memory, reason. These are psychological processes in us and may be faulty at times.

6) What about intuition, faith, and mystical experience? Can they be fully justified? Please note a difference between intuition as something weird and spooky and as merely acute deep perception (which no doubt exists and is, I think, a source of justification). Whether the others are a source of knowledge and justification is a more contentious issue. Notice that we have considerable evidence about the nature and merits of perception and memory and we lack comparable evidence about the merits of faith or mystical experience. So there does seem to be a basis for treating them differently.

7) William K. Clifford's Principle is noteworthy: "It is wrong always, everywhere and for anyone to believe anything upon insufficient evidence." Though theoretically this principle is perfect, it is not always clear what he meant by "insufficient". The principle says that it is wrong to believe when the evidence is not supportive. We can generalize: and assert that it is wrong to disbelieve when the evidence is supportive, wrong to suspend judgment when the evidence is not counterbalanced. In other words: overall evidence determines which is the right attitude (Feldman 2010). The significance of Clifford's principle is that it says that evidence is the determining factor. How important something is, how nice it would be for it to be true, etc., make no difference.

8) A popular slogan is: everyone has a right to believe what they want. As a legal principle, that seems admirable, since we do not want thought censoring and moral policing. But as an epistemological principle, this slogan is mistaken and it conflicts with the suggested interpretation of Clifford's principle. Clifford's principle is good enough principle, provided we clarify that is "insufficient evidence."

3.12 UNJUSTIFIED BELIEFS

There is a large literature detailing with situations in which people have unjustified beliefs - beliefs that are not supported by their evidence. Thinking about some of these cases can help to clarify the concept of justification. Since some of the errors, as pointed out by Richard Feldman,

University of Rochester, are relevant in our discussion on the justification of beliefs, it will be useful to review them here. They point out to the fact that in spite of the best efforts of epistemologists, human belief and convictions are not always based on justified knowledge. Sometimes they prefer to act according to unjustified beliefs.

1) Refusal to revise one's view in the light of conflicting evidence.

The Millerites were a religious group who predicted that the end of the world was coming soon. As the dates passed, each time they pushed back the date a little rather than acknowledge the overall weakness of their general view. Or they even stick to their diagnoses in the face of undermining evidence, with some made up explanations for why things did not exactly happen as they predicted. They just refuse to revise one's convictions on the basis of conflicting evidence.

In such cases, it seems that the order in which you get the evidence does not matter. The example of a detective is insightful: Some evidence makes me suspect that A is guilty, and I believe it. Then I get comparable evidence that it's B. But because I already believed or tend to believe it, I do not revise my belief.

2) Confirmation bias

This is a tendency to look for evidence that confirms what we already believe rather than evidence that goes against it. For example, after conflicting studies, arguments, the tendency is that both sides became more convinced of their initial views. An argument normally reinforces my position. Along these lines is another fact: we tend to hang out with like-minded people, who will reinforce our prejudices.

But notice the difference between getting biased information treating competing evidence in an inequitable way. The latter is an error of rationality. The former is a different sort of error - perhaps we can say that there are errors in dealing with the evidence we have and errors in collecting evidence. But if we know that our sources are not representative, then we have reason to treat them differently than if you don't know that. And if we don't have reason to think that our sources are in some way biased, then it's not clear that we have made any error of rationality at all.

Yet another point to note is this: If we have good reason to think that one group is more reliable about a topic than another, and we hang out with the people you have good reason to believe to be reliable, and then our beliefs are shaped by them, it's hard to see that we are making any kind of error. This leads to further confirmation bias.

3) Availability error

It is to base judgments on vivid or memorable evidence, rather than on reliable evidence. Example: Using personal recommendations rather than statistics (as in forming beliefs about which car or computer is most reliable.).

This makes for puzzling example about lunar effect: People believe the position of the moon can affect behaviour and make people crazy (therefore, the term 'lunatics'). Careful study undermines this. One explanation is that the cases of crazed behavior in a full moon are more memorable. Media reporting is another. But on the latter option, what is our evidence about this?

4) Ignoring the evidence

From time to time we engage in such things as wishful thinking or fearful thinking. Example: optimistic and pessimistic students. In many cases our emotions rather than our evidence guide our beliefs. When the resulting beliefs are unsupported, they are epistemically unjustified even if they have some important personal value.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1. William K. Clifford's Principle?

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2. Enumerate four ways of having (or justifying) unjustified belief?

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3.13 LET US SUM UP

After having spoken of the kinds of certitudes, we understand knowledge as justified true beliefs. We took up some issue connected with justification and evidence. Then we saw briefly some reasons for unjustified beliefs and why people keep on holding to them, in spite of contrary evidences.

3.14 KEY WORDS

Nescience is the absence of that knowledge and moral certitude not expected from one.

Syadvada: From the everyday and empirical point of view, we have always to qualify our judgments as 'somehow' ('syat') true or 'somehow' false. This is the Jain 'syadvada' theory of knowledge.

3.15 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 4 JUSTIFICATION: MODERN APPROACH

Contents

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- 4.2 That species of Justification called epistemic justification
- 4.3 Justification and evidence
- 4.4 Truth and justification
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4.0 OBJECTIVES

Often today's world gets defined as knowledge world. But what knowledge itself is something that demands priority over the various types of knowledge that we value today. Knowledge when gets analyzed carries justification as one of its prime conditions. This unit aims to define justification and segregate epistemic justification from other varieties of justification. Then we shall explore the relation between justification and truth. Different theories of justification are propounded on the basis of the conception how inferential justification chain gets terminated. The major theories of justification, namely Foundationalism, Coherentism, Contextualism and Reliabilism will be analyzed separately. Towards the end a brief sketch of the well known controversy between internalism and externalism will be detailed.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Analysis of knowledge concentrates on that category of knowing which philosophers sometimes call factual knowledge. This is roughly knowing that such and such is the case, in the contrast of knowing how to do something, or knowing a person. This information sense of knowledge, from the time of Plato, has been accomplished by its subjective requirement, namely belief, and objective requirement namely truth. However, Plato himself concealed that it is not enough for one's belief hits the truth. This belief must not be true by chance, the person acquiring it must use some reliable method appropriate for acquiring such a belief. This is called Justification. In fact, justification of belief is said to constitute the subject matter of epistemology. Why is justification considered as the central theme in knowledge analysis? Does it carry more weightage than the other two conditions of knowledge, namely truth and belief? This unit intends to address these questions in detail.

Of late epistemologists have realized that the major pitfall in the historical form of standard analysis, namely the JTB analysis is that we have not adequately explicated the connection between justification and truth. In any case, as Chisholm says, at present our understanding of what is it for a proposition to be justified is very much similar to what is it to be moral or well mannered. This vagueness has caused an eventful era in the history of epistemology, known as

Gettier era. This begins in 1963 when Edmund L. Gettier has published a two paged article titled 'Is justified true belief knowledge?'. Herein Gettier advocates two counter examples to the existing form of standard analysis. A Gettier counter example is one in which a person has a justified but false belief by inference from which he justifiably believes something which happens to be true. As a result he arrives at a justifiably true belief which is not knowledge.

The Gettier aftermath has prompted philosophers to revise knowledge analysis and the crucial revisions were effected in justification condition. The traditional internalistic conception of justification has been identified fallible and this made them think of an externalistic alternative to justification. In fact the externalistic tendency in epistemic justification should be read together with other contemporary trends like naturalism in epistemology. It is our experience that we have at our disposal certain beliefs which are instances of justified belief and few others which are unjustified ones. While the laymen are neither conscious nor capable to discern the criterion of their distinction the epistemologist takes upon himself this task of eliciting their criterion. 'What could be the necessary and sufficient conditions of belief being justified?' Different answers lie at the root of the different theories of justification. The exact significance of the concept of justification is this that it evaluates the cognitive agent to have immediate accessibility to truth, which otherwise is external to him.

In order to understand the notion of justification there are two questions we need to ask: first, what is the strength of justification needed for knowledge and second, what is the underlying nature of justification itself? Before addressing these questions, it is essential that we discern that variety of justification called epistemic justification.

4.2 THAT SPECIES OF JUSTIFICATION CALLED EPISTEMIC JUSTIFICATION

It is evident that knowledge is not simply true belief. An epistemic acceptance (belief) which happens to be true does not suffice for knowledge. A groundless conjecture, say a superstitious man walking inadvertently under a ladder might believe that he was about to suffer some misfortune and it may turn out to be true as well, but still we would not credit knowledge to him. For here he arrived at his conviction by a process of reasoning which is unreliable. This necessitates that true belief qualifying as knowledge must be based on good evidence. The condition may be formulated thus:

"If S knows that *p*, then S is *completely* justified in accepting that *p*"

The italicized term *completely* in the locution requires a further explanation. The reason for necessitating that a person be completely justified rather than simply justified is to indicate that slight justification is not enough.

As we know, there are many specific varieties of justification in use in our daily life. There fore, it is imperative that we distinguish epistemic justification, as that species of justification which is appropriate to belief or judgments rather than to actions, decisions and so on. But this classification would not take us a long way since there are other species of justification which also can apply to beliefs.

Epistemic justification in our sense is disinterested justification, for the epistemic justification of a belief does not depend on person's desiring that belief to be true. It is clear that a belief's being in one's best prudential interest is never a sufficient condition

for that belief's being epistemic ally justified. Therefore, epistemic justification may be distinguished from prudential justification.

Epistemic justification may also be distinguished citing differences between doxastic and propositional justification. The former (doxastic) variety of justification amounts to a person's being justified in believing some proposition and the latter (propositional) is suggestive of some propositions being justified for a person. It is obvious that the doxastic justification is that which is essential for epistemic justification, for otherwise a proposition could be justified for S even if S were not justified in believing it.

Within epistemic justification we could also distinguish between one's being justified in believing that p and one's justifying belief that p . The former is justification before the event and the latter justification after it where one is doing something to show that p , to exhibit that one's belief is justified. Epistemic justification currently under consideration runs in terms of the former since that alone is the type of justification which speaks of a state or condition one is in not anything one does or any upshot there of.

Roderick. M. Chisholm remarks that the term 'justify' in its application to a belief is used as a term of epistemic appraisal. The term epistemic appraisal is suggestive of two things:

1. The term *justify* is a term of appraisal, and hence it, like the concepts of validity or rightness and unlike the concept of sweetness or softness is an evaluative concept.

2. The evaluation is epistemic in nature and hence to be distinguished from other kinds of evaluations like moral, legal, religious or prudential. The evaluation is done here from the epistemic viewpoint. The epistemic viewpoint may be defined by the aim at maximizing truth and minimizing falsity in a large body of beliefs. Infact what distinguishes epistemic justification from other kinds of justification is its special relation to truth. The epistemic subject ought to keep before himself the goals of believing the true and not believing the false.

The above discussion speaks of distinctive features of epistemic justification. However, it is not clear as to what it is for a belief to be justified. Generally a person is said to be justified in believing that p *iff* his belief is based on adequate grounds. What is it for a subject to have adequate *grounds*? As W.P. Alston observes, it is to say that the present belief could be inferentially drawn from the other beliefs or experiences which are strongly indicative of the truth of the belief. Let us explore further the so called *adequate grounds* or evidences and their relation to justification.

4.3 JUSTIFICATION AND EVIDENCE

Philosophers commonly think of epistemic justification as evidence or warrant for a proposition. However there is a disagreement over what exactly qualifies as justifying evidence. All evidences for a belief may not be justifying. Evidence is justifying if it consists of good and relevant reasons. Keith Lehrer suggests that evidence represents the conviction of a man concerning the chances of truth of a sentence in the light of his experience, reason and testimony of others and therefore, is entirely subjective. Following Lehrer we may stipulate the rule for the selection of evidence thus: accept a

sentence as evidence if it has a higher subjective probability than any sentence with which it competes for the status of evidence. In order to work out this method of choosing evidences, we must first of all specify with which empirical sentences a given sentence must compete. Whether a sentence is to be accepted as evidence invariably arises in some context and with regard to some hypothesis. Let us call it *touchstone hypothesis*. The sentences that compete for the status of evidence are the ones that are relevant to the touchstone hypothesis. A sentence S is relevant to a hypothesis H if the probability of H , $P(H)$ is either less than the probability of H on S , $P(H/S)$ in which case S is favorably relevant to H , or $P(H)$ is greater than $P(H/S)$, in which case S is unfavorably relevant to H . Assuming that the class of sentences thus chosen is a finite one, we may place them in numerical order $S_1, S_2, \dots, S_n$. Further we may attempt to reduce the members of this class by constructing maximal conjunction containing every S , or its negation, but not both. Such a net of proposition may be called the conception set for H . With this we shall formulate the condition for the acceptance of sentences as evidence: accept e as evidence relevant to H if e is member of the competition set C for H and $P(e)$ is greater than $P(s)$ for any S in C with which e competes.

This clearly points out that the prime role of justification is to connect knowledge with the truth. Therefore, let us address the relation between justification and truth.

4.4 TRUTH AND JUSTIFICATION

One can speak of a two fold relation between epistemic justification and truth: In a trivial sense, to say that one is justified in believing a given proposition is the something as to say that one is justified in believing that the proposition is true. Secondly, in the non-trivial sense, if I want to believe what is true and disbelieve what is false, then the most reasonable thing for me to do is to believe what is rationally justified and not to believe what is not justified. To say differently, one should accept those propositions alone which have good reasons to support. To accept a belief in the absence of such reasons is held to be epistemically blameworthy because it neglects the epistemic pursuit of truth.

Edmund L. Gettier while challenging the JTB definition of knowledge makes it clear that there are two presuppositions involved in his counter examples: first one is that a false belief can be justified. This has in fact questioned the close relation between epistemic justification and truth. While one could view these two as conceptually distinct components of knowledge, a variety of philosophers from Descartes to the present, have presupposed the view that justification and truth are conceptually related. It is conceived that there is an internal connection between a belief's being justified and being true. The strongest view regarding truth connection is affirming that the connection is logical. That is to say that if conditions (e) justify a belief for a person, then those conditions logically entailed that the belief is true. This Cartesian view has been discarded by contemporary philosophers who have instead adopted a fallibilistic theory of justification. A fallibilistic theory allows that when e make p justified for S , it is still possible that p is false. The condition under which we are justified in believing p in the requisite sense failed to guarantee the truth of p . Why fallibilism in epistemic justification? Let us explore further.

From the cognitive agent's view point there seems to be no difference between ascertaining that *somebody is justified in believing that it is true that p* and *it is true that p* . That is to say, in order to ascertain that the truth condition is satisfied there is nothing one has to do or can do in addition to ascertaining that the justification condition is satisfied. That is why some philosophers at least consider truth condition as redundant in knowledge analysis. In knowing truth there is nothing that the knower can do except having a fully justified belief in what he supposes to be true. In fact, no subject can supply the truth condition: it has to be satisfied only by the proposition or by the object about which the subject wants to assert. All that the knowing subject can do is to go on collecting maximum evidences to strengthen his justification in favour of the truth of the proposition in question. But the truth of the proposition does not lie within the justification of the believer. If a belief is true, it is true not because the believer has made it true but because it corresponds to fact. Hence it is observed that the satisfaction of justification condition, however complete it may appear, does not entail satisfaction of the truth condition. In brief truth and justification are two conceptually independent concepts. Granting this, we may better settle down with a fallibilist theory of justification which would permit us to claim atleast a few cases of knowledge where we are fortunate enough to hit at the truth. It is hoped that if our standards of epistemic justification are appropriately chosen, bringing it about that our beliefs are epistemically justified will also tend to bring it about that they are true.

The only obvious way to show that an empirical belief p is justified is by producing an argument to the effect that it is shown as justified by citing some other empirical belief, q and pointing out that p in some acceptable way can be inferred from q . In an inferential justification, it is not necessary that the person explicitly rehearses the justifying argument in question to others or to himself, that would be a luxury one indulges in only in special situations. All that is required is that this inferential route be available to the agent so that in case that belief is called in to question she should be able to make it explicit. A little reflection would reveal that one has to clearly stipulate theories regarding how she wishes to terminate this inferential justification chain. Depending on how one wishes to terminate this inferential justification chain, philosophers have conceived different theories of justification. What follows is a brief enumeration of major theories of justification.

4. THEORIES OF JUSTIFICATION

Foundationalism: This is the oldest of all theories according to which inferential justification chain terminates with belief that are immediately justified, beliefs that do not depend on any other beliefs for their justification. It is claimed here that if we try Socratically to formulate any claim to know we will come to a stopping place where the fact that P is the sole reason for my justifiably believing that p . Chisholm call these stopping place as directly evident propositions. In brief foundationalists distinguish two kinds of justified beliefs: some beliefs that are justified independently of their relationships to other beliefs, and some other beliefs that are justified because of their relationship to other beliefs. The first sort of belief is called *foundational* and second sort is called *nonfoundational*. The central thesis of foundationalism thus can be presented in the following arguments: a) Some empirical beliefs possess a measure of epistemic

justification which is somehow immediate or intrinsic to them, and do not depend, inferentially or otherwise on the epistemic justification of other empirical beliefs, and b) the basic beliefs (foundational beliefs) are the ultimate source of justification for all empirical knowledge. All other empirical beliefs derive their justification from standing in appropriate inferential evidential relation to the members of this epistemically privileged class. To borrow the Leibnitzian terminology, the self moved movers of the epistemic realm contribute the foundation upon which empirical knowledge rests.

Now what are the conditions for a belief to be basic? For a belief to be basic it must meet two conditions: 1) It must be self justified and must not be justified by any non basic belief and 2) it must be either irrefutable or if refutable, must only be refutable by other basic beliefs.

The above picture of foundationalism suggests that the structure of justified thought is like a building. The foundation of the building rests on the strong basic / foundational belief which is irrefutable (ideally). They are self justified. The higher levels of the building consisting of mediate beliefs which get justified because of their relationship to other beliefs. The analogy is perfect, just as the upper parts of the building rest on its foundation so too the non basic beliefs rest on the basic beliefs.

Typically foundationalists claim that beliefs about our perceptual states are self evident and infallible. This is objected. Many philosophers point out that perceptual belief cannot be included in the list of infallible propositions. On the other hand, if we have any indubitable beliefs, they are so few in number that they could not provide a foundation for the rest of what we obviously know. Apart from this, there is also the problem about the way non foundationalist beliefs are said to rest on foundational beliefs. The Foundationalist has two options: one might require foundational beliefs logically to imply non foundational beliefs or one might relax this requirement. As we shall see neither option seems to work. If the foundationalist requires foundational beliefs logically to imply non foundational beliefs, then most beliefs turn out to be unjustified. The foundationalist then must claim that the foundational beliefs need not logically imply non foundational beliefs. This means that foundational beliefs can be non-logical evidence for non-foundationalist beliefs. But non logical evidence is called as non defeasible evidence. If E is non- logical evidence for some proposition C then it will be possible to defeat E's support for C by adding new information. With this foundationalism is in for trouble, for if foundational belief is defeasible evidence for non foundational beliefs then it fails its very definition. As we know, one of the conditions of foundationalism is that the foundationalist beliefs must not be defeated by other things one believes. Subsequently we realize that foundationalism depend on the global condition that no defeats be present for those foundational beliefs.

To conclude, it is not clear that we have indubitable beliefs. And even if we admit foundational belief, they are realized as those which are defeasible . This suggests that our proposition get justified because of the way our evidence globally fit together. This is suggestive of coherent theory of justification. On the Coherentist solution to the regress problem, there need not be any basic beliefs because all beliefs may be justified by their

relation to others by mutual support. The edifice of justification stands because of the way in which the parts fit together and delicately support each other. Coherentists also deny the claim that the justification need proceed until all claims to knowledge are themselves justified. Justification of knowledge claims need proceed only as long as some claims to knowledge is disputed.

There is a general distinction drawn between negative and positive epistemic **Coherentism**. Negative Coherentism asserts that a person justifiably believes a proposition so long as he does not have a reason to refrain from believing it. Positive Coherentism assigns a positive function to reasons, to produce positive support. For justified beliefs Keith Lehrer has suggested the following scheme for the positive coherence theory: a person S is justified in believing a proposition P *iff* P coheres with the other beliefs belonging to a system of beliefs kind K. Two immediate question spring from into: 1) what kind of system is kind K? and in what way must a belief cohere with other beliefs belonging to a system of belief to be justified. To consider the second question first; the traditional defenders of Coherentism, namely idealist have conceive coherence relation, as a relation of necessary connection, or entailment. This requirement of classical coherentists is untenable: Philosophers have come to an agreement that such a logical entailment is not necessary for complete justification. The second issue addresses the problem 'what kind of a belief system must a justified belief cohere with?' There are, for example, certain science fictions that are obviously erroneous and the coherence of a belief with system of that sort is not sufficient for justification. Infact, the proponents of a coherence theory of justification have not yet arrived at a uniform resolution of this problem. Thus the notion of maximal coherence is intolerably vague. Philosophers of the present have attempted to meet this requirement and have offered modified versions of coherence theory of justification.

Contextualism - Contextualism is yet another theory of justification. Contextualist maintain that in the context of an inquiry or discussion, the truth or acceptability of some proposition will be taken for granted by the discussion. These proposition though themselves are unjustified can be used to provide inferential justification for other proposition. Contextualists seem to be holding that the foundation of justification are those beliefs that a certain community of believes takes for granted or accepts without any reasons. But they do not specify who the relevant fellow believers are and what is the minimum number of believers required for a belief to be justified. These apart S's awareness of the consensus of his fellow believers is left out totally. Above all this social consensus cannot provide the required reason to believe anything to be true. Social consensus will empower one to say only what is believed by certain people. But being believed cannot be a good reason for being qualified as true. Further, the concept of social consensus is laden with vagueness. Nothing is specified about whose consensus in epistemically significant, and what kind of consensus constitutes epistemic consensus. Last but not the least, being preoccupied with the social consensus contextualists has ignored the individual's epistemic perspective which has a priority over other social consensus.

4.6 INTERNALISM VS EXTERNALISM

Of late philosophers have noted that the regress problem has two versions : One version deals with people's abilities to be justified in holiday beliefs. Questions about the nature and extend of believer's awareness of their justification are not directly relevant to this version of the problem. The second version, on the other, addresses people in abilities to identify their justification responsive to the issue of being justified and being able to identify justification are respectively called externalism and internalism. As the labels indicate, internalist theories try to account for justified through appeal to internal features of S, and externalist theories try to do the same through appeal to external features of S.

Internalism: Internalist position will restrict justifies to items that are within the subject. Now the issue turns on what kind of access a thinker has to the feature in question. In this literature of internalism, we find two senses in which the phrase is used. 1. Being within the subject's perspective and 2. Being accessible to the subject in some special way. The former is called *perspectival internalism* and the latter *access internalism*.

According to both version of internalism, as the subject shifts from one situation to another, so longer his beliefs and sensory information remain constant, the evidential status of his belief also will remain constant. Clearly the truth of S's belief need not remain known after he has shifted to rigged circumstances. Thus, the justification theories, internalistically conceived cannot succeed become an epistemic situation that is not rigged may be doxastically similar to that of rigged.

Externalism: Externalism represents a substantial departure from it general tradition. Externalist claim that although there must indeed exist a reason why a basic empirical belief is likely to be true, the person for whom the belief is basic need not himself have the cognitive grasp of the reason. According to them epistemic justification of a basic belief derives from obtaining of an appropriate relation, causal or nomological between the believer and the world. If truth is an epistemic goal we may define justification in terms of this goal. Some relationship to the external world accounting for the truth of our belief suffices to convert true belief into knowledge without our having any idea of that relationship. It is not our conception of how we are related to a fact that yields knowledge but simply our being so related to it.

The most common version of externalism is Reliabilism. The idea is to ground justification in the reliability of belief forming processes. To specify the conditional:

“S's belief in P is justified *iff* S's belief in *p* is produced by a reliable process.”

Reliabilism is a plausible alternative for the following reasons.

1. Since truth is our epistemic goal, reliable belief forming mechanisms are the right means to this goal.
2. Just like justification, Reliabilism also comes in degrees. The greater the availability of evidences, the better will be the justificatory status of our belief. In brief the graded nature of justification matches the graded nature of reliability.
3. The rational and reliable belief forming processes do coincide. There is a close intuitive connection between epistemic justification and reliability.

Though Reliabilism emerges as a plausible solution to the problem faced internalism some nagging questions like, 'Is Reliabilism necessary for justification?' 'Is reliability sufficient for justification' etc reduce its colour.

4.7 LET US SUM UP

The following are the main derivations from this Unit

1. Propositional knowledge or complex relation between a person and a true proposition.
 2. To have knowledge, a person must be fallibly justified in believing a true proposition.
 3. It should be no accident that what the person believes is true.
 4. Epistemic Justifications that species of Justification relevant to beliefs rather than actions. It is disinterested justification unlike prudential justification.
 5. While collecting evidences one may use a touch stone hypothesis to create a competition set, from which one can draw the most suited ones as evidence.
 6. There is an internal connection between truth and justification. Justification is the bridge between our subjective belief and objective truth.
 7. Various theories of justification are formed according to one's conception of how inferential justification chain could be terminated.
 8. Philosophers generally draw a distinction between internalism and externalism in epistemic justification.
 9. Internalism maintains that the agent should have cognitive access to evidence while externalism insists that justification should be linked with truth.
 10. Theories like Foundationalism, Coherentism and Contextualism are all internalistic theories. Reliabilism is a typical example for externalistic justification.
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4.8 KEY WORDS

Justification:	Rational warrant for ones believing a particular proposition.
Fallibilism:	The possibility of a proposition or justification to fail.
Internalism:	A variety of justification where the agent will have the access to the evidences put forth for justification.
Externalism of P.	Epistemic theories that appeal to the external features of S for justification
Foundationalism:	A theory of Justification which claims that inferential justification chain get terminated with basic beliefs which are incorrigible.
Coherentism:	A theory of justification which proclaims that epistemic justification of a belief depends on its coherence with the ideal doxastic system K.
Contextualism	That theory which holds that basic beliefs are contextually justified.
Reliabilism	An externalist theory which holds that S's belief in P is justified <i>iff</i> S's belief in P is produced by a reliable process.
<i>iff</i>	If and only if – suggesting the set of necessary and sufficient conditions.

Questions

1. What is epistemic Justification?
2. Distinguish between internalism and externalism.
3. Discuss the process by which one may select evidences.

4. What is Foundationalism?
5. Is Coherentism a better option than Foundationalism?
6. What are the problems for internalist theories of Justification?
7. How far Contextualism tenable as a theory of Justification?
8. Discuss the Virtues of Reliabilism.

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