
UNIT I DIALECTICAL METHOD

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

Objective of this Unit is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Dialectical Method (also known as Dialectics and Dialectic), which is one of the most influential philosophical ideas in the history of mankind. The Unit attempts to demystify the seemingly complex idea of Dialectics by providing a lucid account of it as well as the use of the method in different ages in history. The Unit discusses the methods of Dialectics in important classical and modern philosophers - Heraclitus, Gautama Buddha, Socrates, Aristotle, Hegel, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and the applications of these methods. In addition, an attempt is made to discuss the intellectual and historical impact created by the application of Dialectics and Dialectical Method in order to keep students informed about the power of the idea of Dialectic in particular and philosophical ideas in general. It would be difficult to appreciate the power of ideas in Philosophy without being aware of their real-time historical implications. By the time of completion of this Unit, you should have a fair idea of , forms of dialectics, major philosophers of dialectics, important variants of dialectical method, and impact of dialectical thought.

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE METHOD

The term Dialectic is derived from the Greek terms ‘dia’ and ‘logos’ which mean dialogue or a conversation between two persons. Dialectics can be traced back to pre-Socratic philosophy and has been used by different philosophers in different eras of philosophy with different meanings. As a result, the term Dialectics doesn’t have a single meaning or connotation. This is the first important thing that should be taken note of as to the understanding of dialectical method. The point becomes more obvious in the following brief survey of various thinkers of Dialectics. The initial strands of dialectics were associated with the ancient Greek philosopher Plato. Plato first used the term for the art of discussion, in which participants try to arrive at truth by exchanging logical arguments. His work Republic provides a wonderful demonstration of this discussion method.

Aristotle considered Dialectics as a method of examining the commonly held beliefs by the people. (Aristotle, Topics X) According to Aristotle, Zeno of Elea, an ancient Greek philosopher was the founder of dialectical thought. Zeno produced quite a lot of paradoxes to prove motion is impossible. For example, he argued that an arrow shot from the bow doesn't move because at a given point in time, it would be in rest at some space. Zeno examined the popular beliefs and refuted them based on his logic, hence, according to Aristotle, he was the founder of dialectical thought. Here, Dialectics was meant to deal with the art of argument or discussion.

Apart from these Greek philosophers, German idealist thinkers Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel made use of this method, particularly Hegel. Kant in his Critique of Pure Reason, criticizing speculative metaphysics said that it is not possible for human reason to grasp things such as God, which do not fall under phenomena, which are appearances and can be grasped by human intellect. He distinguished phenomena from noumena, which consists of things-in-themselves and beyond the grasp of human intellect. Showing the futility of noumenal arguments such as the World has a beginning in time and is limited in space, Kant puts forth an equally forceful counter argument like - the world has no beginning and no limitations in space, it is infinite in time and space; and no argument can be proved at the end. Kant called the first argument as Thesis and the second argument Anti-thesis, where the latter proves the futility of the former. He termed this mode of criticism as 'Transcendental Dialectic'. Here Dialectic is a method of refutation.

Fichte, in his theory of consciousness, held that evolution of ego, which is the only reality and source of self-consciousness, takes place in three moments. They are (1) the ego, (2) the non-ego and (3) setting both of them in opposition. He calls the first, the thesis, the second antithesis and the third synthesis. While the ego is the principle of knowledge, the non-ego, is equally independent of the ego and unlimited and a negation of the former. The antithesis is assertion of a non-ego in opposition to the ego. The synthesis is the determination of the first two through one another, in such a way that the ego and the non-ego mutually limit each other. Here for the first time, the dialectics got the triadic method and entered into a speculative plane.

Schelling has attempted to construct nature or the world a priori. His main aim was to reason out the necessary stages in the evolution of nature where he found a dialectical process working through the world. He has comprehended the two opposing activities viz., thesis, and antithesis, which get united in a synthesis. He called this process the law of triplicity, wherein the thesis is action, antithesis is reaction and synthesis is the harmony between the two. Schelling applies the triadic dialectic to every phase of organic and inorganic realms, to individual and social life, to history science and art. Thus it is evident that Schelling regarded nature as a dynamic evolutionary process of reason moving towards the self-conscious reason of man. He has equated the necessary forms of thought with the necessary forms of being.

The next major thinker in this series is Hegel. Modeled on Schelling's philosophy, presenting his grand philosophical system of the world, Hegel attempts to explain the progress of history through the march of the Absolute or Spirit. According to Hegel, the Spirit realizes itself in the movement of history. At first, the Spirit was a pure idea. The very affirmation of the Spirit faces its negation i.e. the non-Spirit. The being of Spirit negated by non-being of Spirit doesn't result in nothingness but in becoming, the physical manifestation of the Spirit as the World. In Hegel, dialectical theory entered into a speculative explanation of the Nature.

Bringing the Hegelian dialectics down from speculative plane to reality, Karl Marx applied them in history and showed how the human societies were always in a state of change due to clashing interests of different economic classes. Marx's economic interpretation of history postulates that society had progressed from one mode of production to another due to the struggle between the classes. In Marxian theory, Dialectics explain different contradictions in the human societies and a conflictual movement of them would lead to further progress.

Thus, the term Dialectics is used differently in different epochs of philosophy. However, in the history of philosophy, two fundamental tendencies – Dialectics as a theory of knowledge that explains natural/social phenomena and Dialectics as a method of discourse – were identified as the major types of Dialectics. However, often, at least in popular writings, Dialectics is being identified with either of these varieties, particularly with the methods developed by Plato or Hegel.

1.2 TYPES OF DIALECTICS

According to the first type, Dialectics is theory of knowledge or a method of understanding that explains any given phenomenon/process/object as a unity of opposites. This variant can be called as Phenomenal Dialectics, phenomenal in the sense that - of, relating to, or constituting phenomena or a phenomenon. The second one explains dialectics as a method of logical discourse which tries to derive truth and this variant can be called as Discourse Dialectics, discourse in the sense that a formal, lengthy discussion of a subject, either written or spoken.

Phenomenal Dialectics: According to Phenomenal Dialectics, any given phenomenon / object/process would always be in a state of motion and it is a unity of opposites. And the development or change of the phenomenon/object/process essentially happens through a constant and often conflictual movement of the two latent opposites.

The variant of Dialectics owes its beginning to Heraclitus, a great natural philosopher from ancient Greece. He explained that all the objects in nature are always in a state of flux and existence of those objects are possible due to tension between the opposites and unity of them. His famous quote, “You cannot step twice into the same river, for other waters and yet others go ever flowing on” (William Harris, Heraclitus - The Complete Fragments, 20) indicates not just the ever-changing nature of the river but all the phenomena of the Nature. He said, "Everything is and is not, for everything is in flux, is constantly changing, constantly coming into being and passing away". (Rob Swell, [Introduction to The ABC of Materialist Dialectics](#)) Emphasizing the conflictual nature - i.e. unity of opposites - of the aspects of objects and process, he stated that, “It should be understood that war is the common condition, that strife is justice, and that all things come to pass through the compulsion of strife.” (William Harris, Heraclitus - The Complete Fragments, 26)

Friedrich Engels, cofounder of communism along with Karl Marx, wonderfully puts it as “Dialectics is nothing more than the science of the general laws of motion and development of nature, human society and thought.” (Engels, Anti- Dühring). He described Dialectics as "The

great basic thought that the world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready made things, but as a complex of processes, in which things apparently stable, no less than their mental images in our heads, concepts go through an uninterrupted change of coming into being and passing away." (Engels, Anti-Dühring)

For example, Karl Marx, using the Dialectical Method, theorised that human history was nothing but a chronicle of constant struggle between the divided economic interests of two classes. Analyzing his contemporary times, he opined that capitalism had emerged as the order of the day by defeating feudalism. However, Marx said, its demise was inevitable as it was creating its potential opponent i.e. working class. The working class would defeat capitalism and progress to the next level in the history i.e. to socialism. In Marxian theory of history, one can see constant change and continuous or conflictual movement of the opposites, two defining traits of phenomenal dialectics. Heraclitus, Gautama Buddha, Hegel, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels are major thinkers who developed the phenomenal dialectic method.

Discourse Dialectics

Discourse Dialectics is rooted in the philosophy of Plato, who defined the method and used it extensively in his writings. Indeed the word 'Dialectic' was first used by Heraclitus who developed Dialectics as a method of argument for arriving at the truth by the exchange of logical arguments. Platonic Dialectic is based on a dialogue between two or more people who may hold differing views, yet wish to pursue truth by seeking agreement with one another. Two major discourse dialecticians Plato and Aristotle are discussed in this Unit.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) Who are the major thinkers of Dialectical Method?

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2) Differentiate between two types of Dialectics.

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1.3 DIALECTICS IN CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY

In this section, we shall discuss Phenomenal Dialectics of Heraclitus and Gautama Buddha and Discourse Dialectics of Plato and Aristotle. Heraclitus was a fascinating Greek natural philosopher who predicted quite a few of scientific discoveries made in modern days such as the Law of Conservation of Energy and Law of Conservation of Matter. Heraclitus was deeply concerned about the knowledge levels of his fellow human beings and went on to explain Nature in his cryptic propositions. According to Hegel, Heraclitus was the founder of Dialectic method.

His method of Dialectics can be explained by way of two theories - theory of flux and theory of unity of opposites. He famously said – one cannot step into the same river twice and the one exists and does not exist. According to Heraclitus, everything is and is not; everything is in flux, is constantly changing and constantly coming into being and passing away. By saying this, he meant that the river exists since it is there and it is not there since there is nothing but the flowing waters; the human being who steps into the river also exists since he is and he doesn't exist since he undergoes change every second. These notions explain how change is the only permanent law of nature.

Theory of Unity of Opposites

Heraclitus maintained that all the phenomena of Nature were possible due to the conflict and unity between the opposite features/aspects that are latent in those phenomena. When he said, “You cannot step twice into the same river, for other waters and yet others go ever flowing on.” The ‘same river’ and ‘other waters’ are exact opposites. It means, though the waters are always changing, the river stays the same. Indeed, it must be precisely because the waters are always changing that there is a river at all, rather than lake or pond. The message is that river can stay the same over time even though, or indeed because, the waters change. The point, then, is not that everything is changing, but that the fact that some things change makes possible the continued existence of other things. Perhaps more generally, the change in elements or constituents supports the constancy of higher-level structures.

Another insight of Heraclitus, “It throws apart and then brings together again; it advances and retires.” (William Harris, Heraclitus - The Complete Fragments, 31) explains elements coming together in a combinatory process, and then dissociating in Nature. This notion is quite important in understanding the phenomena of Nature in its being, becoming and diminution stages. These stages are exclusive and identical at the same time. Thus unity of the opposite aspects of the same object/process/phenomenon makes the change/development possible. Heraclitus' theories of flux and unity of opposites, formed the basis for what was later called as Dialectics, had iconoclastic effect in ancient Greek natural philosophy. He openly opposed the permanence of soul and dogmatic practices of erstwhile religion, thus created foundations for materialism in Western thought. Heraclitus' thought had direct influence on Hegel, who further influenced Karl Marx, which is a clear demonstration of his powerful legacy.

Dialectic Method of Buddha

Gautama Buddha, a light dawn on the Indian subcontinent around 563 B.C., infused peace into a disheartened nation with his profound teachings. He condemned all the dogma associated with erstwhile orthodox Vedic religion. His doctrine of momentariness or Ksanika Vada, which was part of his rational teachings, can be considered as Buddhist theory of Phenomenal Dialectic. With this doctrine, Buddha ruled out the eternality of the soul and all the logics that were related to the permanency in the Vedic religion. Buddha emphatically said all the things that have origination must perish and the world is a becoming, it is Bhavarup. Everything in this world is merely a conglomeration of perishable qualities. Everything is momentary. This world is determined by the principle of dependent origination and animals, Gods, plants, things, bodies, forms, substances...all are perishable. Everything has a beginning, existence and extinction. This

was the middle path posited by Buddha, a way between the views of absolute existence and absolute nihilism. This teaching of Buddha had helped the restoration of rational thinking in the erstwhile dispirited nation. Buddha and Heraclitus, both of them didn't use the term Dialectics. However, this doesn't stop their theories to be qualified as foundations of dialectical method in the East and the West respectively.

Dialectics of Plato

The term has been connected with Plato in the history of philosophy as a method of discussion. Before going into the details of Plato's Dialectic Method, it is important to know how the concept of natural philosophy, during the time of Heraclitus, had transformed into a method of discussion. August Thalheimer, a German Marxist thinker, theorised that development of a slave labour system had dragged the Greek city state into wars for a perennial supply of slaves, hindered technical progress and also gave rise to parasitic behaviour among its free citizens. (August Thalheimer, Introduction to Dialectical Materialism - The Marxist World-View, Greek Idealism) As a result, scientific growth had stopped and questions of natural philosophy had lost relevance, instead questions related to human conduct gained prominence.

Plato developed Dialectic Method as an art of discussion, through which participants try to arrive at truth, by exchange of logical arguments. British philosopher Simon Blackburn defined Plato's Dialectic Method as "The process of eliciting the truth by means of questions aimed at opening out what is already implicitly known, or at exposing the contradictions and muddles of an opponent's position" (Simon Blackburn, Plato's Republic – A Biography, p. 104). Plato had popularized this method by making extensive use of this method in his works. The dialectic dialogue is also known as Socratic Method or Socratic Irony, in which Socrates attempts to examine someone's beliefs and argues by cross-examining his opponent's claims and premises in order to point out inconsistency among them in order to take them nearer to the truth.

According to Ryan Patrick Canney, Plato's dialectical method requires the following: 1) Participation and the appearance of equal status among those involved, 2) Starting the dialogue with commonly held views and ideas, 3) Dialogue that leads to critical reflection amongst the participants, and 4) Connection of ideas brought up in discussion. (Ryan Patrick Canney, The Dialectic Today: Critically Interrogating the Socratic Method for Contemporary Use). Plato's method of discussion is different from debate, in which two people try to disprove each other and also rhetoric, which aims at winning over others in an argument by mastering argumentation techniques but not the facts about the subject matter. In his Gorgias, Socrates gets Gorgias, a rhetorician, to agree that a rhetorician is actually more convincing in front of an ignorant audience than an expert, because mastery of the tools of persuasion gives a man more convincingness than knowledge of subject matter. Gorgias concedes this criticism and asserts that it is an advantage of rhetoric that a man can be considered above specialists without having to learn anything of substance. Socrates calls rhetoric a form of flattery and compares it to pastry baking and cosmetic beautification. He says that rhetoric is to politics what pastry baking is to medicine, and what cosmetics are to gymnastics. All of these activities are aimed at surface adornment, an imitation of what is really good. (Plato, Gorgias) Plato had provided solid foundations for quite a lot of philosophical ideas with his irrefutable arguments that formed the basis for Western philosophy. Indeed, he had outlined the important questions that formed the subject matter for philosophers for the next 1500 years.

Dialectical Method of Aristotle

Aristotle worked on Dialectics at length in his Topics. He divided the possible kinds of reasonings in an argument or discussion into four kinds, of which dialectical proposition is the second one: Demonstrations, which are based on premises that are primary and true; Dialectical propositions, which have commonly held opinions as their premises; Contentious, which have premises those seem to be common held, but are really not; Mis-reasonings, which are based on the premises that are neither true nor primary. He further defined dialectical proposition as some thing that examines the endoxos i.e. commonly held beliefs. However, every proposition and every problem can not be set down as dialectical. The endoxos must not be the view which no one holds or which is obvious to everyone. If nobody holds a particular view, any reasoning would not be possible and if it is obvious to everyone, then there is no place for doubt. The dialectical propositions are a kind of assertion and not demonstrations.

Given the picture of dialectical proposition, the dialectical art comprises of two elements: a method for discovering premises from which a given conclusion follows, a method for determining which premises a given participator will be likely to concede. A dialectical problem is a subject of inquiry that contributes either to choice and avoidance, or to truth and knowledge, and that either by itself or in tandem with some other fact helps in the solution of some other such problem. Dialectical reasoning, according to Aristotle, is useful in a). intellectual training, b). casual encounters and c). the philosophical sciences. He said, "It (dialectical reasoning) is useful as training is obvious on the face of it. The possession of a plan of inquiry will enable us more easily to argue about the subject proposed. For purposes of casual encounters, it is useful because when we have counted the opinions held by most people, we shall meet them on the ground not of other people's convictions but of their own, while we shift the ground of any argument that they appear to us to state unsoundly." (Aristotle, Topics, X)

"For the study of the philosophical sciences it is useful, because the ability to raise searching difficulties on both sides of a subject will make us detect more easily the truth and error about the several points that arise. It has a further use in relation to the ultimate bases of the principles used in the several sciences. For it is impossible to discuss them at all from the principles proper to the particular science in hand, seeing that the principles are the prius of everything else: it is through the opinions generally held on the particular points that these have to be discussed, and this task belongs properly, or most appropriately, to dialectic: for dialectic is a process of criticism wherein lies the path to the principles of all inquiries." (*Ibid.*) Aristotle's analysis of Dialectics, as part of his exploration of Logic, provided a beginning for analytical examination of the method.

1.4 DIALECTICS IN MODERN PHILOSOPHY

Hegelian Dialectics

After Greek philosophers, it was German idealist thinkers who worked on Dialectic method in an apperceptive fashion. While Kant used dialectics as a principle of self-contradiction, Fichte made use of it to explain his evolution of self-consciousness and for the first time used the thesis-antithesis-synthesis triode. Schelling fully developed dialectics as a method that explains the phenomenon of nature and utilised the triadic method. Based on Schelling, it was Hegel who

worked out a complete system of the world through speculative reasoning. He wanted to have the fullest knowledge of past, present and future through this system. Hegel's system has many similarities with that of Adi Sankara, whose doctrine of Brahman also captures the eternal knowledge.

Hegel argues that "what is rational is real and what is real is rational." This must be understood in terms of Hegel's further claim that the Absolute must ultimately be regarded as pure Thought, or Spirit, or Mind, in the process of self-development. According to Hegel's system, beginning of history happens with the beginning of the primitive Spirit or Absolute Being. This Spirit was so poor and simple that when it had faced its anti-thesis i.e. nothingness and in a perennial and conflictual movement, the synthesis is produced i.e. Becoming. In an unlimited series of phenomena, the Being constructs itself continuously and becomes more conscious about itself. The perennial movement between the opposites i.e. the Being and non-Being make self-construction and self-revelation possible. This reality, or the total developmental process of everything that is, he referred to as Absolute Spirit. According to Hegel, the task of philosophy is to chart the development of Absolute Spirit. This involves (1) making clear the internal rational structure of the Absolute; (2) demonstrating the manner in which the Absolute manifests itself in nature and human history; and (3) explicating the teleological nature of the Absolute, that is, showing the end or purpose toward which the Absolute is directed. Being, in other words, is characterized in its development by three stages: being (thesis), non-being (antithesis), becoming (synthesis). It is in this that Hegel's system of triads consists. This higher entity, at the same time it becomes being, is lacerated, so to speak, by its opposite (i.e., by non-being), and tends to affirm itself in a still higher entity, and so on ad infinitum. This activity of building and of tearing itself apart, with the intention of rebuilding itself ad infinitum, is the life of Being.

Another important feature of the primordial Being is rationality. It was essentially a perfect, rational thought that confirms the development of Being in the dialectic process that confirms the series of phenomena. This thesis of the World as nothing but 'Becoming' helped Hegel to challenge the Aristotlian logic. According to Aristotle, the principle of identity could be formulated because the concept of being is always the same -- A is equal to A, and A cannot be its negation (non-A) at the same time and in the same respect. For Hegel, this logic is faulty because it misinterprets reality. For him reality is never identical with itself, but at every moment changes, passing from what it is to what it is not. Contradiction, therefore, is the life of concrete being. The progress of history happened through a logical process of developing in accordance with the law of coincidence of opposites. This process depends upon a fundamental triad: Idea (Logos), Nature, Spirit. This triad indicates a logical rather than a chronological succession, for the entire process is actuated within the primordial Spirit, in which all is immanent.

Idea or Logos is the system of the pure concept which lay at the foundation of all reality. Nature is the objectivation of the Idea. It is the Idea's becoming other than itself, or its self-extension in time and space. But it is the Universal Spirit which establishes itself in the series of phenomena extended in space and time, with the purpose of developing itself and of gaining consciousness of self. Nature reaches the height of perfection in the human organism, and the human organism attains the peak of perfection in individual consciousness or Subjective Spirit. With the attainment of this supreme stage of perfection there begins the return of nature to the Universal Spirit. Indeed, the Subjective Spirit is the first appearance of the Universal Spirit as rationality

and freedom. But in the narrow limits of individuality, the Subjective Spirit can never reach the fullness of rationality and freedom, which is the consummation of the entire process of the Spirit. To realize this ultimate end (the fullness of rationality and freedom), the Subjective Spirit objectivates itself in many super individual forms; i.e., it constructs the ethical world.

The first objectivation is the juridical order or right, which guarantees freedom to all in a measure compatible with the freedom of others. Right can regulate only external conduct. The spirit which aspires to regulate the interior world also, objectivates itself in a higher form, i.e., in morality. Morality concretizes itself:

1. In the family, in which the spirit reveals itself as a union of souls;
2. In civil society, which is a larger and higher community of souls; and, lastly,
3. In the state, the highest revelation that the spirit gives to itself.

The Objective Spirit of the people manifests itself in the State, which is the living God. The living God incarnates Himself now in this, now in that nation, according as the nation realizes more perfectly than any other the ideal of civilization. As the Spirit passes from one nation to another, the chosen people by the Spirit conquers and dominates the others. Although the state is the highest objectivation and manifestation of the Spirit,

Hegel places the Universal or Absolute Spirit over the objective spirit. The Absolute Spirit – which expresses itself through art, religion and philosophy -- fully actualizes the consciousness of its divine nature in a reckoning with itself. In art the Spirit apprehends its absolute essence as an idea expressing a sensible object: the beautiful is an idea sensibly concretized, in which the infinite is seen as finite. In religion, on the other hand, there is the unity of the finite with the infinite. The infinite is immanent in the finite, but in a sentimental, imaginative, mythical form. The Hegelian concept, in which the state is the living God and individuals but passing shadows, and in which, moreover, conflict and war are affirmations of the vitality of the state, has been put to the test in the German nation. Needless to say, Hegel's concept of reality is immanentist, pantheistic and atheistic.

Dialectics in Karl Marx

While Hegel talks of resolving contradictions removed from Kant's pursuit of objective truth, his understanding of dialectic thought remained rooted in the notion of an ideal distinct from reality. Marx in a significant departure from the idealistic dialectics of Hegel embedded the Hegelian triad of affirmation, negation and the negation of negation in a more discrete zone of the socially apparent and the materially manifest. The idea or the concept for Marx was not something that existed beyond social realities, as was Hegel's wont, but was the direct result of the forces shaping the concepts that underlay social reality. A more direct application of this idea translated into the field of historical materialism, whereby history became a result achieved through the resolution of the contradiction inherent in the hierarchy of social and specifically class, i.e. economic divisions. So for Marx history was a byproduct of the class struggle. The attempt of the proletariat, or the economically marginalized, to correct the prevailing contradiction of their own subordinated existence. This was a direct application of the discourse of dialectics into the tangible or the real. A thought process that did not make such a move into the realm of pragmatic

action would, for Marx, remain an empty ideology. Something that would be philosophising shallowly, akin to mysticism or spirituality, rather than a concrete imperative to action.

For Marx the demystification of Hegelian Dialectics was predicated upon the principle that the world was “knowable,” the human mind in effect stood at the apex of a rational order which interpreted the dynamism of forces associated with social change and rendered that change with the possibility of interpretation: “To Hegel, the life process of the human brain, i.e. the process of thinking, which, under the name of ‘the idea,’ he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of ‘the idea.’ With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought.” (Capital, Volume 1, p.29).

This line of thought is central to Marx’s idea of control that can be exercised over a knowable and material world. In such a world oppositions of power and authority, divided amongst strata of society that have access to authority and are denied it, are instrumental in initiating moves that would eventually resolve social contradictions premised on class. To iterate an earlier argument, it is such moves working towards a resolution of ideas of control that create history. Anything that exists outside the purview of such a material movement would not classify as history in Marx’s account.

The concept of the Being is an integral part of Hegel’s speculation regarding the process of knowing. The being, which in other words is the thesis, in trying to know and position itself also privileges the non-being or absence or anti-thesis, eventually the union of such an opposition results in a more absolutist version of ‘becoming’ where the spirit of the discourse becomes the synthesis. But for Marx this version of dialectic thought privileging speculation remained at the level of dangerous metaphysics, dangerous because it made the individual in society impotent and incapable of action. Marx replaced the notion of unity within Hegelian dialectics with the idea of struggle. And to present it in a more reductive and perhaps vulgar fashion the struggle of a class of people over another with the ultimate aim of overthrowing one and gaining control over the means of production. It is at the height of an almost pre ordained logic that Marx declares his methodology of Dialectics to be: “[A] scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors, because it includes in its comprehension an affirmative recognition of the existing state of things. At the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state of its inevitable breaking up; because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary.” (Capital)

Contradiction lies at the heart of the critique that Marx offers, so also does Hegel, but for Hegel it is the route towards understanding a transcendent notion of being and space of the real occupied by the being. For Marx the contradiction is in a way pejorative and something that needs to be reconciled keeping in mind the demands of a more equitable social order. And it is to satisfy this demand that ‘the critical’ and the platform it provides for conflict and struggle becomes significant.

Friedrich Engels

Engels and Marx occupy the same range of the Dialectic spectrum. Engels determined three laws of dialectics from his reading of Hegel's Science of Logic. He elaborated on these laws in his work *Dialectics of Nature*: The law of the unity and conflict of opposites, The law of the passage of quantitative changes into qualitative changes, The law of the negation of the negation

The law of unity and conflict emphasizes the idea of struggle central to Marxian dialectics. In such a space the apparent unities of coincidence, identity and equal action are transient and always subordinated to the struggle embodied by the conflict of opposites. The transition of states in the second law finds social resonance in the analysis of demographic changes and the resultant changes in social structure. The third law highlights the contradictory nature of a delimited being and the divisive tendencies innate to the phenomenon that translate into our understanding of the being.

While Marx believed that Hegel's dialectic was disrupted by its idealism, and reversed Hegel's idealistic dialectic from a material position, Engels addressed Marx far more directly. Engels held that Marx's dialectic is "nothing more than the science of the general laws of motion and development of nature, human society and thought," where development of nature and society is the foundation on which the development of thought rests. For Engels all of nature itself was the summation of a continuing dialectical process. In *Anti-Duhring* he contended that a negation of negation is; "A very simple process which is taking place everywhere and everyday, which any child can understand as soon as it is stripped of the veil of mystery in which it was enveloped by the old idealist philosophy."

In effect Engels deviates from the far more direct and brutal rationalization of conflict in Marx by tempering the nature of that struggle in a more organic environment. For Engels the state of conflict was a natural phenomenon prevalent in the universe, the upturning of social orders also perhaps a consequence of the consistent impetus for change in the fabric of nature and society. All Nature, from the smallest thing to the biggest, from a grain of sand to the sun, from the protista to man, is in a constant state of coming into being and going out of being, in a constant flux, in a ceaseless state of movement and change. (*Dialectics of Nature*)

The building of such momentum manifested itself in the hierarchical inversions highlighted by Marx but also in the words of Engels created a natural state of expectancy that governed the change. In short while the template of struggle is provided by Marx's position, according to Engel's the change itself perhaps follows a natural pattern and in a way is anticipated. Thus a doctrine of development is encompassed by the idea of dialectics that is very different from a conventional approach towards a general concept of development. A doctrine that talks of progression in terms of the image of spirals rather than something compounded in a linear fashion.

Here progress is not incremental but abrupt, sudden and in many ways apocalyptic. Engels firmly believed along with Marx that qualitative changes that he spoke of in his writings were only possible through such disruptions. What interested Engels's the most was the process of such instrumental change as evoked in his three conceptual laws/premises that he arrived at after a careful consideration of Hegel's idealistic dialectic. What is evident from the evaluation of such

concept based cognitive mapping of the ideational being is the negation of the sacred. The emergent pattern then is a complete abjuring of unified terms such as the final or the absolute. This is done for the simple reason that totalizations such as the sacred would permit a social closure whereby the essential contradiction of social divides gain a completely natural sanction, and this is something that a materialistic dialectic espoused by Marx and Engels absolutely seeks to avoid.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) What is your understanding of Dialectics in Classical Philosophy?

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.....

.....

2) Differences between Hegel and Marxian Dialectics.

.....

.....

.....

1.5 CRITIQUE OF DIALECTICAL METHOD

Many philosophers have offered critiques of Dialectical Method. One of the general points made is that, in Dialectics, harmony and unity are not emphasized; only tensions, paradoxes and contradictions are highlighted. Critics of Hegel like Arthur Schopenhauer argue that the selection of any antithesis, other than the logical negation of the thesis, is subjective. Then, if the logical negation is used as the antithesis, there is no rigorous way to derive a synthesis. In practice, when an antithesis is selected to suit the user's subjective purpose, the resulting "contradictions" are rhetorical, not logical, and the resulting synthesis not rigorously defensible against a multitude of other possible syntheses. Karl Popper unleashed a famous attack on Hegelian dialectics, in which he held Hegel's thought was to some degree responsible for facilitating the rise of fascism in Europe by encouraging and justifying irrationalism.

Some critics argue, while the dialectic in the sphere of ideas can be defended, the concept as applied to the movement of matter, in the manner of Marx, contradicts the ways of the natural world. Nature is full of examples where growth and development occurs through the dynamic movement of opposites, such as the positive and negative charges that make up an atom, or male and female animals that mate to produce offspring. However, in spite of the critics, it can be said that Dialectical Method retains a central position in philosophy as an important research methodology providing answers to some philosophical questions.

1.6 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we tried to have a general understanding of Dialectical Method tracing it from the Greek period to the Modern times. We have rather elaborately seen the various nuances associated with dialectical reasoning in its varied forms. The effort was to capture how Dialectical Method of argument was central to both Western and Indian philosophical traditions, though in a brief manner. The emphasis was to bring forth the uniqueness of Dialectics which is an open, flexible, unassuming, critical, skeptical and holistic method taking into consideration all aspects of reality through rational dialogue in the pursuit of truth in its earnestness.

1.7 KEY WORDS

Dialectic: Dialectic is a formal system of reasoning that arrives at the truth by the exchange of logical arguments.

Negation: Negation involves the resolution of a dialectical contradiction which transforms or resolves a thing, situation or process in certain important respects, while also maintaining some similarity or continuity with the previous thing, situation or process in other respects. Example: Capitalism is the negation of feudalism.

Thesis, Anti-Thesis and Synthesis The thesis is an intellectual proposition; Anti-thesis is a reaction to the proposition; the synthesis solves the conflict between the thesis and antithesis by reconciling their common truths, and forming a new proposition.

Quantitative Change and Qualitative Change: It's part of the continuity-discontinuity issue. A quantitative change is a change in numbers. A qualitative change is a change in quality

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UNIT 2 RATIONAL METHOD

Contents

- 2.0 Objectives
 - 2.1 Introduction
 - 2.2 Understanding Rationalism
 - 2.3 Rational Method of Investigation
 - 2.4. Descartes' Rational Method
 - 2.5 Leibniz' Aim of Philosophy
 - 2.6 Spinoza' Aim of Philosophy
 - 2.7 Let us Sum up
 - 2.8 Key Words
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-

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In order to provide a solid foundation to philosophy one need to adopt a solid and sound method. This unit explore the one of such methods - “rational method” in the discover of truth. This study on the rational method will enable a student

- To see the immensity of the power of reasoning in philosophizing
 - How reason can lead us to clear and distinct truths
 - Also to value the mathematical tool in the demonstration of truth
-

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The renaissance began in 12th century in Italy and flourished all over Europe by 16th century made sweeping changes in all aspects of life in the west. The awakening of the reflective spirit endowed with a critical mind inspired by the values of the classical world almost redefined the understandings of society, culture, religion, politics, art and literature. Revolt against authority and tradition, intellectual and religious absolutism and collectivism on the one hand and a demand for freedom in thought and action on the other hand were the dominant trends of the period. Perhaps the most important contribution of this period may be the recognition of the dignity, freedom and importance of the human individual. In other words renaissance witnessed the emergence of a new humanism freed from the strong hold of authority and tradition.

The field of intellectual life was also affected by this new trend. Reason took over the place of authority and tradition as the standard or criterion of truth. Truth is now considered as something to be acquired by impartial inquiry than what is decreed by religious authority and revelation. The method of arriving at truth is now changed from contemplation to empirical verification. Consequently an abiding faith in the power of human reason became the fashion of the time. Knowledge then is esteemed for its utility for the practical value too. Philosophy became more rationalistic in the sense that reason became the highest criterion of knowledge leaving behind the supernaturalism of scholasticism. Philosophy became more scientific than a mere servant of Christian theology. Thus the modern thought was generally classified as rationalistic and empiristic as they accept reason or experience respectively as the source and norm of

knowledge. In this unit we will deal with the understanding of rationalism as a philosophical system, its method of investigation and finally a detailed study of the method developed by the various rationalist philosophers.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING RATIONALISM

Rationalism derives from the Latin word “*Ratio*” meaning “Reason”. In Epistemological sense, Rationalism is “any view appealing to reason as a source of knowledge or justification”. In a more technical term it is a method or a theory “in which the criterion of the truth is not sensory but intellectual and deductive. Rationalism holds that genuine knowledge cannot come from sense perception or experience but must have its foundation in thought or reason. It makes reason instead of revelation and authority as the standard of knowledge. To employ reason is to use our individual intellectual abilities to seek evidence for and against potential beliefs. To fail to employ reason is to form beliefs on the basis of such non-rational processes as blind faith, guessing or unthinking obedience to institutional authority. Rationalism gives emphasis on the a priori reason which means knowledge obtained prior to experience. It is universal, necessary and self evident. Hence this theory holds that certain ideas like ideas of causality, infinity and perfect being of God are inborn and highly indubitable. Rationalism is also commonly called as Continental Rationalism, the term ‘continental rationalism’ would traditionally refer to a 17th century philosophical movement begun by Descartes. After Descartes several scientists and philosophers continued his teachings throughout continental Europe and accordingly were titled as Cartesians. A handful of philosophers influenced by Descartes were more original in developing their own views and they are Benedict Spinoza, Nicholas Malebranche and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz..

2.3 RATIONAL METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

Continental rationalists in understanding the origin of knowledge accepted the idea of innate and a priori truths which do not depend on experience, although psychologically perception of them may be on the occasion of an experience. They maintained that we could deduce truths with absolute certainty from our innate ideas, much the way theorems in geometry are deduced from axioms. Mathematical demonstration was seen as the perfect type of demonstrating truth and accordingly mathematical proof became the model for all other kinds of demonstration. For them Mathematics provides a model of clarity, certainty and orderly deduction. The personal elements the subjective factors such as feelings and emotions are eliminated and body of presuppositions the truth of which is assured and built up. Although the empiricist used the same deductive reasoning but they put a greater emphasis on the inductive method following the British country man Francis Bacon. Thus rational method is basically predicting and explaining behavior based on mathematical reasoning and logic.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your Answers

1) What was the effect of Renaissance on the intellectual sphere?

.....

2) What do you mean Continental Rationalism?

.....

3) Define the Rational Method of investigation?

.....

2.4 DESCARTES' RATIONAL METHOD

Fundamental aim of Descartes was to attain philosophical truths by the use of reason. But what he was seeking was not to discover a multiplicity of isolated truths but to develop a system of true prepositions in which nothing would be presupposed which was not self-evident and indubitable. And the whole edifice should rest on a sure foundation. In one sense Descartes consciously and deliberately broke with the past and did not rely on any previous philosophy. He resolved to rely on his own reason and not on authority. He was against what is conjectural of which he accused the scholastics. Knowledge for him was only certain knowledge. He was determined to attain and work with clear and distinct ideas in contrast to confused ideas and in contrast to terms (scholastics) without any clear meaning. He built his own interconnected system of knowledge, comprising an account of knowledge, metaphysics, physics and other sciences.

This ambition is summarized in one of his last writings as “all philosophy is like a tree, metaphysics is the roots it starts with the intuitively apprehended existence of the finite self and proceeds to establish the criterion of truth, existence of God and the existence of material world. Physics is the trunk of the tree and it depends on metaphysics in the sense physics cannot be considered organic part of science until the ultimate principles of physics have been shown to follow metaphysical principles. Particle sciences which are the branches of the tree will be truly science when their organic dependence on physics or natural philosophy is shown.

For Descartes tree of knowledge was its hierarchical organization. He held firmly to the notion that the interconnected body of knowledge has a particular order. For him knowledge begins in metaphysics and metaphysics begins with the self. From the self we arrive at God and from God we arrive at the full knowledge of mind and body. Thus he overthrows the accumulation of life-long beliefs and use reason alone to establish solid and permanent truths. Truths should confirm to a rational scheme. Ideal philosophy means organically connected system of scientifically established truths. This shows not only systematic arrangement and a proof was his aim but believed in the use of method that would enable the philosopher to discover hitherto unknown truths.

Cartesian Method of Investigation

In his method to attain absolutely certainty and universally acceptable knowledge Descartes wanted a certain and undubitable starting point that even a radical could not shake the edifice of his philosophical method. Expressing perfect confidence in the capacity of human reason to achieve knowledge, Descartes wanted to accept only what is genuinely certain as valid knowledge in his method. In order to do that one must first deliberately renounce all of the firmly held but questionable beliefs previously acquired by experience and education. Thus in his second part of the Discourse on the Method he characterized four simple rules for his rational

method. 1) Accept as true only what is indubitable. Never to accept anything as true if one does not have evident knowledge of its truth: that is carefully to avoid precipitate conclusions and preconceptions. 2) One must analyze difficulties into as many simpler parts as possible. 3) One must advance from the simplest and most easily known objects to ascend little by little to knowledge of the most complex. 4) One must ensure that nothing had been omitted it is to make enumerations so complete and reviews so comprehensive. Therefore this Cartesian method means a set of certain and easy rules such that anyone who observes them exactly will never take anything false to be true without any waste of mental effort but by increasing his knowledge step by step, will arrive at a true understanding of all those things which do not surpass his capacity.

Mathematics as the foundation

In order to do this he employs mathematics as the foundational tool. Mathematics must be the guide to clear the confusions and uncertainties of philosophy. He looked at mathematics as mode of clear and dubitable reasoning, because it consists of the use of two mental operations they are **Intuition**: an immediate knowledge of anything. It is supposed to be direct and impeccable. It is the understanding of self-evident principles about which no doubts are possible. Self-evident principle is anything that does not require any proof to establish itself. **Deduction**: Is a logical inference from self-evident propositions. A valid conclusion can be arrived by proceeding from generalizations to particular. Therefore Descartes quest for certainty and his looking for mathematics as a model of reasoning was due to the revival of skepticism. Which was one of the aspects of Renaissance Charron's fideism (he was skeptical of reason – theological truths can never be attained by reason, only by faith) and Montaigne's skepticism. It is this that led to set philosophy on a sure basis. This quasi mathematical procedure for the achievement of knowledge is typical of a rational approach. This method is also called as the method of Doubt.

Doubt and Certainty

Descartes insisted that the task of his method is to rid oneself of all prejudices by calling in doubt all that can be doubted. The path even to certainty begins with doubt. The doubting process frees oneself from all preconceived opinions and provides one the easiest route by which the mind may be led away from senses. It is a methodic doubt because he doubts not for the sake of doubting but as a primary stage in the attainment of certainty and for shifting the true from the false. In this way the skeptical doubt prepares the mind for certainty. The first step towards certainty is the discovery of the existence of the self. There is one thing that cannot be doubted. That is the doubt itself which is certain. If doubt or thinking is real than the doubter or thinker is also real. If the thinker is real than the objects whatever comes into his contact are real therefore he come to conclusion "Cogito ergo sum" 'I am thinking therefore I exist.' This cogito argument not only derives a proof for his existence but also sought to discover the essence to demonstrate the existence of God and to provide the criterion to guide the mind in its search for truth. Thus this argument is to build the entire world from the thinking self. It is important here that it is not just the mind that is the foundation, but my mind. In this way the starting point of philosophy for him was connected with the rejection of authority.

Check Your Progress II

1) What is the importance of Cartesian method in philosophizing?

.....

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz a German philosopher, mathematician and logician shared Descartes concern with what he called the improvement of the sciences' meaning the advancement of knowledge which would render it secure against the possibility of serious doubt and error. Like Descartes he felt that the various sciences and our so called knowledge generally are not properly grounded and lack the certainty and freedom from the possibility of error and so wanted to provide for a foundation for knowledge. As Descartes he too was very much impressed with mathematics. His philosophical method was modeled on mathematics hoping to get a comparable exactness and certainty of our reasoning about reality.

From these principles Leibniz contends that the rules of common logic may be derived. To avoid all errors it is enough that one sticks to common rules of logic with great constancy and rigour. It is not necessary first to prove that existence and goodness of God which is not possible without these rules anyhow. Thus for Leibniz there was not only the two principles and indeed something more to start with than Descartes Cogito ergo sum. There are other truths. That is the particular contents of our immediate experience. What is immediately given is not simply that I think but also that I have the particular thoughts or perceptions I do. They do not guarantee that there exists anything independent of them, corresponding to them but they themselves are not subject to doubt. There are as many primary truths of the act as there are immediate perceptions. Therefore what is truth are how will one establish that truth?

Types of truth

In his method he holds that the truth is to be established by combining the simplest and most basic elements of knowledge. The key idea here is the distinction between truth of reasoning and the truths of facts. This is yet another contribution of Leibniz. The truths of reasoning (a priori) are necessary and eternal truths, their opposite is impossible. Their denial can only lead to contradiction. For example: “a triangle had three sides.” They are also analytical that is the predicate of the Truth of Reasoning is already pre-contained in the subject itself. Eg. Two and two is four. Such truths are arrived through analysis and reasoning. The opposite of such truths is indeed false and not possible at all.

Truths of Facts: The truths of fact (a posteriori) are contingent and their opposite is possible. It is not arrived by rational analysis but by experience of the fact. These truths are synthetic that is an external reason is needed to equate the subject and the predicate in their propositions. However the predicates of the TF are also virtually pre-contained in the subject. One who has a vast and extensive knowledge of the subject would be able to know all its contingent possibilities. Thus in his method Leibniz has a rather low opinion of the importance of empirical knowledge. He is much more interested what can be discovered about general nature of things through the use of reason alone. It is this main reliance upon reason as opposed to experiment and his conviction that reason can reveal to us the basic structure of reality despite the limitation applying to empirical knowledge accounts for the traditional designation of Leibniz as rationalist.

2.6 SPINOZA’S AIM OF PHILOSOPHY

Spinoza a Dutch-Jewish philosopher expounded part of Descartes philosophy. In Spinoza’s view the proper order of philosophical argument demands that we should start with that which is ontologically and logically prior, namely with the divine essence or Nature and then proceed by logically deducible stages. In adopting this approach Spinoza separated himself from Descartes. In this endeavor to give a rational explanation of the world speculative metaphysicians have always tended towards the reduction of multiplicity to unity. Explanation in this connection means explanation in terms of causality and so they have tended to reduction of multiplicity to unity. In this sense Spinoza was a metaphysician with the ambitious aim of explaining reality or making the universe intelligible. For him the fundamental philosophical vision was one of unification and synthesis. Man’s happiness consists in attaining the truth. Hence he was concerned with the method of attaining truth and not about the capacity of the mind to know truth. In order to attain truth the mind must get rid of various prejudices that distract us. For example the prejudice that God and nature are not one. Thus in his book Treatise on the correction of the understanding he speaks of three levels of the method of knowing.

Levels of Knowing

Imagination: We can first of all look at things ‘*sub specie temporis*’ i.e under the aspect of ‘here and now’ time. This takes place when we use imagination. This corresponds approximately to sensation. Our bodies are affected by other bodies passively and through this affection we come to know them. The knowledge of universal ideas also belongs to this level. Through opinion or imagination we neither perceive things in themselves nor infer them from the clear ideas of their causes. We nevertheless rely on ideas of this kind in our common life and this is therefore a

useful source of knowledge. Imaginations give us vague, generalized and inadequate information.

Reason: Sometimes we employ reasoning to view reality as separated, isolated and distinct. The object of reason is common notions which are self-evident principles of mathematics and physics. This knowledge is already scientific but it is not the highest cognition because common notions and the conclusions inferred from them are abstract. They do not represent the essence of things in the richness of totality.

Intuition: We also view things in “*sub specie aeternitatis*” or under the aspect of eternity. We are able to glimpse the essential inter-relatedness of things. This is the most perfect level of knowing. Here we have perception of the individual things in all their fullness. This is a natural process of knowing which begins with the perception of individual unrelated phenomena, continues through the common notions or abstract principles of thinking and ends in a full and gratifying version of all things in God. On the criterion of truth he supplemented the ideas of Descartes. For Descartes clarity and distinctness was the criterion of truth, instead for Spinoza coherence is another criterion.

The Geometrical Method

Spinoza applied Geometrical method in order to explain the nature of God and world. This method had been propounded by the most prominent mathematician Euclid (300 BC, Alexandria, Egypt). It deals with the laws concerning lines, angles, planes etc. he handled the problem of the world as a problem of geometry. According to him everything is said to follow the first principle or ground of the universe as necessarily as the propositions. He assumed without questions that it is possible to construct a system of metaphysics that will render it completely intelligible. The method guarantees true conclusions if only the axioms are true and the definitions are correct. Spinoza’s abstract entities also apply to reality as such. Thus we have a real definition an adequate, true or clear and distinct idea of things. Although Spinoza uses the geometrical method in the *Ethica ordine Geometrico Demonstrata* (Ethics Demonstrated in Geometrical Manner), he does not attempt to justify or even explain it. This has led many readers to view its argument as an intricate and fascinating chain of reasoning from arbitrary premises, which as such never touches reality.

Check Your Progress III

1) What are the two great principles that direct our reasoning according to Leibniz?

.....

2) Explain the distinction between truths of reasoning and truths of fact?

.....

3) Relevance of geometrical method in the discovery of truth?

.....

2.7 LET US SUM UP

In order to provide a solid foundation to philosophy one has to adopt a solid and sound method. The rationalists in and through their methods have given a strong foundation for philosophy. Their emphasis on reason as a tool to discover truth brought in a new dimensional change in the western thought, especially the paradigm shift took by Kant in the history of western philosophy. Rational method by using mathematics and its operations of intuition and deduction has eliminated the the personal and subjective factors such as feelings and emotions from of the body of truth. As a result it has given truth a rational scheme in other words it has demonstrated truth is a rational and systematic order.

2.8. KEY WORDS

A priori – truths which do not depend on experience

A posteriori – truths which do depend on experience

2.9 FURTHER READING AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 3 EMPIRICAL METHOD

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- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Common Features of Philosophical Method
- 3.3 Empirical Method
- 3.4 Exposition of Empiricism
- 3.5 Locke's Empirical Method
- 3.6 Berkeley's Empirical Method
- 3.7 David Hume's Empirical Method
- 3.6 Let us Sum up
- 3.7 Key Words
- 3.8 Further Readings and References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

Earlier concepts of the existence of "innate ideas" were the subject of debate between the Continental rationalists and the British empiricists in the 17th century through the late 18th century. John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume were the primary exponents of empirical method. The empirical method held that all essential truths about the world were discoverable only by empirical experience i.e sense experience. It is a process of arriving at truth through experiential verification of perceived data. Hence in this method reason was substituted by experience. The unit exposes the empirical method adopted by these three above mentioned philosophers.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The term method is derived from a Greek word "methodos" – road to. Etymologically the term refers to the way of doing something, the system of procedure to obtain or reach the end intended. It is a way of procedure from the known to the unknown, from the given starting point to final propositions in a determined field of knowledge. In sciences the use of correct methods is most important in order to make certain that the conclusions are correctly connected with the starting point and the foundation. Every scientific method is the road from the known starting point to a result. And one of the characteristic features of the discipline of philosophy is the existence of method. Philosophical method (or philosophical methodology) is the study of how to do philosophy. So a method of doing philosophy, or a *philosophical method*, is a systematic or patterned way of answering philosophical questions.

But within them the questions in philosophy are always local in the sense that they carry favor of their own peculiar time and circumstances as a result they do not remain quite the same over a period of time the methods adopted to obtain answers for them have also changed over a period of time. This is especially evident if we look at the evolution of philosophical methods in

western philosophy from the speculative, dialectical, empirical, rational method to that of analytical, phenomenological, transcendental method. This evolution and proliferation of different methods in western philosophy seem to close links with the way science and philosophy began developing in 17th century. When science started to develop quite fast due to the impetus received from the work of Galileo, Newton and others two powerful and influential methods in philosophy – rationalism and empiricism also quickly developed. Of course, there is not just *one* method that philosophers use to answer philosophical questions. But it is possible to draw some valid generalizations or common features that include while discussing philosophical methods.

3.2 COMMON FEATURES OF PHILOSOPHICAL METHOD

Doubt: Notice doubts that one has about the meaning or justification of some common, everyday belief one has. **Formulate a problem:** Formulate the doubts in a philosophical problem, or question. Explain the problem very clearly and carefully. **Offer a solution:** Offer a solution to the problem: either something like a philosophical analysis or a philosophical explanation. **Argument:** Give an argument or several arguments supporting the solution. **Dialectic:** Present the solution and arguments for criticism by other philosophers, and help them judge their own.

3.3 EMPIRICAL METHOD

Empirical method is generally taken to mean ‘the collection of data’ on which to base a theory or derive a conclusion in science. The term "empirical" was originally used to refer to certain ancient Greek practitioners of medicine who rejected adherence to the dogmatic doctrines of the day, preferring instead to rely on the observation of *phenomena* as perceived in experience. An empiric is "one who, either in medicine or in other branches of science, relies *solely* upon observation and experiment. The empirical method is not sharply defined and is often contrasted with the experimental method, where data are derived from the systematic manipulation of variables in an experiment. Some of the difficulty in discussing the empirical method is from the ambiguity of the meaning of its linguist root: *empiric*. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2nd Edition, 1989), empiric is derived from the ancient Greek for experience, *ἐμπειρία*, which is ultimately derived from *ἐν* (in) + *πείρα* (trial) or experiment. Therefore, empirical data is information that is derived from the trials and errors of experience. In this way, the empirical method is similar to the experimental method. However, an essential difference is that in an experiment the different "trials" are strictly manipulated so that an inference can be made as to causation of the observed change that results. This contrasts with the empirical method of aggregating naturally occurring data. In philosophy too an empirical method refers to a practice of knowledge derived entirely from sense perception or experience. It is a process of attaining truth through experiential verification of perceived data. It is a method which interprets philosophy from a world of experience. But in order to understand the entire process of empirical method one needs to study what first Empiricism is and philosophers who have contributed to this philosophical trend.

Check Your Progress I

1) What is a philosophical method?

.....

2) Define Empirical Method

.....

3.4 EXPOSITION OF EMPIRICISM

The modern philosophy can be generally classified as rationalistic and empiricistic as they accept reason or experience respectively as the source and norm of knowledge. According to the empiricist view, for any knowledge to be properly inferred or deduced, it is to be gained ultimately from one's sense-based experience. As a historical matter, philosophical empiricism is commonly contrasted with the philosophical school of thought known as rationalism which, in very broad terms, asserts that much knowledge is attributable to reason independently of the senses.

In philosophy empiricism holds the attitude that beliefs are to be accepted and acted upon only if they first have been confirmed by actual experience. This broad definition accords with the derivation of the name from the Greek word '*Empeiria*', which corresponds to the Latin '*experientia*' which in turn takes the English meaning 'experience'. Empiricism is a system of thought which believes that there are no inborn truths and all knowledge springs from sense perception or experience and there is no absolutely certain knowledge without experiential verification of the perceived data. Reason can yield only probable knowledge. Empiricism thus holds that our world of experience is the object of philosophy and all knowledge is ultimately based on experience. Experience so understood has a variety of modes – sensory, aesthetic, moral, religious and so on but empiricist concentrate on sense experience. It goes to an extent of affirming that there is no other knowledge except that which comes from experience.

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

Characteristics of Empiricism

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

Check Your Progress II

1) What is the relevance of empiricism in the modern thought?

.....

2) Distinguish the difference between the weak and the strong form of empiricism

.....

3) Explain some of the characteristic features of Empiricism

.....

3.5 LOCK’S EMPIRICAL METHOD

John lock was suspicious of the view that a thinker could work out by reason alone the truth about the universe. In response to the early-to-mid-17th century Continental Rationalism of Rene Descartes and Baruch Spinoza in the later 17th century John Locke (1632–1704) proposed in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1689) a very influential view wherein the *only* knowledge humans can have is a posteriori, i.e., based upon experience. All materials of human knowledge are derived from experience either of the external world through our senses or of our own mental life through introspection. He established that all our ideas derive from experience that is the way we conceive the world (including ourselves). Therefore, he set the tone for the empiricist method by affirming the foundational principle of empiricism; “there is nothing in the intellect that was not previously In the senses .” (*nihil est in intellectu quod non antea fuerit in sensu*). All knowledge of the world must finally rests on human sense experience.

Thus Locke is famously attributed for holding the proposition that the human mind is a *Tabula Rasa*, a "blank tablet," in Locke's words "white paper," on which the experiences derived from sense impressions as a person's life proceeds are written. Through the combining and compounding of simple sense impressions or ideas (defined as mental contents) into more complex concepts the mind can arrive at sound conclusions. In his empirical method Lock vehemently attacked the doctrine of innate ideas according to him ideas are acquired, learned and obtained from our experience. They are immediate objects of our sensory awareness. They are sensory presentation of physical objects both external and internal. They are concepts that we gain through introspection of our own mental operations like meditation.

There are two sources of our ideas: sensation and reflection. In both cases, a distinction is made between simple and complex ideas. Simple ideas are those that result from pure passivity and consist of a single content. These are obtained through experience alone and are directly known as the contents of actual experience Ex. Colour, hear extensity etc., Lock calls them as primary qualities Those ideas which, come from more than one sense organ (solidity, motion, number, shape...) and the secondary those ideas that are from one sense organ and are the ways in which facts affect us (colour, smell, sound ...). Complex ideas are formed by the synthesis of two or more simple ideas. Here the mind is active. Mind has the power to repeat, compare, compound the simple ideas in endless variety and thus make complex ideas. This process of compounding and comparing are the operations of the mind. The number of ideas formed by compounding and comparing is almost infinite but they can be classified into Modes themselves, substance and relation.

Modes: Modes are the complex ideas that cannot exist by themselves they are represented by others they are simple modes and Mixed modes,. The former same simple ideas without any mixture of any other whereas the later is components of simply ideas of various kinds put together to make a complex one. **Substance:** The existence of modes presupposes that of substance. It is the substratum as the cause for the unity of modes. **Relation:** Here mind gets certain ideas of relation by comparing one thing with another. The idea of cause and effect. Thus his empirical method establishes the hold that the mind is at first a blank tablet, a passive receptor of its experience. The mind possesses innate powers but not innate ideas as cognition begins only with sensation.

3.6 BERKELEY'S EMPIRICAL METHOD

One of the aims of Berkeley's philosophy is to attack scepticism and thereby to defend common sense and to attack atheism and thereby to defend religion. Against them he held that the reality of the physical world is essentially spiritual for it manifests the activity of spirit and goodness of God's will. Mind or spirit is the only substance and that it is God who produces sensations or ideas in our mind. According to him secondary qualities are not objective. They change and are not perceived in exactly the same way by everyone. Therefore they are more in the mind than of the things.

As a result his empirical method is viewed by many as having some idealistic tenants as it teaches that reality consists of spirits and their ideas only. This is known as immanent idealism.

According to this doctrine human mind can possess or acquire the knowledge of their own experiences. However he established this idealistic conclusion as the implication of his famous maxim “*esse est percipi*.” Since there is nothing as an objective material substance it follows that for material things to be is to be perceived. *Esse* is act of being or literally to be and its *percipi* is nothing but to be perceived. It is not possible that they have an existence out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them. His method implies that our thoughts, passions, pictures of imagination do not exist outside the mind, they are in the mind and their existence consists in their being perceived or known by the mind. Objects exist in so far as they are perceived. In other words to be is to be perceived. The objects are existing because the finite minds perceive them. Even if the finite minds do not perceive the objects still they exist because an ever vigilant spectator perceives them all through. Such an ever vigilant spectator is none other than God (infinite mind or spirit). In short Berkeley points out all mental representations of supposed material substance are finally ideas in the mind therefore the existence of a material world external to the mind is unwarranted assumption. To do does not mean to be a material substance rather to be means to be perceived by mind.

3.7 DAVID HUME’S EMPIRICAL METHOD (1711–1776)

It was his great desire to establish a science of human nature. After all every science has to do with human nature in some way or the other, whether it is logic, mathematic etc. Man and it is he who ultimately decides what is true and what is false in these disciplines. Thus it is evident that human nature is the capital or centre of the various sciences and it should therefore serve as their focal point. Hume’s aim was then to explain the principles of human nature so that all the various disciplines might be able to build upon the solid foundation. In order to do that he advocated experimental method to establish this science. This method is based on observation and experience. We must make a close and accurate observation of man’s psychological processes and moral behavior and try to separate out from these the various laws according to which man works – just as is done in the natural science. Thus rather than relying on supposed intellectual intuitions of the essences of the human mind through introspection, one shall make use of the more scientifically solid procedure of induction. Thus his view is empirical in the sense that our knowledge has its source in experience.

He argues that all knowledge derives from sense experience. In particular, he divided all of human knowledge into two categories: *relations of ideas* and *matters of fact*. Mathematical and logical propositions (e.g. “that the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the two sides”) are examples of the first, while propositions involving some contingent observation of the world (e.g. “the sun rises in the East”) are examples of the second. All of people’s “ideas”, in turn, are derived from their “impressions”. There are two types of impressions outward impressions and inward impressions. From such impressions all our knowledge is derived. For Hume, an “impression” corresponds roughly with what we call a sensation. To remember or to imagine such impressions is to have an “idea”. Ideas are therefore the faint copies of sensations. Thus according to Hume there is no absolute or certain knowledge of matters of fact. Our knowledge never reaches absolute certainty. We base our conclusion on experience. As a simple instance posed by Hume, we cannot know with certainty by inductive reasoning that the sun will continue to rise in the East, but instead come to expect it to do so

because it has repeatedly done so in the past. Thus David Hume drove the empiricist method to its logical end making use of Berkeley's insight at the same time turning towards modern secular skepticism. As an empiricist who grounded all human knowledge in sense experience, still Hume disagreed with Locke's representative perception and Berkeley's idealistic solution. Human experience is indeed of the phenomenal only and there is no way to ascertain what is beyond it.

Check Your Progress III

1) How are the ideas classified according to Locke?

.....

2) What are the implications of the maxim "*esse est percipi*."?

.....

3) Compare and Contrast the similarities and the difference that exists in the method of Locke, Berkeley and Hume

.....

3.8 LET US SUM UP

Empirical method paved way of very practical basis for philosophy. It said pure rationality or making use of reason as the only tool of knowledge will led philosophy to a baseless ground. Therefore, one needs to start from the given form the sense perception or experience. Out mind cannot act, reason cannot perform its function unless something is carried on to it in and through the sense experiences. Truth or discovery of truth is basically through the a posteriori. Though the empirical method has its own drawbacks still it served a valid basis for demonstration of truth.

3.9 KEY WORDS

Tabula Rasa – word used by Locke to refer to the emptiness of the mind before experience

Innate ideas – refers to the inborn ideas

3.10 FURHER READING AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 4 CRITICAL METHOD

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

- To introduce a method of philosophizing that was prevalent in the twentieth century
- To familiarize the students to the world of critical thinking, social critique and ideological structuring
- To have an overall picture of Critical theory developed and promoted by Frankfurt school of philosophy which has a tremendous impact in the continental philosophy of our times.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Critical Method is the critical theorist approach to the study of society. As a theory, it was developed between 1930-1970 by 'Frankfurt school' group of theorists and philosophers like Max Horkheimer, Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Habermas. It begins by critiquing the modern Western societies that became closed and totalitarian societies where all individual freedom and autonomy were at stake. As a result of the capitalist mode of production, they believed early, that the societies turn into totalitarian. Later they focused on the role of science and technology in modern society, and the 'instrumental' conception of reason. This conception denies the possibility of inherent rational ends of human action and affirms reason as exclusive choice of effective instruments for achieving arbitrary ends. If 'instrumental rationality' is not subordinated to a more encompassing notion of rationality, it would bring in disastrous consequences. Critical theorists reflected on the impossibility of leading a good life in the contemporary world. Critical method is a form of cultural criticism and more a theoretical commitment than action for radical social change.

4.2 BASIC FEATURES OF CRITICAL THEORY

Many critics and intellectuals in Frankfurt School adapt Marxism to the theoretical and political needs of their time. The distinguishing feature of their approach is their theoretical orientation in social sciences for a critical theory of society. Method of the Critical theorists was to offer an

internal or immanent criticism in form of resistance to the contemporary society. For them, every society claims to have substantive rationality and to allow its members to lead a good life. Critical method takes such claim as a standard for criticism. Critical theory method exposes such societies that fail to live up to their own claims. Understanding of good life from the beliefs, cultural artefacts and forms of experience present in the society is analysed and criticised in critical method. This serves as a basis for internal criticism. However, they find in the contemporary society a particular difficulty of finding these traditional substantive conceptions of the good life. These have been replaced by a justification that modern society needs no legitimation beyond its actual efficient functioning and to its 'instrumental' rationality. Hence 'instrumental rationality' itself becomes a major target for critical theory. (Geuss 1998)

Critical theory began with a social theory guided by an interest in the normative goal of human emancipation. They were skeptical of the enlightenment assumption of scientific and technological progress as an unproblematic human good. Empirical science was based on 'instrumental rationality,' which is inherently manipulative. It has brought in disastrous social and moral consequences.

They rejected a commonly held view of a 'theory' as a set of formally specified and interconnected general propositions which is used for successful explanation and prediction of the phenomena. This conception is extremely misleading. It takes away the social context in which theory arose, tested and applied. Without the context theories are not fully comprehensible. For the critical theorists, the term 'theory' designates a form of social activity. Human societies are engaged in a constant process of assimilating nature through labour in order to reproduce themselves; they develop forms of cognitive activity in order to make this self-reproduction more secure and more efficient. Cognitive activity is 'traditional theory,' from which the so called scientific theories are derived. Such cognitive activity not only directed at reproducing society but also at changing the existing society radically. (Geuss 1998)

4.3 ON INSTRUMENTAL REASON

'Reason' was objective in ancient world and was thought to refer to a structure of order inherent in reality. Human beings were thought to have a subjective faculty to perceive and respond to that objective structure of the world. It was used to determine goals of humans. In the post-Enlightenment world the 'objective' conception of reason becomes increasingly implausible. Reason comes to be conceived as essentially a subjective ability to find efficient means to arbitrarily given ends. Reason becomes subjective, formal and instrumental. It is identified with the kind of reason used in natural science. Scientific reason, obtained from the instrumental understanding reason, is used to manipulate the world towards human ends. Reason becomes a guide to life only in a very limited sense. But reason goes beyond those limits and retains its internal and immanent critical character. (Geuss 1998)

4.4 CONCEPTION OF SOCIETY

Positivists held that the human societies are just bundles of separate facts, events and institutions. Social facts and institutions are what they are objectively. The concepts of society are purely descriptive and defined in terms of observable properties. These concepts are just

tools that humans can define in whatever way seems convenient. Critical theorists totally reject all these understanding of society. For them, every society is a 'totality' in which each feature is essentially connected with all others. Social reality is partly constituted by forms of belief, understanding and evaluation. The facts and institutions are not objective but inherently oriented towards the realization of specified conception of the good life. As each society has an objective concept of itself as an ideal form of itself, every institution in it is to be evaluated in relation to that concept towards the realization of the good life. To discover the concept is a very complex, constructive, theoretical activity. The method of critical theory is to elicit the concept of a given institution in a given society, formulate it and confront the actual reality of the institution with this ideal concept. If there are discrepancies, it would be exposed and analysed. Such method is called internal or immanent criticism. Adorno says that one cannot extract from reason the image of a good society as reason cannot describe utopia.

4.5 HUMAN HISTORY AS DIALECTIC OF ENLIGHTENMENT

For Horkheimer and Adorno, human history is a dialectic of 'enlightenment' on the one hand and 'myth/barbarism' on the other. 'Enlightenment' is a certain theory, a specification of goals for society, a set of views about individual morality the nature of knowledge, rationality and so on. It is also the actual state of society resulting from the above. 'Myth' is 'barbarism' opposed to 'enlightenment'. Enlightenment as a theory has commitment to certain ideals like autonomy, individuality, human happiness. Genuine knowledge, according to it, is knowledge that is objectifying, identifying and inherently technologically efficacious. Increase in such genuine knowledge in a society would lead to realization of ideals. Nothing is taken on faith or authority or tradition.

Critical theorist claim that all formulations of enlightenment as seen in the previous paragraph, is false. Enlightenment is not utterly and radically different from myth. The relation between myth and enlightenment is dialectical. Both have a common origin as reactions to the same phenomenon: primeval terror, to deal with fear of what is unknown. Myth is a mimetic reaction by making ourselves like that which we fear, by identifying with it. It is an attempt to do away with its primitive. The other way of reacting to fear is by separating it fully from the self and subjecting it to have control over it. The latter becomes enlightenment. In myth we make ourselves like the other; in enlightenment we try to make the other like our category by subsuming it. Myths are only historically superseded forms of enlightenment. Moreover, myth and enlightenment are not given absolutely once and for all, but is historically relative.

Enlightenment has its own negative impact on humanity with its instrumentally manipulative attitude in terms of relation between human and nature and with fellow human beings. The effective instrumental control led to repress the spontaneity, which is human's capacity for happiness. Modern subjectivity in which self-preservation is ensured at the cost of happiness, is the best example as a result of enlightenment. Enlightenment has an inherent tendency to destroy itself. The ideals like autonomy, individuality and so on are not exempt from the demands of the principle of universal criticism. The increase in technological control over the world and the spread of scientific knowledge has not made people more autonomous, more highly individuated or happier. Finally, enlightenment is potentially totalitarian and has an inherent tendency to absolutize itself. Therefore, critical theorists have the task of enlightening the enlightenment

itself, by analyzing its inherent tendency towards totalitarianism, by saving its ideals and by preventing it from turning itself into a form of myth and barbarism.

4.6 SUBSTANTIVE REASON

Adorno gave an account of a thinking that is a form of substantive reason. It is a kind of thinking constitutive of his critical theory. For enlightened reason some false beliefs are subjective projections. The medium of those projections like senses, social practices and history, are systematic sources of error. So for true knowledge the only condition is complete independence from these mediums. The autonomy of reason and meaning-independence of concepts is explicitly identified with the spontaneity of the 'transcendental' subject. This subject and the philosophical concept of system from it are driven by self-preservation due to both fear and rage against their objects. Adorno appropriates this conception of idealism as rationalized rage which is directed at anything that refuses to fit or non-identical with the demands of autonomous reason. This autonomy of reason is secured through the meaning-independence of concepts from concrete experience and its mediums. The particulars and contingents are incommensurable with this reason. Adorno tries for the 'rescue' of nonidentity - the thing in itself in its concrete, historically mediated sensuous particularity by the use of dialectic.

We usually subsume particulars and individuals under generality. Asserting of identity between the two individuals and between each individual and the concept is taken for granted in every day thinking and generally in science too. This Adorno calls as 'identity thinking,' which is not true as in every individual there is a difference. 'Identity thinking' in a way crushes or suppresses difference. For instance, X is a cow and 'Y' is another cow. We subsume these two particulars as a general concept of 'cow,' and the third one 'Z' is also linked to this concept of 'cow.' By engaging 'identity thinking' we tacitly try to make these three animals identical. In fact what is there is that there are three particular animals which are different from one another. Hence, it overlooks the differences. Critical theory tries to resist such identity tactics and to remain aware of 'non-identity.' There are instances where any given two are not identical with the concept that is already made of subsuming one to the other.

Adorno demonstrated that the rationalized concept of an object does not exhaust the thing conceived. The sensory images and other mediums that are stripped away in the attainment of autonomy are the necessary mediations through which knowing subjects come into relation to objects known. Such a project of Adorno is called 'Negative dialectics' which continually points out the concrete differences. It becomes a kind of cognition of the non-identical and it goes on back and forth. It would not stop in some positive or more adequate concept but a continual negative dialectics. In applying this critical method in philosophical writing, Adorno even rejected the usual standards of clarity and communicability which he feared as forms of repression. It prevents, according to him the novel thoughts and critical ideas from being 'thoughts.' Hence, we find that he adopted an elusive style in writing and claimed that his philosophy could not be summarized.

In summary, the critical theory of Horkheimer and Adorno maintained capitalism, enlightenment, scientific era brought in many disadvantages and suffering to humanity in the modern period. No doubt they brought in various changes. Nevertheless, they led people to have

guilt, inadequacy and progressive political change contributing to a new barbarism. As Adorno calls, they brought in nothing but a 'real hell.' From critiquing the impact of enlightenment movement their concern was to expose the nexus of rationality and social actuality. The ulterior dominating attitude of the humans upon nature underlies the project of instrumental reason. Critical theory exposed the rise and domination of instrumental reason while examining the philosophy of the Enlightenment. By doing so, they hoped for a positive and emancipatory notion of enlightenment. Their method in critical theory was to release humanity from the entanglement and domination of philosophy of instrumental reasoning which hailed enlightenment. The critical method is directed at a particular society that stunts the possible realization of the good life. It is inherently negative, and it depends on a conception of substantive reason. Critical method paves a way for the play of free, spontaneous, human subjectivity in an increasingly regimented world. It remained as part of the 'self consciousness of a revolutionary process of social change.'

4.7 HABERMASIAN CRITICAL THEORY

Critical theory took a turn to more generalized critique of instrumental rationality which finally culminated in Adorno's "negative dialectics." For Habermas, with Horkheimer and Adorno, the critical theory had reached its dead end. He sketched out a critical theory of modernity that accounted for its pathology. He suggested a re-orientation of modernity rather than abandoning the project of enlightenment. He proposed a shift of paradigm for critical theory away from the philosophy of consciousness.

He had his interest in developing the concept of rationality, which is beyond the individualistic and subjectivist premises of modernity. He shared with other critical theorists that enlightenment in the form of instrumental rationality became more a source of enslavement means than a means of liberation. By his investigation of instrumental rationality that dominated the modern thought, Habermas examined the loss of significance of the epistemic subject and the capacity for reflection by the subject on his or her activities. In the present effort of making rationality for emancipation, we need to counter this tendency and re-affirm the necessity of self-reflection for self-understanding.

Critical theory of society for Habermas is inherent in the very structure of social action and language. If in any communicative situation a consensus is established under coercion it is an instance of systematically distorted communication. In proposing for the contemporary formation of ideology and the process of emancipation, Habermas advocates the transcendence of such systems of distorted communication. Here again, what is required is engagement in critical reflection and criticism where domination is exposed.

4.8 HABERMAS' THEORY OF SOCIETY

Habermas tried to develop a theory of society with a practical intention. His concern was to offer a systematic and theoretical account of the relation between theory and practice in all social sciences. By doing this he intended to challenge the domination of scientism. He reflected on the nature of cognition, the structure of social inquiry and the normative basis of socio-cultural aspects of the society. He wanted to develop the theory of society with practical intention. He

was critical of the developments and changes in the capitalist and socialist societies in the twentieth century history that raised lots of doubt about the validity of Marxian analysis and theory. It also posed a major concern about the traditional social thoughts and values perpetuated by many traditions, as they seemed to be bearing no impact on contemporary society. It called for an assessment and reformulation so as to be relevant today. The developments through scientific revolution and enlightenment are juxtaposed with the developments in the notion of freedom, justice, happiness and self-realization. The Western society has witnessed rather the rise of nihilism and anti-modernism threatening the project of modernity and enlightenment. It paved a way also to dogmatism and superstition, fragmentation and discontinuity with loss of meaning, as reactionary response to modernity. According to him, the growth of rationalization has curtailed the freedom and self-determination of human being. Technological progress brought in both blessings and difficulties. One cannot think of abandoning the achievements of modernity. One needs to have a careful analysis of the outcome of the progress of modernity. Critical theory, for Habermas had real potential to overcome domination and repression and to further the process of human emancipation. It is the distinguishing factor for Critical method from traditional social theory. It is necessary, therefore according to him to undertake the task of a scientific understanding of the dynamics of the society. One has to appropriate the developments in the social sciences and integrate them into a critical social science. He worked towards the notion of just and emancipated society.

4.9 HABERMAS' CRITIQUE OF SCIENTISM

Habermas attempted to construct an alternative to the technological determinism. The technocratic consciousness in the level social theory has made people to have a tendency to define practical problems as technical issues. Such technocracy justifies a particular class interest in domination and does not disclose the fundamental interests of humankind. It threatens an essential aspect of human life and affects the very structure of human interests. In his systematic critique of positivism and scientism Habermas says that positivism insists that only the sciences constitute genuine knowledge and believes that science does not need any further critical analysis. It is a mere 'scientific self-misunderstanding,' which Habermas challenges. He attempts to secure an independent basis for critique that all forms of knowledge are rooted in fundamental human interests, namely 'anthropologically deep-seated cognitive interests. These interests are vivid as technical interest in natural sciences, as practical interest in historical-hermeneutic sciences and as emancipatory interest in critical sciences. "The human interest in autonomy and responsibility is not mere fancy, for it can be apprehended a priori. What raises us out of nature is the only thing whose nature we can know: language' (1968: 314).

For Habermas the growth of technocracy was not inevitable but the result of a failure to preserve the classical distinction between theory and practice, and between practical wisdom and technical skill. He traced this loss of distinction in modern political theories of Hobbes to Hegel as well as of Marx. Marxian concept of praxis blurred the distinction between labour and modes of social interaction. Habermas argues that the end of alienated labour does not alone ensure social emancipation. (Baynes 1998)

For Habermas, knowledge is historically rooted and interest bound. Human beings are both toolmaking and language-using animals. They had to produce from nature what is needed for

their existence. It was done by manipulation and control of objects and necessarily communicated with each other through the use of intersubjectively understood symbols of language. Humankind has an interest in the creation of knowledge to control objectified processes and to maintain communication. This is a basis of interests that human beings had to organize their experience in terms of *a priori* interests. There is also an interest in reason, in the human capacity to be self-reflective and self-determining, to act rationally. It results in the generation of knowledge enhancing autonomy and responsibility. It is an emancipatory interest. His theory of cognitive interests elaborates the relationship of knowledge to human activity.

Further for examining the distinction between processes of constitution and justification, he developed the theory of communicative competence. All speech is oriented to the idea of a genuine consensus which involves a normative dimension. This is formalized and attained in an ideal speech situation, where consensus becomes a rational consensus and the ultimate criterion of truth. Here the very structure of speech is held to involve the anticipation of a form of life in which truth, freedom and justice are possible.

4.10 THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

The Theory of Communicative Action (1981) is Habermas' *magnum opus*. It is a major contribution to social theory with reflections on the basic concepts of social theory along with observations on the methodology of the social sciences, hypotheses about modernization as a process of societal rationalization. Habermas does not see social rationalization as a process that culminates in the loss of meaning and freedom in the world, but as potential for societal learning and human emancipation. He makes a distinction between communicative action and purposive-rational actions. The former is 'content-oriented,' whereas the latter is 'success-oriented,' and goal oriented. The latter instrumental actions are appraised from the standpoint of efficiency with following the technical rules. They are strategic actions aiming at influencing others for the purpose of achieving some end. Communicative action constitutes an independent and distinct type of social action. The goal is not to influence others but to reach an agreement or mutual understanding about something in the world. The goal of the agent is subordinated to the goal of achieving a mutually cooperative process of interpretation of the life-worldly situation. The individuals with communicative action aim at understanding by relating their interpretations by three basic types of speech acts: constative, regulative and expressive. (1981, vol. I: 319-). Habermas forms it as communicative rationality as it tries to criticize its own validity claims.

By communicative rationality Habermas does not see society as sort of large-scale debating club. The agents' interpretations are taken for granted and form the background of knowledge and practices which is called the life-world. Social integration is achieved in this way. Habermas' distinction between society as life-world and society as system is a unique feature in critical method. The society is an outcome of process of rationalization and societal differentiation. Habermas emphasizes the potential for emancipation through his theory of communicative action. Social pathologies are not just because of rationalization but rather from a one-sided process displacing modes of integration based on communicative reason with that of the market and administrative state's functional rationality. This is 'colonization of the life-world.' (Baynes 1998)

4.11 DISCOURSE ETHICS OF HABERMAS

Discourse ethics is communicative ethics. Habermas develops this as an important corollary of theory of communicative action. This ethics is a formulation of a post-conventional moral theory and an alternative to utilitarianism and Kantian ethics. Discourse ethics is centered around the basic idea of principle of universalizability that functions as a rule testing the legitimacy of norms. The principle is as Habermas puts it, “Every valid norm must satisfy the condition that all affected can accept the consequences and the side effects its general observance can be anticipated to have for the satisfaction of everyone’s interests (and these consequences are preferred to those of known alternative possibilities).” (Habermas 1983: 65)

This principle is derived from the general pragmatic presuppositions of communication and argumentation. In every communication the speakers have validity claims with ideal speech situations. The principle of universalizability is an attempt to formulate counterfactual ideal. Accordingly, the norms or maxims of action are only morally legitimate if, when contested, they could be justified in a moral-practical discourse.

Discourse ethics does not presuppose substantive moral content beyond the idea of practical reason. It specifies a formal procedure which any norm must satisfy if it is to be morally acceptable. It supposes an independent order of moral facts. Discourse ethics is a deontological moral theory as it assumes the priority of the right over the good. For Habermas morality consists not just of categorical imperatives but of obligations in terms of communicative action. The valid norms are morally binding as there is an intimate connection with processes of social interaction and communication. (1983: 109).

Habermasian ethics differs from Kantian ethics as it breaks the Kantian two-world metaphysics (phenomenal/noumenal) and rejects the monological interpretation of the categorical imperative. Habermas favours an intersubjective or communicative version of the principle of universalizability, even though in Kant’s kingdom of ends one finds an inter-subjective dimension already. In communicative ethics the ideal is in practical discourse. Discourse ethics makes good its claim with a notion of rational consensus or rational acceptability as the best general account of more ordinary moral intuitions. The abstract notion of equal respect implicit in the idea of communicative action is in contrast to Kantian and Utilitarian attractive claims of respecting individual autonomy or integrity and concern for the welfare of others or solidarity. Habermas understanding of communicative rationality enhances agreement between subjects rather than instrumental control of thing.

In his *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1985), Habermas criticizes postmodern thought for resting modern philosophy of consciousness against which its criticism is directed. The modern and contemporary philosophy dwells either of the following positions: Subject is regarded as one object among others in the world, or as a ‘transcendental’ subject. The paradigm shift is necessary with a model of communicative action in which subjectivity is first approached through the intersubjective relations of individuals with one another. In short, modernity remains an ‘unfulfilled project,’ which is not to be abandoned but to be amended. (Baynes 1998)

4.12 LET US SUM UP

Critical theory emerged from a group of intellectuals in Frankfurt, Germany, who studied social and economic issues in contemporary society from socialist perspective. Critical theory is

designated as the approach to social theory developed initially by people like Max Horkheimer, Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno and Herbert Marcuse and later by Habermas. They involved themselves with the forces, which moved society towards rational institutions. They conceived of these rational institutions as ensuring a true, free and just life, while at the same time being aware of the obstacles, which rendered radical change untenable and difficult. Critical theory developed in the background of various political and historical events in the West especially between 1920s and 1930s that had surely shaken many a Marxist followers. The Marxist theory of the day let down the expectations of the followers, for, political events and revolutionary practice had not coincided with the expectation derived from the Marxist ideals.

Marcuse claimed that the modern world had brought into existence a 'new sensibility,' with its demand for aesthetically satisfying forms of immediate experience and its refusal to participate in consumer society. It represented a significant new political force in the world. The social change is necessary to accommodate the 'new sensibility.' Adorno in particular was uncompromising in his opposition to the idea that philosophy should consist of a closed system of interconnected propositions that rested on a purportedly firm foundation and claimed universal validity. Jürgen Habermas, have tried to develop further some of the central components of critical theory. In the second generation of critical theorists a return to the kind of Neo-Kantian philosophy is witnessed. In the work of Habermas we find the Kantian themes of finding a fixed universal framework for theorizing, giving firm foundations for knowledge claims of various sorts, and investigating the conditions of the possibility of various human activities. The critical theorists had tried to make Marxism more viable and suited to their own time. Especially Habermas tried to revise and reformulate Marxist tradition. His project had a radical democratic character looking forward to expand the sphere of freedom and aiming at harmony between theory and practice. For him knowledge is historically rooted and interest bound. His theory of communication claims that all speech is oriented towards the idea of genuine consensus. In all, Critical method had contributed to philosophy in its criticism of positivism and its demand that social theory be reflective. (Geuss 1998)

4.13 KEY WORDS

Instrumental Reason : Rationality of humans defined only in terms of domination and control of objects of nature, especially in science.

Discourse ethics : is communicative ethics where the norms are deliberated in the society and validated.

Communicative Action : Habermasian theory of ideals with due emphasis on practices being deliberated in ideal speech situations with speech acts.

4.14 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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