
UNIT 1 PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD: WESTERN AND INDIAN

Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
 - 1.1 Introduction
 - 1.2 Phenomenology in Philosophy
 - 1.3 Phenomenology as a method
 - 1.4 Phenomenological Analysis of Knowledge
 - 1.5 Phenomenological Reduction
 - 1.6 Husserl's Triad: Ego, *Cogito*, *Cogitata*
 - 1.7 Intentionality
 - 1.8 Understanding 'Consciousness'
 - 1.9 Phenomenological Method in Indian Tradition
 - 1.10 Phenomenological Method in Religion
 - 1.11 Let us Sum up
 - 1.12 Key Words
 - 1.13 Further Readings and References
-

1.0 OBJECTIVES

- To expose to the students the phenomenology in both Western and Indian traditions
 - To illustrate the method used in philosophical systems concerning the human subjectivity and consciousness.
-

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) was a German philosopher, mathematician and physicist. His works are '*Logical Investigation* (1900), *Phenomenology and crisis of philosophy* (1910), *Ideas* (1913), *Cartesian Meditation* (1931), *Philosophy and Crisis of European Man*. Important contribution of Husserl is his notions of 'Intentionality, *Noema* and *Noesis*, *Epoche*, Life-world. His phenomenology revolutionized philosophy. We understand the reality from our own experience. Continental philosophy and hermeneutics evolved from phenomenology. Understanding reality as a method in philosophy is phenomenological. There are two features of phenomenology. First is all knowledge about reality or world must be the last analysis with our highly personal experience. This brings in the question of whether there is objective knowledge possible at all. Secondly, Phenomenology is concerned with meaning or perspective I have on objects.

1.2 PHENOMENOLOGY IN PHILOSOPHY

Phenomenology is a study of 'appearances' as they are experienced in one's subjectivity. It is the study of structure of consciousness which are common to all consciousness. It examines the way in which phenomenology constituted "in" or "by" consciousness. Phenomenology is cognitive approach to the field of studying aiming at rigorous and interpersonal knowledge by way of describing the intentional act and intended object. Hume used 'phenomenologism,' to mean it as only impression. Husserl uses it differently. Kant used *phenomenon* and *neumena* as opposite in their conception, former meaning 'things as it appears' and the latter to mean 'things as it is.' Husserl's usage was little closer to Kant yet different. Hegel also used this term, phenomenology. His famous book *phenomenology of spirit*, clearly shows that Hegelian notion is different in understanding although he used Kantian terminology. Bentan influenced Husserl by his, what is known as, descriptive psychology. He also used the word phenomenology he come closer to Husserl. From the question of being, as in metaphysics, phenomenology moved

to the concern of ‘meaningfulness of reality.’ The terms phenomenon and phenomenology derive from the Greek for “appearance”. Phenomenon refers to a thing or event that appears to human consciousness. Phenomenology, thus, is the study of manifestations. Edmund Husserl believed that as far as our knowledge of the world goes, all we can know is phenomena. Husserl agreed with Descartes that the one thing we can be certain of is our own conscious awareness.

1.3 PHENOMENOLOGY AS A METHOD

For Husserl European science in particular and Western society in general had lost direction. From the time of enlightenment, reason had increasingly bifurcated from man’s essential, ‘transcendental’, identity. He was convinced that we should return to ‘things themselves’. The method of approach he advocated for the attainment of these ends is called phenomenology. In his phenomenological method, Husserl succeeded in relocating reason as an integral, a priori, faculty of human consciousness. He allows human consciousness to ‘intuit’ its own essence. For Descartes, what one can be certain about existence is one’s own conscious awareness. Husserl agrees with this view of consciousness. He says, ‘if we want to build our conception of reality on rock-solid foundations, that this is the place to start’. (Magee 1998, 211) As Descartes begins by doubting everything but not doubting itself, Husserl believes that the study of mind should begin by setting aside all that is not given in consciousness: ‘all that does not belong to the mental state of the subject’. (Scruton 1994, 139)

The method Husserl introduces for this analysis or examination of things as they appear to our consciousness is called ‘phenomenology’. Husserl believes that the first step towards any attempt to understand the theoretical problems which he confronts have to appropriate access to phenomena themselves. Phenomenology thus evolves as a method of approaching phenomena in their pure state. Phenomena, for Husserl, is anything, imagined or objectively existing, ideal or real, that presents itself in any way to individual consciousness. Husserl’s aim is to develop a method that will not falsify these phenomena, but will allow them to be described as they appear – as things themselves. Thus, when Husserl recommends the return to things themselves, what he is recommending is a return to an analysis of things as they appear to consciousness. Husserl thought that all sciences had evolved randomly and were made up of a combination of empirical act and theoretical supposition. Theoretically this hotchpotch was unacceptable: what was required was a clear account of the nature and the theories which were deemed central to scientific investigation. What was needed was a new method which could clearly identify the metaphysical presuppositions inherent in the sciences.

1.4 PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF KNOWLEDGE

Philosophy is more a method than a preoccupation with knowing the reality. Epistemology is the study of the method of knowing. The word epistemology comes from two Greek words, namely, ‘*episteme*’ (knowledge) and ‘*logos*’ (science); that is to say, it is the science of the being as the knowing, or the science of human mind with respect to its aspect of knowing. In the past, it was called Noetics, Gnoseology, Higher Logic, Material Logic, Critical Logic, Applied Logic, and so on. Epistemology covers a wider spectrum of themes. Apart from laying the standards of truth, it treats the structure and the conditionings of the knowing mind, the very process of cognition, the accompanying states of mind, the role of sense organs in the cognitive process, the nature and limitations of human knowledge, etc. When people ordinarily say that they know something, most often, what they mean is that they believe, think, hope, opine, doubt or wish something.

However, when a philosopher says he knows something, he means that he knows that thing beyond any doubt, with full certitude borne out of a thorough scientific investigation. Normally we say that knowing is an exclusive activity of human beings and inanimate things do not know. Although animals possess some 'intelligence', we say it is mere instinctual responses or conditions. Only humans have reason and deliberate activity of knowing. In knowing we create a sort of mental representation of a thing in the mind. A thing is said to be having a twofold existence, within and without the mind.

Husserl dedicated himself to a search for the very foundation of human knowledge. His first passion had been mathematics and he became gripped by a vision of a philosophy that provided the certainty found in mathematics. He wanted to create a philosophy that was a "rigorous science". Yet his focus was not on the so-called "objective" truths of empirical science, but on the "subjective" process of human thinking; not on so-called "facts" but on "phenomena", things as they appear to the mind.

For Husserl, all genuine knowledge rested on inner evidence. Knowledge, in the strictest sense, means it is inwardly evident that something is the case. Human acts must be fulfilling intuitions. In order to grasp this 'inner evidence', it is necessary to 'bracket' all that is inessential so that the essences of phenomena can speak for themselves. In order to grasp this 'inner evidence', says Husserl, it is necessary to 'bracket' all that is inessential so that the essence of phenomena can speak for itself. For Husserl the study of mind begins by setting aside all that is not given in consciousness. It begins by stripping our perceptions down to their simplest forms, shedding all our layers of habit and assumption. Husserl calls this kind of perception "bracketing". Since all we can know are things that appear to our consciousness, he said, let us ignore the questions that we cannot answer and deal with those we can answer. The human mind understands the world by bringing it under certain concepts, and each concept presents an essence. These essences are not discovered by scientific inquiry and experiment, but are revealed to consciousness where they can be grasped by intuition. In order to grasp the true essence of things themselves we must clear the mind of all the debris that prevents intuition from forming. And it is only by "bracketing" all those presuppositions and prejudices which clutter our minds that we can approach the true essence of the object: that we can study what is left as an object of pure inner awareness.

For Husserl, the ultimate truth is that all we can know for certain is that we have pure consciousness. All objects and acts that appear to consciousness must be treated with circumspection: they must be kept under constant review. Before feelings, imaginings, fears, doubts, and even thought itself, there is pure consciousness – the transcendental ego. Thus, while Husserl seems to echo Descartes, in effect he goes beyond the *cogito*. For Descartes the only thing we can know with any certainty is that we are thinking things – "I think, therefore I am". For Husserl, it is more the case that "I am, therefore I think". Pure consciousness can be grasped by thought, but it is not synonymous with thought. For Husserl, in order to think, first we must be – we must have consciousness. (H. Spiegelberg "The Phenomenological Movement" Vol. 1 1865, pp.76-82.)

1.5 PHENOMENOLOGICAL REDUCTION

Phenomenological reduction, according to Husserl's teachings, is the exclusion from consideration of everything. It is transcendent and anything else derived via scientific or logical inference. A phenomenologist would consider only what was immediately presented to

consciousness. For Jean-Paul Sartre, what one suggested what one know of a person or item are all that one can evaluate. An object, even a person, is only what one sees and experiences of that object. The rest, Husserl suggested, was “bracketed out” from judgment. Husserl referred to this suspension of judgment as *epoché*. As an example, via this theory, a colour seen by one individual is known only to and by that one person. Measuring it scientifically, comparing to other colours, et cetera, do not truly change that what the individual sees is the only thing consciousness comprehends. The colour experienced is the “*pure phenomena*”, the scientific data are held in suspension, or *epoché*. Only the phenomenological knowledge is certain, and then only to the individual.

Eidetic reduction is the abstraction of essences. The essence abstracted via eidetic reduction is the intelligible structure of the phenomena found in consciousness. The goal is to find the basic components of a phenomena. For example, a chair might include the colour, the materials used, and the shapes present in the structure. We apply basic, Platonic forms to all phenomena, according to Husserl. These basics allow us to communicate and describe a phenomena with some accuracy, though this lessens the original phenomena in some manner. Returning to the example of colour, one knows there are component colours. If one thinks too much about the mixture of colours, the colour viewed is devalued. Green is green, according to Husserl, not a mixture of blue and yellow subtractive. The scientific knowledge of colour is the universal form: there are agreed upon mathematical representations of colour. Still, colour is a personal and subjective phenomena, further complicated by differences in human senses, such as colour blindness.

Husserl was unable to come out of this transcendental suspension. The harmless “bracketing” of commonsense realities became the metaphysical thesis that they can have none but an “intentional” existence in and for consciousness. Husserl does not see that we cannot suspend a belief if the belief suspended is meaningless. (Findlay, *Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy*, 145)

1.6 HUSSERL’S TRIAD: EGO, COGITO, COGITATA

What a phenomenologist considers important is that which can be experienced via the human senses. After reduction and abstraction, what remains is what an individual knows, regardless of the scientific or transcendental data. After removing the transcendental and the scientific, what remains is the Phenomenological Residue of the phenomena. This residue exists in three forms: ego, *cogito*, and *cogitata*. Phenomenological Ego is the stream of consciousness in which one acquires meaning and reality from the surrounding environment. Husserl considered it a great mystery and wonder that a group of beings was aware of their existence, in effect human consciousness is the phenomenological result of introspection. By observing that “I can touch and see my being,” we recognize that we exist. The science proving we exist is not of value to human consciousness. The ego is always present, or nothing exists for the individual. *Cogito* or cogitations comprise all the acts of consciousness, including doubting, understanding, affirming, denying, etc. The ego exists only as a result of these cogitations and these cogitations continue only as long as we are self-aware. *Cogitata* are the subjects of thought or objects of consideration. One cannot deny or understand nothing — something must be under consideration for thought to occur. In the presence of nothing, there is no person, no individual.

1.7 INTENTIONALITY

It comes from two words “*in + tendere*” ‘*in*’ means towards. ‘*Tendere*’ means tending, tending towards. Husserl did not use it for the first time but Avicenna (Islamic) used this word and later on developed by scholastic philosophers. Intentionality is the power and the vitality of consciousness. He says physical objects have no intentionality. Only mental objects have intentionality. Physical objects have capacity to tend to its objects. Intentionality is teleological towards objects. Intentionality has direction in a way, object-orientedness. Physical objects are not oriented. Consciousness always refers to something. Consciousness is always conscious ‘of’ something. Consciousness must have an object always. He says “*ego cogito cogitatum*” I think something. So far philosophers said only I think but Husserl told that “I always think something.” What is that something is a different question altogether, but thinking is always about something. Consciousness is co-relational, not just relational. Descartes’ theory of consciousness is called container theory of consciousness as he says that consciousness is simply reflection of objects. Kant also says that mind has a role to play. Co-relational means it is reference theory of consciousness. For Husserl my mind is not simply reflecting.

Meaning, says Husserl, is neither in the mind, nor in the world alone, rather it is discovered by the *a priori* modes of intentionality. These intentional modes fall into three categories – perception, imagination, and signification. Intentionality is like a screen between consciousness and the world onto which objects and acts are projected. Without the screen objects and acts would not exist. Intentionality, then, is a conduit, a channel, between consciousness and phenomena. Consciousness itself cannot be grasped as itself because it is intentional: it is always directed towards that which is not consciousness: it is always looking away from itself. It is only by an analysis of intentionality that consciousness itself can be discovered. Thus, when we peel away the encrustations of preconditioning not only can we intuit the essence of things themselves but also the essence of consciousness – pure consciousness. To examine consciousness, we need to bracket out all objects and facts. What remains is “the transcendental ego”, which, for Husserl, is pure being - Absolute Being. It is important to realise that Husserl does not deny that the real world exists; rather that it is only realisable in virtue of the transcendental ego. Without pure consciousness, nothing is possible. Pure consciousness is before all acts and objects. It is only through pure consciousness that all other entities are known; and they are known as entities that appear in consciousness.

For Husserl the world and the entire field of objectivities would appear before us as being correlated with consciousness. Transcendental consciousness ‘constitutes’ the world. In spite of his insistence on methodological devices for phenomenology, Husserl’s followers and the philosophical scholarship have not been able to see their relevance for a phenomenological way of doing philosophy. H.L. van Breda, Eugene Fink, J.N. Findlay, H. Spiegelberg and Merleau-Ponty are unanimous on the dubious philosophical value of these devices. (Rafy, 2010)

1.8 UNDERSTANDING ‘CONSCIOUSNESS’

Husserl’s view on the self is understood from the issues concerning the unity of consciousness. Hume says, “There are some philosophers, who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our SELF; that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence.... For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, or heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe

anything but the perception.”(Hume 1978, 251-2). Reflection does not reveal a continuously existing self. It is a constantly changing stream of mental states. There is no impression of self. The idea or concept of self that we have of ourselves is problematic. For Hume, there are two problems of conscious unity: firstly, synchronic unity of consciousness and the distinction between subjects of experience; secondly, diachronic unity.

Kantian understanding agrees at one level with Hume on the question of self-awareness but goes in disagreement concerning the legitimacy of the concept of the self. The diverse experiences are unified by the self, as Kant says, “The thought that these representations given in intuition all together belong to me means, accordingly, the same as that I unite them in a self-consciousness, or at least can unite them therein... for otherwise I would have as multicoloured, diverse a self as I have representations of which I am conscious.” (Kant 1929, sec. B143). Kant brings in the notion of the self as unifier of experience. For him, it is legitimate to appeal to an ‘I’ that unifies experience since such a thing is precisely a condition of the possibility of experience. Without such a unifying self, experience would not be possible. The *I*, for Kant is *transcendental*. It is brought into the account as a condition of the possibility of experience.

Husserl claims that the self is experienced indirect intuition. He writes, “I exist for myself and am constantly given to myself, by experiential evidence, as ‘*I myself*.’ This is true of the transcendental ego and, correspondingly, of the psychologically pure ego; it is true, moreover, with respect to any sense of the word ego.” (Husserl 1960, sec. 33). For Kant the ‘I’ has a role in structuring experience but not given itself in experience. For Husserl the ‘I’ plays this structuring role and is also given in inner experience. The ego appears but not as (part of) a mental process. It’s presence is continual and unchanging. Husserl says that it is, “a *transcendancy within immanency*” (Husserl 1982, sec. 57). It is immanent in that it is on the subject side of experience; It is transcendent in that it is not an experience (or part of one).

Sartre understands that consciousness is empty and denies not only of sensory qualities but also our experiential awareness of an ego within consciousness. Sartre denies that the ego is given in pre-reflective experience, either in the content of experience (as an object) or as a structural feature of the experience itself (as a subject). As he puts it, “while I was reading, there was consciousness of the book, of the heroes of the novel, but the ‘I’ was not inhabiting this consciousness. It was only consciousness of the object and non-positional consciousness of itself.” (Sartre 1960, 46-7). Again, “When I run after a streetcar, when I look at the time, when I am absorbed in contemplating a portrait, there is no *I*.” (Sartre 1960, 48-9). For him, the self can appear to consciousness, but it is paradoxically experienced as something outside of, transcendent to, consciousness. With respect to unreflective consciousness, however, Sartre denies self-awareness. Sartre also denies that the ego is required to synthesise, or unite, one’s various experiences. Rather, as he sees it, the unity of consciousness is achieved via the objects of experience, and via the temporal structure of experience.

1.9 PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD IN INDIAN TRADITION

All classical Indian schools speak of consciousness, its intrinsic nature, its place in the causal processes, its relations to objects in the world, and the possibilities. Accordingly their epistemological conceptions are shaped by their positions on consciousness. Key issues are whether it has forms of its own or assume content with reference to objects, its relation to objects in the world. Madhyamikas have anti-theoretical notion on it. Nyaya and Mimamsa take world-oriented theories, while Advaita vedanta speak of self as consciousness in a spiritual and

mystical sense. Advaita is emphatic about the world-transcendent nature of consciousness. The only content of it is self-aware consciousness itself. The worldly content is viewed as an illusion and a deformation, a falling away from being conscious in itself. The relation is explained this way: With regard to the world, uninvolved witnessing is upheld as the state the least estranged from what consciousness is in itself. Samkhya and Yoga prefer a dualistic view of consciousness with regard to nature of it. The world is contrary to the true nature of consciousness. They are separate realities. It is problematic how they are related at all. Nature ranges without break from luminous and malleable mentality to gross material elements. In this the mind is viewed as capable of presenting to the witnessing person of things that are continuous with the things represented. (Phillips 1998).

Yogacara deployed arguments similar to epistemological idealists. Theirs were also compared to Kant as held by Western scholars. Some even think that these Buddhist thinking is very closer to Husserl's phenomenology. There are lots of similarities between what is known as Husserl's description of *noesis* and *noema*, and Buddhist analysis of the *grahaka* and *grahya*. Husserl's *noesis* is the consciousness projecting its cognitive field. Yogacara's *grahaka* is similar to *noesis* as a cognitive grasper. *Noema* of western phenomenological tradition, which is understood as the constructed cognitive object, is similar to the cognitive grasped, *grahya* of the Buddhist tradition.

Husserl did play down the notions of causality. Yogacara developed complex systematic causal theories. These theories were considered as of great importance to Yogacara. In western tradition the ontological realm was afforded at least sufficient to acknowledge its existence in their philosophical enquiry method. Whereas for yogacara was critical of that particular motive in all its manifestations. Yogacara is a type of epistemological idealism. The purpose of its arguments was not to produce an ontological theory of reality. They insisted on shifting one's attention to the epistemological and psychological conditions of human cognitive activities that compel us to construct and attach to ontological theories. From being epistemological idealists they could extend their investigations to be critical realists.

Yogacara has the doctrine of types of consciousness (*manovijnana*)- visual, auditory, etc. Each consciousness is produced by the contact between its specific sense organ and a corresponding object. Consciousness depends on sensation. Enlightenment consists in bringing consciousness to an end, replacing with enlightened cognitive abilities (*jnana*). When consciousness ends, true knowledge begins. (Lusthaus, 1998)

1.10 PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD IN RELIGION

What is called the phenomenology of religion is a descriptive approach to the philosophy of religion. Meaning and understanding of what is religion is a primary issue in it. From the existing divergent beliefs and practices among various religions, the quest for the essence of religion is sought here. With an existential orientation, the concern is more towards our own mode of being in the world than about the question of ultimate being. So the issue is what it means to be religious with the faith and beliefs one has. From phenomenological perspective, philosophy of religion is merely a normative enterprise reflecting on the truth of religious beliefs with proofs and arguments for and against. Phenomenology of religion brackets such concerns and holds that religion is an observable phenomenon of human life. To understand better what is religion is to give a descriptive analyses of that aspect of human experience and to give us deeper insight into the structures and functions of these widespread human activities. Phenomenologist approaches

religion as a matter of belief and focuses attention of the essence or the common nature of religions.

For Kant, we can set forth the basic structures of our experience of the world although there can be metaphysical disputes about what the world really is. So, the subject matter is phenomenal rather than noumenal. In Husserlean method transcends the natural attitude by moving from fact to essence and by bracketing questions about the reality of the world as distinct from the mode of its givenness in experience (the *epoche*). Kierkegaard says that reflection always emerge from within the concrete situatedness of human existence. It clarifies the possibilities that confront us. Phenomenological method in religion presupposes that theoretical reason cannot settle metaphysical disputes in all its modes and criticizes traditional method of philosophy of religion as engaging in unwarranted speculation on things that are undecidables. Even the debates in theology become theoretician's luxury in a realm of abstraction that is least bothered about the living God and the concrete concerns and inescapable choices of existing individuals.

From the objective question of what is religion? God? and so on, the phenomenological concern is towards What would it mean to be religious distinct from being irreligious? Phenomenological method here is looking more for meanings than facts; meanings as living; looking for what happens rather than what happened. As Phenomenology addresses itself to modes of our experience the focus is not just the subjective side of religion but on the 'object' of religious experience. In this sense, the concept of God or gods, for instance, not appropriate for religious 'objects' as the Buddha nature. This 'Buddhahood' is the being of all things and yet *anatta*, non-substance or no-self. Again, the highest experience of God or Brahman or Allah etc., is beyond the structure of subject-object experience. Hence the terms like 'sacred' 'holy' 'divine' 'power' 'other' become generic names for the 'object' of religion. Van der Leeuw stresses its remoteness. However frequently one encounters it, it never becomes usual or familiar, but remains a 'highly exceptional and extremely dangerous "Other"' ([1933] 1963 (1): 24). Accordingly, encounters with the sacred are accompanied by amazement, fear, and especially awe. Rudolf Otto's earlier study, *The Idea of the Holy* (1917), defines the holy as the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* (overwhelming and fascinating mystery). The holy as mysterious is the 'object' of religion which is non-rational or ineffable in the sense of exceeding our conceptual apprehension. Calling it as *mysterium tremendum* evokes fear and dread and designates the sacred as wholly other. Yet as *fascinans*, it is uniquely attractive and fascinating. (Westphal, 1998)

1.11 LET US SUM UP

Phenomenology is not a unified doctrine as its main proponents - Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty - interpret it differently. Phenomenology is a method of philosophical investigation which results in a radical ontological revision of Cartesian Dualism. In phenomenology consciousness is intentional and directed onto objects. Phenomenologists interpret the intentionality to mean that subjects and objects are essentially interrelated. All consciousness is essentially consciousness of objects and all objects are essentially, if not explicitly, objects of consciousness.

As a method in arriving at knowledge, especially in dealing with research methodology in philosophy, phenomenology has a lot to contribute. Phenomenological method has a purpose of being descriptive and presuppositionless. It is descriptive of one's experience of the world by

putting aside assumptions about the world's existence and character. And secondly, one seeks to describe particular, concrete phenomena. Phenomena are not contents of the mind; they all involve an experiencing subject and an experienced object. Phenomenological description aims to make explicit essential features implicit in the 'lived-world' - the world as we act in it prior to any theorizing about it. The phenomenological method reveals that practical knowledge is prior to propositional knowledge - knowing that arises from knowing how.

As being presuppositionless it scrutinizes scientific and philosophical theories. The phenomenological reduction is as called by Husserl 'bracketing' or 'the epoche'. It is to bring to our attention the realm of phenomena, the 'lived-world', the world as we experience it. Basic aim of phenomenological method is to explore how the world appears with a view to finding the experiential basis for, and meaning of, our belief that the world exists independently of our experience of it. Phenomena are our experiences of the world. One needs to remain neutral concerning the ontological status of that 'world'. Phenomenological description can avoid theoretical assumption of reality. While theoretical entities may have a place in the natural sciences, they have no legitimate place in philosophical enquiry. Philosophy should not take scientific realism for granted.

1.12 KEY WORDS

Phenomenology: It is a study of 'appearances' as they are experienced in one's subjectivity.

Bracketing (epoche): For Husserl the study of mind begins by setting aside all that is not given in consciousness. It begins by stripping our perceptions down to their simplest forms, shedding all our layers of habit and assumption. Husserl calls this kind of perception "bracketing".

Phenomenological reduction: According to Husserl it is the exclusion from consideration of everything. It is transcendent and anything else derived via scientific or logical inference.

Cogito or cogitations: It comprises all the acts of consciousness, including doubting, understanding, affirming, denying, etc.

Cogitata: They are the subjects of thought or objects of consideration. One cannot deny or understand nothing — something must be under consideration for thought to occur. In the presence of nothing, there is no person, no individual.

Intentionality: It is the power and the vitality of consciousness. Physical objects have no intentionality. Only mental objects have intentionality.

1.13 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Bernet, Rudolf. Et.al. *An Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993.

Bhatta, Govardhan P. *The Basic Ways Of Knowledge*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989.

Howarth, Jane. "Epistemic Issues in Phenomenology," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Version 1.0. London: Routledge, 1998.

Husserl, Edmund. *Logical Investigations*. Trans. J.N. Findlay. 2 Vols. London: Routledge, 1970.

Husserl, Edmund. *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*. Trans. Dorion Cairns. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995.

Husserl, Edmund. *The Idea of Phenomenology*. Trans. William P. Alston & George Nakhnikian. Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973.

Lusthaus, Dan. "Eight types of consciousnesses." in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Version 1.0, London: Routledge, 1998.

Magee, Bryan. *The Story of Philosophy*. London: Dorling & Kindersley, 1998.

Otto, R. (1917) *Das Heilige*, Gotha: L. Klotz; trans. J.W. Harvey, *The Idea of the Holy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1958.

Phillips, Stephen H. "Awareness in Indian Thought." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Version 1.0, London: Routledge, 1998.

Puthenpurackal, Johnson. "Method of Phenomenology." in *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Vol.2. Bangalore: ATC publications, 2010. 1023-1026.

Scruton, Roger. *Modern Philosophy: An Introduction and Survey*. London: Mandarin, 1994.

Vezhaparambil, Rafe. "Story of Phenomenology." in *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Vol.2. Bangalore: ATC publications, 2010. 1026-1030.

Westphal, Merold. "Phenomenology of Religion." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Version 1.0. London: Routledge, 1998.

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Analysis in History of Philosophy
- 2.3 Conceptual Analysis
- 2.4 Analysis as a Method
- 2.5 Analysis in Logical Atomism and Logical Positivism
- 2.6 Analytic Method in Ethics
- 2.7 Language Analysis
- 2.8 Quine's Analytical Method
- 2.9 Analysis in Indian Traditions
- 2.10 Let us Sum up
- 2.11 Key Words
- 2.12 Further Readings and References

- To introduce to the students philosophical discussions on meaningfulness of word, sentence in language used.
- To give an overall picture of analytical tradition both in West and India on the question of language and reality.
- To enable students to cull out from the philosophies of language analytical method used in sorting out philosophical problems.

Generally any philosophical analysis is a method of inquiry. Analysis is normally understood as assessing complex systems through simpler elements. In philosophical analysis we do seek the complex thought pattern by breaking them into simpler components. Analytic philosophy was a leading philosophical tradition and a dominant branch of philosophy in the West in 20th century. Having emerged and dominated the English speaking world for decades analytical tradition steadily grew to influence the continental philosophy. From the beginning of Indian philosophical tradition there had been issues related to meaning of terms, sentences and the meaningfulness of language. This we may consider in par with the 20th century discussion in the West on language and reality.

Analytical method has a long history in philosophy, although it became prominent at the start of the twentieth century. In classical Greek, the term 'analysis' denoted the activity of taking something apart and became a model for explanations of complex structures in reference to parts. In Descartes, the idea of analysis reappeared with the reference to identify the simple natures as characteristic of one's subject-matter. (Arnauld, A.; Descartes, R.). In John Locke's account of complex ideas in terms of their constituent simple ideas the analysis found a place. Moving from

the Cartesian analysis of 'ideas' to the analysis of our capacities for understanding and judgement, Kant's position is 'Transcendental Analytic.' In the further development of idealist tradition, we find in Hegel a shift from the method of analysis to the method of dialectic. (Baldwin 1998)

G. E. Moore appropriately calls for a return to the method of analysis breaking the idealistic trend of dialectics. He maintained that 'a thing becomes intelligible first when it is analysed into its constituent concepts' (Moore 1899: 182). Moorean conception of analysis inspired Russell in his analytical programme. Logical positivists developed the method further in their anti-metaphysical project. Russell's development of logical theory paved a way for analysis as legitimate philosophical inquiry. Expanding the philosophical inquiries beyond the logical positivist's position, analytical philosophy included the analysis of structures of language and thought. From the conception of linguistic analysis the central concern of analytical philosophy became language and meaning. Frege and Quine forwarded arguments for and against the methods of analysis. Brentano's approach to psychology was explicitly analytical, which enables us to understand Husserl's programme of phenomenological analysis. American pragmatist, C.S. Peirce wrote that 'the only thing I have striven to do in philosophy has been to analyse sundry concepts with exactitude' (Passmore [1957] 1968: 104).

By 1945 most analytical philosophers had abandoned any commitment to simple meanings and basic certainties, and that the positivist thesis that philosophy could only be analytical philosophy was also soon rejected. They rested only on the assumption that methods of analysis can clarify conceptual and epistemological relationships that would contribute to dissipation of philosophical problems. Quine questioned the assumption that there is a clear distinction (the 'analytic/synthetic' distinction) between logic and other disciplines and the assumption that there is a single chain of justification from observation to more speculative claims about the world (Quine 1953). For him we find only a complex network of interdependent relationships and our understanding of each other, and in particular of each other's utterances, is generally underdetermined by our observations of each other. Quine earlier pointed to the holistic structure of our language and beliefs. Rorty viewed that Quine's writings signaled the end of analytical philosophy (Rorty 1980). Yet, analytical philosophy still survives by retreating to the pre-positivist position of analysis as an ingredient of philosophical inquiry, involving inference and justification that connect concepts, beliefs and statements. Analytical philosophy made a remarkable expansion, both geographically and disciplinary, with the acceptance and use of its methods in outside Europe and in areas of philosophy such as ancient philosophy and Marxism. (Baldwin 1998).

Recently analytical philosophy turned its attention to philosophy of religion. Early thinkers had anti-metaphysical trend where religious claims were considered as unverifiable or as part of a language game. After 1950s Plantinga contributed to epistemology of religion and Swinburne has worked extensively in natural theology. Analytical tradition now covers range of topics from traditional theistic concerns to objections to theism. (Wehinger 2010)

2.3 CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

The theory of conceptual analysis holds that concepts are the fundamental objects of philosophical inquiry. Accordingly, insights into conceptual contents are expressed in necessary 'conceptual truths' (analytic propositions) which could be obtained by two methods: (1) direct a priori definition of concepts; (2) indirect 'transcendental' argumentation. John Locke's doctrines of general ideas and definitions had an element of analysis in decompositions of complex general ideas into sets of simple ideas. Further analysis had its foot in Locke's distinction between 'trifling' and 'instructive,' universally certain propositions and in his distinction between 'intuitive' and 'demonstrative' knowledge. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant makes three crucial sets of distinctions; between 'analytic' and 'synthetic' propositions, between a priori (necessary, experience-independent) and a posteriori (contingent, experience-dependent) truths, between proofs by empirical methods and 'transcendental' proofs. (Hanna 1998)

2.4 ANALYSIS AS A METHOD

Explanation of a whole by referring to its parts, becomes a gist of analysis. Although in physical science the decomposition of a whole into its parts is well understood, analysis in philosophy needs certain clarification. In logical analysis the inferential significance of a statement in its logical form depends on the simple logical constants in the statement. Logical analysis of a statement can lead one to discern the presence of logical constants which are not apparent in the surface structure of the statement. For instance, in Russell's famous illustration, "The present King of France is bald." For Russell, a statement's logical analysis revealed the 'constituents' of the proposition expressed by the statement. Complex claims to knowledge are justified by reference to simpler items of evidence. In empiricist tradition, all evidence is perceptual evidence. Analysis of perceptual evidence unravels the complexity of beliefs. Phenomenological analyses are not mere introspective descriptions of appearance but are meant to bring out the priorities within different modes of consciousness. (Baldwin 1998).

Russell develops his theory of descriptions into a theory of 'logical fictions.' It implies that our ontological commitments are less extensive than it is supposed. For both Moore and Russell philosophy is not just analysis. Wittgenstein brought out the paradigmatic exercise in logical analysis with assumption that 'A proposition has one and only one complete analysis' (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 1922: 3.25). From the Vienna circle the positivists analysis rested on the beliefs that 'what is left over for philosophy... is only a method: the method of logical analysis' (Carnap 1932: 77). For them the proper task of the philosopher is to engage in logico-epistemological analysis. It clarifies the questions about the world with the answers based on scientific observation and experiment. In the explicitly anti-metaphysical contexts of logical positivism we find the transition from 'philosophical analysis' to 'analytical philosophy.' The former is conceived of as an important method of inquiry while the latter restricts genuine philosophy to analysis. (Baldwin 1998).

Analytic method in philosophy has a diverse concerns from logic, epistemology and language. The developments within analytic tradition show this. Concerns of the analytic philosophers ranges from aesthetics to ethics to history of philosophy. There is no definition in terms of a certain set of doctrines or method for analytical philosophy. From the early days of analytical tradition there was no shared methodological approach among philosophers. Even after the linguistic turn there was no methodological constraint on the philosophers to adopt. In post-Quinean period we find concerns of analytical tradition on metaphysics, mind, religion, etc.

Amidst the diversity of doctrine and methods analytical philosophy is a method of philosophizing. It emphasized argument, rationality and sought clarity. (Wehinger 2010)

Method in Conceptual Analysis

In any conceptual analysis, the theory is as follows: A concept is a general content possessing intrinsic, individuating structures and relations (an intension), and having a corresponding application either to sets of actual or possible objects (an extension), or to other concepts. Secondly, a concept is the meaning of a predicate-expression; and all such words have meanings only in the context of whole sentences used (first and foremost) in making statements in ordinary discourse. Thirdly, every true proposition expressing conceptual interconnections is necessary and analytic. Fourthly, purely conceptual inquiry produces important a priori knowledge. This knowledge is expressed in analytic propositions known to be true either by (a) direct definitional analysis of conceptual contents, or by (b) indirect 'transcendental' arguments. Fifthly, all fundamental philosophical errors arise from misunderstandings of concepts, and can be corrected only by proper conceptual analyses. Therefore from the above understanding on the concept and knowledge, concepts are understood as playing a role as universals. They ontologically depend upon ordinary language and not otherworldly. Concepts have necessary relations to one another. Concepts govern the ways we think about all things and other concepts. Thus not only all philosophical truths, but also all philosophical errors, are conceptual. The two methods of conceptual analysis - definitional and transcendental - must be employed not merely as means of philosophical insight but also for the unmasking and diagnosis of conceptual confusions. (Hanna 1998)

2.5 ANALYSIS IN LOGICAL ATOMISM AND LOGICAL POSITIVISM

In the beginning of 20th century G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell opposed the British idealism. Moore's *A Refutation of Idealism* (1903) and Russell's (along with A.N. Whitehead) *Principia Mathematica* became influential for analytical method. It aimed at reconstructing ambiguous or misleading terms of our language by means of the ideal language of predicate logic. It tried to develop a foundation that logic and mathematics could be based on. Gottlob Frege's logical tools were adopted well by Russell. (Wehinger 2010)

Logical positivist like Alfred Jules Ayer endorsed the ideal of scientific knowledge. The goal was to reconstruct, on the basis of empirical observation and by means of formal logic, our statements about the world. The logical positivists dismissed as meaningless those statements for which such a reconstruction was not possible and that were not tautologically true. The logical positivists thus embraced a verificationist criterion of meaning. Only verifiable statements can be meaningful. (Wehinger 2010)

2.6 ANALYTIC METHOD IN ETHICS

Moral philosophy has traditionally been divided into normative ethics and meta-ethics. Normative ethics concerns judgments about what is good and how we should act. Meta-ethics, with which 'analytic ethics' is typically identified, seeks to understand such judgments. The questions before analytic ethics are: are they factual statements capable of being literally true or false? Or are they commands or expressions of attitude, capable only of greater or lesser appropriateness or efficacy? The former leads to cognitivism where the focus is on the facts of moral judgments. The latter leads to non-cognitivism. The cognitivists question whether they are discovered from experience or they are like mathematical facts. The noncognitivists argue that

moral judgments are not fact-stating and that they are only signals of our feelings or commitments, or are imperatives of conduct. Concerning the moral judgments another question is whether they are subjective or objective. Analytic ethics is concerned about the meaning of moral terms. It offers specific insights into morality and contributes to our understanding of the functions of thought and language. (Railton 1998)

In ethics some like Hume, stressed the role of sentiment and others like Kant stressed reason for the faculty involved in moral judgments. Ordinary moral practice or the external force as a standard for moral judgment was discussed. After analytical philosophy, especially after G.E. Moore, questions of meaning got separated from substantive questions, moral concepts discussed in non-moral terms (for example, 'Good' = 'Conducive to happiness'). Good cannot be analytically reduced to a natural property. Logical positivists divided cognitively significant propositions into two categories, the analytic, knowable a priori because tautological, and the synthetic, knowable a posteriori by empirical means. Loyal to the positivist bifurcation, A.J. Ayer (1936) concluded that moral judgments expressed not cognitively significant propositions, but emotions. (Railton 1998)

2.7 LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

In post-world war period in the West, many did not want to return directly to old-fashioned metaphysics. They extended the analytical techniques to normative aspects of language. In Wittgenstein's writings there was a hope to end philosophical perplexities. In the writings of Ryle, Austin, Strawson and other 'ordinary language' philosophers there was still old metaphysical questions like status of the mind, appearances and universals.

After 1960s Analytical philosophy was no longer confined to the logico-epistemological analyses of Russell and the logical positivists. It has a much broader concern with language. Russell, Moore and early Ludwig Wittgenstein, thought that such *logical* or *conceptual analysis*—in the sense of a reconstruction of language with the tools of logic—would eventually yield the simple, unanalyzable building bricks of reality, a view called *logical atomism*. Later this emphasis on conceptual analysis turned into a move towards language as the primary object of enquiry. This *linguistic turn* asserted that a philosophical explanation can only be achieved by way of an analysis of language. (Wehinger 2010)

Frege's sense/reference distinction was significant in this context. Frege's philosophy of language was brought into the mainstream of analytical philosophy through Carnap's writings. Dummett's claim that the distinctive feature of analytical philosophy is the priority it assigns to the philosophy of language. The sentences are true only in virtue of the nonlinguistic thoughts they express. His 'theory of meaning' and of Donald Davidson are to be seen against 'theorizing' of Wittgenstein's later writings. There are those who argue for the alternative priority of mind over language employ the methods of logical and epistemological analysis characteristic of previous analytical philosophers. They threatened to bring about the 'end of analytical philosophy.' (Baldwin 1998)

Ordinary language philosophy emerged after the fall of logical positivism. From the Moorean common sense approach towards philosophical problems, which argued that the philosopher's starting point had to be the ordinary meaning of propositions, ordinary language philosopher

stressed the need for not replacing the meaning but to elucidate the ordinary meaning of the statements in accordance with common sense. Later Wittgenstein's influence for the ordinary language movement is worth mentioning. He questioned the idea of an ideal language in favour of a plurality of what he called *language games*, each of which functions according to its own rules. He put the linguistic turn of logical positivists into practice. He was convinced that traditional philosophical problems arise only if we do not use words in accordance with the rules of the corresponding language game. Accordingly, the philosopher's task was to cure such misuse of language. (Wehinger 2010)

2.8 WITTGENSTEIN AND ANALYTICAL METHOD

In his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein presents a logical atomist picture of reality and language. The world is full of independent facts. Each is composed of some combination of simple objects. Each object has a distinctive logical shape which fits it to combine only with certain other objects. These objects are named by the basic elements of language. Each name has the same logical shape. An elementary sentence is a combination of names. If it is true it will be a picture of the isomorphic fact formed by the combination of the named objects. Ordinary sentences are misleading in their surface form. When analysed these would reveal the real complexity implicit in them. These deep truths about the nature of reality cannot be properly be said but can only be shown. The picture theory of meaning: In each individual sentences, one needs to understand that each says one thing but is essentially either true or false. The sentence is complex and has components which represent elements of reality. The truth or falsity of the sentence then depends on whether these elements are or are not assembled into a fact. When we properly understand the nature of our language we see that we cannot formulate the supposed sentences in the first place.

Picture Theory: Picture theory is the earlier position of Wittgenstein. According to this theory, the ontological structure of the world which is logical has its parallel in the structure of the language. The names being basic constituents of the propositions which are either true or false as expressed in the logic of language have a correspondence to the structure of the world. That which can be logically represented in the language is a possible state of affairs in the world. The logical necessity of propositions determines the states of affairs in the world.

Language Game: Language game theory is expressed in the *Investigations*. The language game theory moves from the foundations of logic to the nature of the world. The shift therefore is from the limited understanding of language, language of the natural sciences to the language of wider forms of life. It is no longer one view of language rather languages within the language. A sentence / proposition does presuppose a 'language game', but a language game will be only a small segment of the whole of language. It is the use, employment of particular word in the given language game gives rise to meaning. The language game theory therefore, is the understanding that the language is determined by rules which are particular to the form-of-life.

Later in his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein changes his previous position presenting language not as a fixed and timeless framework but as an aspect of vulnerable and changeable human life. He changed the idea that words name simple objects was incoherent, and instead introduced the idea of 'language games'. When a language is taught words and actions are interwoven. To understand a word is to know how to use it in everyday life. He abandoned also

solipsism and favoured the view that there are many selves, aware of and cooperating with each other in their shared world.

In presenting the contrasting views in his earlier and later writings, Wittgenstein contributed to analytical tradition that philosophical puzzles often arise out of language. Philosophical insight is not to be gained by constructing quasi-scientific theories of puzzling phenomena. It is to be achieved by seeking to be intellectually honest. (Heal 1998)

2.8 QUINE'S ANALYTICAL METHOD

Quine insisted upon a close connection or alliance between philosophical views and those of the natural sciences. Philosophy is an activity within nature wherein nature examines itself. Quine takes account of the theoretical as well as the observational facets of science. The unit of empirical significance is not simple impressions (ideas) or even isolated individual observation sentences, but systems of beliefs. Quine proposes a new conception of observation sentences, a naturalized account of our knowledge of the external world, including a rejection of a priori knowledge. Quine confines logic to first-order logic and clearly demarcates it from set theory and mathematics. They are internal to our system of beliefs that make up the natural sciences. The language of first-order logic serves as a canonical notation in which to express our ontological commitments. Our ontological commitments should be to those objects to which the best scientific theories commit us.

The theory of reference is sharply demarcated from the theory of meaning. Quine is the leading critic of notions from the theory of meaning, arguing that attempts to make the distinction between merely linguistic (analytic) truths and more substantive (synthetic) truths has failed. They do not meet the standards of precision which scientific and philosophical theories adhere to and which are adhered to in the theory of reference. He explores the limits of an empirical theory of language and offers a thesis of the indeterminacy of translation as further criticism of the theory of meaning. The picture theory of meaning: In each individual sentences, one needs to understand that each says one thing but is essentially either true or false. The sentence is complex and has components which represent elements of reality. The truth or falsity of the sentence then depends on whether these elements are or are not assembled into a fact. When we properly understand the nature of our language we see that we cannot formulate the supposed sentences in the first place. (Orenstein 1998)

Quine challenged the logical positivists' distinction between analytic and synthetic truths and the verification of scientific claims. He rejected the method of conceptual analysis. He proposed a holistic account of meaning. Meaning of a statement cannot be fixed once and for. It depends on the relation it has with other statements within a language. Through his ontological relativity, he claimed that reference is inscrutable.

2.9 ANALYSIS IN INDIAN TRADITIONS

From the ancient Vedic period onwards debates on language and linguistic theories has received much attention in philosophical issues. Especially in the grammatical works we find explicit philosophical reflections. For instance, Tamil grammatical work of Tolkappiyar, known as *Tolkappiyam* and Sanskrit *Ashtadhyi* of Panini, contain not just literary norms and notions but have deeper insights on language and reality. Bhartrhari is a celebrated philosopher of language in the ancient period. His Treatise on Sentences and words and his development of theory of

sphota are worth mentioning. For him *sphota* is a linguistic entity distinct from a word's sounds. Classical Nyaya philosophers joined the group and developed a strong philosophy of language in Indian tradition. These Indian philosophers of language debated mainly on i) the search for minimal meaningful units, and (ii) the ontological status of composite linguistic units. In the ancient period with the grammarians search for the meaningful units was given much attention. In the later period the linguistic reflection was more on the ontological status of composite linguistic units. (Bronkhorst 1998)

The Meaning of 'meaning'

'*Artha*' is used to denote 'meaning.' Meaning can be the meaning of words, sentences as well as nonlinguistic gestures and signs. Various Indian theories of meaning, testify to the differences prevailing among philosophical schools with regard to their ontological and epistemological positions, their focus on a certain type of discourse, and the ultimate purpose in theorizing. Meaning can be primary, secondary, suggested or intended meaning. When a verbal cognition results from the primary signification function of a word, the object or content of that cognition is called primary meaning. When a verbal cognition results from the secondary signification function of a word, the object or content of that cognition is called secondary meaning. When a verbal cognition results from the suggestive signification function of a word, the object or content of that cognition is called suggested meaning. When a verbal cognition results from the intentional signification function of a word, the object or content of that cognition is called intended meaning. With this realistic ontology in mind, Nyaya-Vaisesika argue that if the relation between a word and its *artha* were a natural ontological relation, there should be real experiences of burning and cutting in one's mouth after hearing words like *agni* ('fire') and *asi* ('sword'). Therefore the relationship between a word and the object must be a conventional one (*samketa*), the convention being established by God as part of his initial acts of creation. It is through this established conventional relationship that a word reminds the listener of its meaning.

Mimamsa school developed a full-scale theory of ontology and an important theory of meaning. The Vedic scriptural texts are eternal and uncreated and they are meaningful. In this system the relationship between a word and its meaning is innate and eternal. For various schools of Buddhism, language relates only to a level of conceptual constructions, which have no direct relationship to the actual state of the world. Theravada and the Vaibhasikas argued that a word refers to a thing which, in reality, is nothing but a composite entity made up of components which are momentary and in a continual flux. The components, the momentary atomic elements (*dharma*), are presumed to be more real, but words do not refer to this level of reality. Thus language gives us a less than true picture of what is out there. Other schools of Buddhism, such as Vijnavada, reduced everything to fleeting states of consciousness (*vijnjna*). From this point of view, the objects referred to by words are more like fictions (*vikalpa*) or illusions (*maya*). (Deshpande 1998)

Meaningfulness and Ontological Status of Linguistic Units

From the Vedic tradition of giving etymological explanation to names and terms related to their sacrificial practice and utterances, *mantras*, Vedic search for meaning of linguistic unit had begun. In Yaska's *Nirukta*, etymological treatise, only nouns and adjectives are said to be etymologically explained where as verbal forms could not be. Panini's grammar furnishes stems and affixes on the basis of a semantic input, and these stems and affixes are subsequently joined

together, and modified where necessary, so as to yield words and sentences. For Panini these ultimate meaningful constituents are really meaningful than the 'surface forms.' Panini's *sutra* 1.2.45, recognizes three meaningful entities, namely verbal roots, nominal stems and suffixes. He indicates that words and sentences are considered to have a composite meaning. (Bronkhorst 1998)

The ontological status of linguistic units is answer the questions like whether words and sentences really exist. If so, how can they, given that the phonemes that constitute them do not occur simultaneously? Since, moreover, simultaneous occurrence is a condition for the existence of collective entities, do individual phonemes exist? They, too, have a certain duration, and consist therefore of parts that do not occur simultaneously. For the Sarvastivadins of Buddhism *dharma*s, constitute all that is. There are three *dharma*s, namely, phonemes (*vyanjanakaya*s), words (*namakaya*) and sentences (*padakaya*). These are exiting entities but momentary. For Patanjali too phonemes and words are eternal. In Bhartrhari this notion played a vital role as he held that more comprehensive totalities are more real than their constituent parts. During the period of Patanjali and Bhartrhari the discussion was centered on the linguistic unit as meaning-bearer. The meaningless individual phonemes came to be separated from that of meaningful words, grammatical elements (stems and affixes) and sentences. In Bhartrhari's philosophy of language linguistic units and the 'objects' they refer to are treated parallel. (Bronkhorst 1998)

Sphota Theory

Patanjali and Bhartrhari use the word *sphota* to refer to linguistic entities conceived of as different from the sounds that reveal them. For Patanjali, the *sphota* does not necessarily convey meaning; he uses the term also in connection with individual phonemes. For Bhartrhari, the *sphota* is a meaning-bearer, different from the sounds that manifest it. For him *sphota* might be a mental entity or the universal residing in the manifesting sounds. *Sphota* as meaning-bearing or not, became point of contention and discussion rather than the question what exactly *sphota* is. The question of meaningfulness of a sequence of phonemes each without meaning, had been answered variously. According to some, a sequence of sounds can express meaning; they have to show how it does so. Others hold that this is not possible; they solve the problem by postulating the existence of the *sphota*. In his *Slokavarttika* Kumarila Bhatta of Mimamsa tradition gives the classical expositions of both these positions. Bhatta accepts the eternal existence of individual phonemes. Though the constituent phonemes of a word are not pronounced simultaneously, they are remembered together the moment the last phoneme is uttered. Mandana Misra in his *Sphotasiddhi* protests against the idea of the combined memory of the phonemes that constitute a word. The *sphota* is directly perceived: it is gradually revealed by the phonemes. In the sixteenth century, Nagesa Bhatta through his various treatises dealt on *sphota* doctrine. The *Sphotavada* enumerates eight types of *sphota*: (1) phoneme, (2) word, (3) sentence, (4) indivisible word, (5) indivisible sentence, (6) phoneme-universal, (7) word-universal, (8) sentence-universal. These *sphotas* are primarily meaning-bearers. Nagesa affirms the idea that only sentences really exist, that words and grammatical elements are no more than imaginary. The sentence-*sphota* is most important. During Nagesa's period again, the conflict existed between the two major issues of grammar namely, the search for minimal meaningful units on the one hand, and the ontological status of composite linguistic units on the other. For Nagesa, finally, only the sentence is 'real', rather than words and smaller grammatical elements. Grammar is concerned with the smallest

identifiable meaningful elements and the way they combine to form larger units. (Bronkhorst 1998)

Sentence-meaning

Most schools of Indian philosophy have an atomistic view of meaning and the meaning-bearing linguistic unit. A sentence is put together by combining words and words are put together by combining morphemic elements such as stems, roots and affixes. The word-meaning may be viewed as a fusion of the meanings of stems, roots and affixes, and the meaning of a sentence may be viewed as a fusion of the meanings of its constituent words. Beyond this generality, different schools have specific proposals. Prabhakara proposes that the words of a sentence already convey contextualized/connected meanings (*anvitabhidhana*) and that the sentence-meaning is not different from a simple addition of these inherently connected word-meanings. The Naiyayikas and the Bhatta propose that the words of a sentence taken by themselves convey uncontextualized/unconnected meanings, and that these uncontextualized word-meanings are subsequently brought into a contextualized association with each other (*abhihitavaya*). Therefore, sentence-meaning is different from word-meanings, and is communicated through the concatenation (*samsarga*) of words rather than by the words themselves. This is also the view of the early grammarians such as Patanjali and Katyayana. For the later grammarian-philosopher Bhartrhari, however, there are no divisions in speech acts and in communicated meanings. He says that only a person ignorant of the real nature of language believes the divisions of sentences into words, stems, roots and affixes to be real. Such divisions are useful fictions and have an explanatory value in grammatical theory, but have no reality in communication. In reality, there is no sequence in the cognitions of these different components. The sentence-meaning becomes an object or content of a single flash of cognition (*pratibha*). (Deshpande 1998)

All schools of Indian Philosophy accept the true cognition as characterised by 'self-consistency' (*samvada*) and 'uncontradictability' (*abadhitatva*). Of course uncontradictability does not mean as 'not being contradicted by another true cognition,' but being in coherence with other known truths. Logical Positivist theory of the West reduces 'truth' only to coherence of a proposition with a set of other propositions previously accepted as true is not found in Indian traditions. In upholding the theory of truth there are two major trends among Indian systems. That the Truth is either 'self-validating' (*svatah-Pramanyavada*), or to be validated by something other than itself (*paratah-Pramanyavada*). Samkhya, Mimamsa and Vedanta uphold the truth to be *svatah-pramanya*. Nyaya-Vaisesika speak of *paratah-pramanyatva* of Truth.

2.10 LET US SUM UP

In Indian philosophy of Language, grammarians were interested in language and cognition. Nyaya-Vaisesikas were primarily interested in logic, epistemology and ontology. They argued that a valid sentence was a true picture of a state of reality. For Mimamsa, meaning had to be eternal, uncreated and unrelated to a person's intention. The Buddhists aimed at showing the emptiness of everything, including language and they demonstrated how language fails to portray reality.

2.11 KEY WORDS

Picture Theory : Early Wittgenstein's theory that language pictures reality.

Sphota Theory : Indian theory of meaning that refers to linguistic entities conceived of as different from the sounds that reveal them. *Sphota* is primarily meaning-bearers.

2.12 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Austin, J.L. *Sense and Sensibilia*. ed. G. Warnock. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962.

Ayer, A.J. *Language, Truth and Logic*. London: Gollancz, 1936.

Ayer, A.J. Ed. *Logical Positivism*. Glencoe: Free Press, 1959.

Baldwin, Thomas, "Analytical Philosophy." In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Version 1.0, London: Routledge, 1998.

Bronkhorst, Johannes. "Indian theories of Language." in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Version 1.0, London: Routledge, 1998.

Butler, R.J. Ed. *Analytical Philosophy*. 2 vols. Oxford: Blackwell, 1962, 1965.

Deshpande, Madhav M. "Indian Theories of Meaning." In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Version 1.0, London: Routledge, 1998.

Dummett, M.A.E. *The Origins of Analytical Philosophy*. London: Duckworth, 1993.

Hanna, Robert. "Conceptual Analysis." In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Version 1.0, London: Routledge, 1998.

Heal, Jane. "Ludwig Wittgenstein," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Version 1.0, London: Routledge, 1998.

Matilal, B.K. *Logic, Language and Reality: An Introduction to Indian Philosophical Studies*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985.

Moore G.E. 'A Defence of Common Sense.' in J.H. Muirhead (ed.) *Contemporary British Philosophy* (second series), London: Allen & Unwin, 1925. 193-223.

Orenstein, Alex. "Quine, Willard Van Orman." in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Version 1.0, London: Routledge, 1998.

Passmore, J. (1957) *A Hundred Years of Philosophy*. London: Duckworth; 2nd edn repr. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968.

Piyali, Palit. *Basic Principles of Indian Philosophy of Language*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2004

Prasad K.S. *The Philosophy of Language in classical Indian Tradition*. Decent Books, 2002.

Quine, W.V. (1953) *From a Logical Point of View*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953.

Quine, W.V. *Word and Object*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960.

Quine, W.V. *Pursuit of Truth*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Railton, Peter. "Analytic Ethics." In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Version 1.0, London: Routledge, 1998.

Rorty, R.M. *The Linguistic Turn*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1967.

Rorty, R.M. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980.

Siderits, Mark. *Indian Philosophy of Language*. Springer, 1991

Wehinger, Daniel. "Analytic Philosophy." In *ACPI Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Vol.1. Bangalore: ATC, 2010. 68-71.

Wittgenstein, L.J.J. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C.K. Ogden and F.P. Ramsey, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Ed. G. E. M. Anscombe & Rush Rhees. Tr. G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell, 1953.

UNIT 3 HERMENEUTICAL METHOD: INDIAN AND WESTERN

Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 *Sabda*
- 3.3 The Power (*Sakti*) to Convey Meaning
- 3.4 Three Meanings
- 3.5 Pre-understanding
- 3.6 The Semantic Autonomy of the Text
- 3.7 Towards a Fusion of Horizons
- 3.8 The Hermeneutical Circle
- 3.9 The True Scandal of the Text
- 3.10 Literary Forms
- 3.11 Let Us Sum up
- 3.12 Key Words
- 3.13 Further Readings and References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

While dealing with the question of understanding, we must be able to formulate key guiding principles of hermeneutics. To the extent, through a meaningful dialogue with a text, we understand what understanding a text means, we can articulate more viable hermeneutical principles. That is what we envisage in this unit. However, in the first part, we shall examine hermeneutics from the perspective of Indian Philosophy and we shall limit this to the study of language in Indian Philosophy.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Language plays an important role both in the Indian and the Western hermeneutics. In the West we know of Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein who are bent upon extolling the role of language in philosophy. They had influenced the logical positivists of the Vienna circle so much that the logical positivists were keen on constructing a symbolic language free of confusion and dubiousness. Let us now turn our attention to some of the discussions of language in Indian philosophy more specifically in Indian hermeneutics. To dwell at depth into Indian philosophy of language or Indian hermeneutics is beyond our scope. We shall therefore restrict ourselves to the discussions concerning language that emerges from one of the valid means of knowledge (*pramana*) in Indian epistemology called *sabda*. In this unit we attempt to systematize some of the hermeneutical principles that are at work in the process of understanding.

3.2 SABDA

Sabda is one of the *pramanas* in the Indian epistemology accepted almost by all the important philosophical schools of India. *Sabda* is the means to obtain *sabda*. *Sabda* is the *pramana* and *sabda* is the resulting knowledge of testimony. *Sabda* is a sentence spoken by an authority. An authority is a person who knows the truth and tells the truth (not all truth but truth pertaining to the point). A sentence is a group of words. Word is that which has the power (*sakti*) to convey a meaning. There is confusion because *sabda* literally means word. So this understanding of word includes sentences. There is a lot of controversy between *Mimamsakas* and *Nayayikas* with regard to the definition of a sentence as group of words. The discussion hinges on the question, how do you know the meaning of sentence? According to *Mimamsakas*, we understand the meaning of a sentence when the words in the sentence are connected with the verb. But according to *Nayayikas*, we understand the meaning of a sentence when the words are connected without necessarily being connected with the verb.

The *Mimamsakas* hold that the verb in a sentence is the most important word and without verb we cannot understand the meaning of a sentence. For example Devadatta book is a group of word but we do not understand its meaning unless it is connected with a verb, say for example, brings. Thus Devadatta brings book conveys the meaning. Similarly, Devadatta home has no meaning but Devadatta goes home conveys the meaning of a sentence. Verbs deal with action and according to *Mimamsakas*, the action is the most important thing. The action of going is qualified, specified or limited to this particular person goes. It is the action of going, which has Devadatta as its subject and home for its object. The reason why *Mimamsakas* emphasize verbs is because according to them salvation is attained by ritual works. They are ritual activists. *Upanisads* react against this and say that one must renounce everything and become a *sanyasin*. In *Upanisads*, there are also certain passages pertinent to the ritual works. For *Mimamsakas* these passages are primary and the passages dealing with Brahman are secondary. For *Advaita Vedantins* what is said about Brahman is primary ritual injunctions are secondary. But according to *Nyaya-Vaisesikas*, we need only connection between words in a sentence and verb is not necessary. They give the example, *Kanchyam Tribhuvanatilah bhupatih*. *Kanchyam* means in Kanch, *bhupatih* means protector of earth, therefore it refers to the king. *Tribhuvanatilah* is the name of the king though his name means climax of three worlds. So the translation is, in Kanchi, King *Tribhuvanatilah*. There is no verb in this sentence, yet meaning is conveyed.

3.3 THE POWER (SAKTI) TO CONVEY MEANING

A word has the power to convey the meaning. Is this power God-made or human convention (for example people agree *kamala* means lotus). There is a controversy between *Nyaya-Vaisesikas* on this point. Ancient *Nyaya-Vaisesikas* say that the meaning is fixed by God, God fixes especially the names like *kamala* etc. and personal names are conventions. Some say that God fixes even personal names. Modern *Nyaya-Vaisesikas* say meaning of all words is a matter of convention. *Mimamsakas* say that the power (*sakti*) to convey meaning is a separate category (*padartha*) like *dravya* (substance). They come to the conclusion by elimination. But *Nayayikas* would not accept it as a separate *padartha* because of some problems. For example, the word *pankaja* means lotus. We *Panka* means mud and *ja* means born, so *pankaja* means that which is born in mud. Not only lotus, but there are other things in mud. If *sakti* is a separate *padartha* we will have to admit different meanings to *pankaja*.

There are four theories: *Kevalavyakti*, *Kevalajati*, *Jati Visista-Vyakti* and *Apoha*. *Kevalvyakti* only the individual (*Kevala* means only, *vyakti* means individual) For example, father tells the son *ghatamanya* (bring the jar). What does the word jar conveys – this particular jar, jariness or jar and jariness? Jar is *Vkyati*: jariness is *jati*. According to this theory, only the individual jar is meant not the jariness. This is a view hold by modern *Nayayikas*. They say that suppose jar means *jati*, then *ghatamanya* means bring the jariness. But you cannot bring the jariness, you can bring only the individual jar. Those who say *ghata* actually refers to *jati*, therefore jariness object to this saying, then we will have to have different words for different jars because jariness is not involved. It is not practical, so it refers to *jati*.

Kevalajati is proposed by *Mimamsakas*. The word *ghata* conveys the meaning of *jati* (class). *Jati* also include *vyakti* (individual jar), but the reference to individual jar is only by implication and therefore secondary. *Jati visista-Vyakti* is proposed by ancient *Nayayikas*. The word *ghata* refers to *vyakti* which is qualified by a *jati*. So, both are involved. Thus when the word *ghata* is used it fulfils three functions – it points to a particular jar, it also signifies that this particular jar is similar to all other jars in the world and it also distinguishes jars from non-jars like trees, stones, etc. *Apoha* –exclusion is held by one type of Buddhists who are idealists and believe that we cannot know the external reality. When a person says *ghata*, neither is there are jar actually, no it refers to a *jati*. It is a mere idea, only a concept. What is *ghata* then? It is a word in reference to something which is not actually existing, which separates it from other things. A *ghata* is not a *pata*. Their point is we cannot know a thing in itself. That's why it is called *apoha*.

3.4 THREE MEANINGS

Every word is capable of conveying three meanings – *abhidha*, *laksana*, *vijnana*. *Abidha* means primary or direct meaning. *Laksana* means secondary or implied meaning. *Vijnana* means suggestion. *Vijnana* is not accepted by *Nyaya-Vaisesikas*. Let us explain it with an example – *gangayam ghosah*. Its primary meaning is village on the Ganges. This primary meaning is not acceptable because village cannot be on the on the Ganges. This primary meaning is not acceptable, we move to *laksana* or the secondary meaning. Its secondary meaning is village on the bank of the Ganges. Those who accept *Vijnana* would say that the person referring to the village on the bank of the Ganges suggests the idea of coolness. This is found in poetry. But *Nyaya-Vaisesikas* do not accept this.

The power (*sakti*) to convey the meaning of a word takes place in three ways – *Yoga*, *rudhi* and *yogarudha*. *Yoga* means etymology. Through etymology we come to know the meaning of a word. Such a word is called *yaugika* word. For example, *pacaja* is derived from *paca*, which means cooking. Therefore *pacaja* means a cook. Here the word *pacaja* conveys its meaning through etymology. *Rudhi* means customary meaning. It is not the etymology that conveys the meaning of a word but people have conferred on it a conventional meaning. The word may or may not have an etymology but it is not significant. *Yogarudha* is combination of etymology and customary meaning. For example, the etymological meaning of *Pankaja* is that which is born in mud but by convention it is confined only to lotus that is born in mud. Similarly the etymological meaning of *madhukara* is one who makes honey and by convention it is confined to bee. The

same can be said of *hastin* whose etymological meaning is one who possesses hand and by convention it is referred to elephant.

Laksana means implication and they are of three kinds – *jahallaksana*, *ajahallaksana* and *jahalajahallaksana*. *Jahat* means abandoning so in *jahallaksana* the primary meaning (*abidha*) is totally abandoned. For example, the primary meaning of *mancah krosanti* is beds are crying. But beds do not cry, so the implied meaning is children on bed are crying. Therefore, the meaning of bed is totally abandoned. In *ajahallaksana* the primary meaning is not abandoned but in addition, there is an implied meaning. For example, the primary meaning of *chatunah yanti* is umbrellas are going. What is implied here is human persons carrying umbrellas are going. The primary meaning however is retained because the umbrellas move along with the persons carrying them. In the case of *jahalajahallaksana*, the primary meaning is partly kept and partly abandoned. For example when someone says, This is Devadatta, the meaning of Devadatta is retained while the qualifications of Devadatta of yesterday etc. are abandoned.

3.5 PRE-UNDERSTANDING

Understanding presupposes pre-understanding. Understanding is a process and is built upon pre-understanding. Human person is ever becoming and is in the process of growth. Understanding is part of this process. Thus pre-understanding consists not merely of the acts of understanding but to the whole growth process that is at work in every act of understanding. Understanding something therefore implies understanding it from the viewpoint of certain questions raised by ones pre-understanding. Let us take the simple example of the tree. There are different people who are concerned about it: the botanist, the ecologist, the woodcutter, the carpenter, the tribal etc. Each one of them understands it differently because each one of them raises questions from different perspective. Thus for the botanist the issue is, what family or species does the tree belong to? for the ecologist, will the tree be cut down by the developmental officers? for the woodcutter, how much money can I gain by chopping this tree? for the carpenter, what kind of furniture can I make out of this? and for the tribal, how can I prevent anyone from uprooting this tree that is the abode of the spirits of my ancestors? Thus the tree will be understood differently - according to each of these questions. Each of them is posed by a different kind of pre-understanding.

In the process of understanding, the thing to be understood strikes the one who understands according to his or her pre-understanding. It is pre-understanding that determines the kind of questions the person who wants to understand raises. Thus no understanding is possible without pre-understanding and the questions it raises. Bultmann expresses this in his *The Problem of Hermeneutics* in the collection of *Glauben und Verstehen*: Every understanding like every interpretation is continually oriented by the way the question is put and by standpoint. This it is never without a pre-understanding of the matter it is questioning the text about. Understanding means precisely responding to the issue that the pre-understanding raises. This explains why we have interest in something and noninterest in other things. Both interest and non-interest are testimonies to pre-understanding itself.

If we wish to understand what is at work in every act of understanding, we must pay attention to our pre-understanding or prejudgments (not yet the final judgment but the stage antecedent to it,

in the court of law it refers to the stage where the advocates sum up their arguments). This is because our pre-understanding determines both the choice as well as the direction of our search for meaning. The pre-understanding of Nietzsche shapes his understanding God as the supreme power who makes merry at the fragility of the humans and thus restoring human dignity consists in killing him. Our search for meaning and truth is shaped by and large by our prejudgments. This should help us to be aware that we look at reality from a particular perspective and what is meaningful from one perspective may be absurd from another. We can cite a number of examples from within religious traditions. God as Trinity that is profound and insightful within the Christian tradition is prone to be pointless within the Jewish or Islamic tradition of monolithic monotheism. The point is well made - the point of departure for understanding is pre-understanding. This will help us not to absolutize our way of looking at reality.

3.6 THE SEMANTIC AUTONOMY OF THE TEXT

If pre-understanding shapes our understanding, the presumption of objectivity (the concern of epistemology is at stake. There is no such thing as an objective reading of a text. To get to know the mind of the author whether dead or living is naive and inessential. Hence the text as it has come of age must speak for itself. Suppose if the author makes further comments on what he originally intended in his literary work (art, poem, play, film etc.) what status does it occupy? Once the text leaves the desk of the author it is autonomous and his extra-textual comments must be on par with the views of others. On the other hand, we should not fall into the trap of what Ricoeur calls the fallacy of the absolute text. A text is not an authorless entity - it remains a discourse said by someone to someone else about something. It is impossible to cancel out this main characteristic of discourse without reducing texts to natural objects, ie, to things which are not man-made but which, like pebbles, are found in the sand. For Ricoeur, there are two extremes and both are to be avoided. One extreme is the dependence of the text on the intention of the author because primarily we can never know the mind of the author and secondly any rich text will have more than one meaning. Another extreme is doing what one wants with the text as if the text has no author at all.

Ricoeur in this context speaks of the semantic axis of the text. There are certain limits within which a text needs to be interpreted. There are two aspects at work in the process of understanding - the semiotic stage and the semantic stage. The semiotic stage is the decoding of the complex set of codes and the semantic stage is where the meaning emerges. (These are not really two stages because meaning emerges in the act of decoding.) It is here that the reader has to apply the hermeneutic of suspicion - whether he or she reads meaning into the text. For this purpose he or she has to rely on the text as a whole and discover the axis around which the whole text revolves. One can employ any method to study the text as a whole. The semantic axis shows how the text hangs together and what holds it together. But even if an interpretation goes against the original intention of the author it is equally a valid interpretation, provided it is well within the overall thrust of the text. This is to say that we cannot distort the meaning of the text by selective reading, omitting some elements and exaggerating other elements according to our convenience and vested interest. The semantic autonomy of the text is not a pretext to make the text say what one wants according to one's whims and fancies.

3.7 TOWARDS A FUSION OF HORIZONS

We are indebted to Gadamar for the original and significant contribution of his fusion of horizons. The text has its own horizon of its own and the reader has his or her own horizon. The horizon of the text includes the context and the life situation of the author in which the text emerged and also the successive readings it has gone through. The more a text is historically distant the broader its horizon. The horizon of the present reader refers to the reader's life situation inclusive of his or her pre-understanding. The semantic autonomy of the text paves way for the fusion between the horizon of the text and of the reader. The reader approaches the text with his own pre-understanding to understand the text and its meaningfulness for him or her for his life in the present situation. Thus the preoccupations of hermeneutics have come to a full circle: from the concern of what lies behind the text (the author's intention) to what lies in the text (what the text says) towards what lies in front of the text (the emergence of meaning with the fusion of the horizon of the text with that of the reader).

3.8 THE HERMENEUTICAL CIRCLE

Suppose we are given a book written in a totally foreign language (say Hebrew or Greek) we can only stare at it. No understanding is possible because we have no point of entry into the world of the text. On the other hand if it is a simple and plain sentence like 'The Hermeneutics class is interesting', there is nothing to interpret because the meaning is self-evident in this case. Thus the meaning of a text must somehow be clear but not totally for interpretation to become necessary. Thus says Dilthey in his *Patterns and Meaning in History*: Interpretations would be impossible if expressions of life were completely strange. It would be unnecessary if nothing was strange in them. It lies, therefore, between two extremes. Thanks to the hermeneutical circle we can read a text and widen our understanding or correct our previous understanding of the same.

Understanding, therefore, is basically a referential operation; we understand something by means of something we already know. A whole sentence, for instance, is a unity. We understand the meaning of an individual word by seeing it in reference to the whole of the sentence; and reciprocally, the meaning of the sentence as a whole is dependent on the meaning of individual words. By dialectical interaction between the whole and the part, each gives the other meaning; understanding is circular then. Because within this circle the meaning comes to stand, we call this the hermeneutical circle.

The circularity of understanding implies that there is no true starting point for understanding because every part presupposes the others. It seems to suggest a logical contradiction. If we need to understand the whole before understanding the parts we would have understood nothing. On the other hand the part can be understood only in reference to the whole. This brings us to the awareness that there is no such thing as having understood once and for all. The analogy of the game given by Gadamar is of great significance here. Understanding can be compared to a game. The game may be played many times but there is no such thing as the final and the definite game. Every time the game is played according to the rules of the game, yet every time played differently, so also is understanding. Every time we play the game of chess, we understand it better, but we will never arrive at a stage where we have understood it completely. We begin

with the understanding of the part and grasp the meaning of the whole in the light of our understanding of the part. In the process, the meaning of the part becomes better understood in the light of the whole. So there is back and forth in our understanding and every time we read the same text we discover the emergence of new meanings.

3.9 THE TRUE SCANDAL OF THE TEXT

In the process of understanding in which the fusion takes place, not only the text acquires new meanings but the reader is also challenged by the text. Any text especially the religious text worthy of name must scandalize us. The English word scandal is derived from the Greek *skandalos* meaning a stumbling block. Thus when we speak of a text scandalizing us we mean the text challenging some of our ideas and actions that are dehumanizing. Ricoeur points out that every hermeneutics is, explicitly or implicitly, self-understanding by means of understanding others. In this context, we can make a distinction between true scandal and false scandal. The true scandal of the text is the meaning emerging from the text having the ability to clarify our pre-understanding and in the process to critically challenge them. What we uphold to be true and correct conventionally may be called into question. We should remember the role of the tradition that influences the way we see reality. We live by certain myths provided by our tradition. These myths are so powerful that they can grip us to the extent that we do not realize them as myths and are to be demythologized. It is Bultmann who introduces this concept of demythologization. He is critiqued on the ground that we cannot live without myths, hence what we need to do is not demythologization but remythologization. But what Bultmann meant by demythologization is not doing away with myths but to identify and recognize them as myths. This will enable us and our presumptions to be challenged by encountering a text, say like the Bible.

In order to understand the false scandal of the text, it is better to make a distinction between what is said and how it is said. What is said is the meaning of the text. How something is said refers to the vehicle by which the message is transported. This vehicle is inclusive of the knowledge of the tradition in which the text came to be. This knowledge is inclusive of cosmology, anthropology, theology and so on. But it is not this knowledge that is communicated but through which something else is communicated. Hence as Ricoeur says, we must make attempts to overcome the distance between the cultural epoch to which the text belongs and the interpreter himself. Thus, on dealing with any text we must take pains in separating the meaning and the cultural vehicle through which the meaning is passed on.

It is in this connection that Bultmann's demythologization becomes important. As we have made reference earlier, his demythologization is more often misunderstood than understood. He does not intend to purge away the mythical elements and reduce the text to shallow literalism. Far from it, he wants to emphasize the original meaning embodied in myths. These myths do not provide us cosmological information but challenge us as powerful symbols summoning us to a radical and new self-understanding.

3.10 LITERARY FORMS

When we glance through a newspaper, we see a variety of literary forms. There is an editorial - a critical analysis of some significant events. Its purpose is not merely to state facts but also to evaluate them from a specific point of view. We find reporting of events, which is aimed to give a factual account of what had happened. It is true that no two newspapers report the same event in the same way. There may be disagreements on what is known as facts but they may not be diametrically opposed to the happening of an event. Thus for instance, the figure of death toll in an earthquake may vary according to different news reports but no paper would refuse that the earthquake took place. There is a special section on comics in every newspaper, of course, meant to make us burst into laughter. All newspapers are flooded with advertisements with an end to sell goods and commodities. Obviously to achieve this end, exaggerated statements are made in advertisements. We are familiar with famous phrases such as the complete man, better than the best, made for each other and so on. We do not take these statements or catchy slogans in the advertisements as gospel truths. When we read the newspaper, we quickly recognize these different literary forms and interpret them accordingly.

From our ordinary experience of reading newspapers, we shall now try to make a workable definition of literary forms. A literary form is a manner or a style by which particular information is passed on to achieve a specific end and is judged by the effective means it applies to realize the end. It becomes clear that the criteria of judging one literary form cannot be applied to another. A good joke is one that makes us laugh and a good advertisement is one that persuades us to buy the commodity it advertises. These are two different literary forms. We don't reject an advertisement because it does not make us laugh or we don't reject a joke because it contains no factual description of an event. It would be a grave mistake if we were to do so. Hence it is important to identify the literary form of a text before we begin to interpret it. Obviously we cannot interpret Shakespeares Macbeth in the way we would interpret Karl Marx Das Capital.

Wittgenstein uses the analogy of language games. Each game has got its own rules. Applying the rules of football to cricket or basketball to judge football would be foolish. Likewise every discipline is a literary form in its own right and the rules of one are not applicable for another. Thus for instance when a poet describes the beauty of a gin by comparing it with the full moon it has to be acknowledged as poetic. We should not apply the rules of astronomy that the gin is a celestial thing. This is all the more important in the religious language that is symbolic and has to be acknowledged as such.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) What is pre-understanding?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2) Explain the fallacy of the absolute text?

.....

.....

.....

3) State the importance of Hermeneutical Circle.

.....

.....

.....

3.11 LET US SUM UP

We have discussed in the beginning the significance of Indian hermeneutics particularly that of *sabda*. We have also seen how language plays an important role in hermeneutics both from the Indian and the Western philosophical points of view. Some of the key hermeneutical principles are also discussed at length to enable the students to apply these principles in their textual reading and to make an authentic interpretation of the text and deepen their understanding.

3.12 KEY WORDS

***pramana*:** Means of knowledge.

***Sabda*:** Verbal testimony.

***laksana*:** Implication.

Semantic Axis: The axis which shows how the text hangs together and what holds it together.

The Semantic Autonomy of the Text: Once the text leaves the desk of the author it is autonomous and his extra-textual comments must be on par with the views of others.

Scandal: The English word scandal is derived from the Greek *skandalos* meaning a stumbling block.

Demythologization: identifying and recognizing myths as myths

3.13 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Croatto, Servino J. *Biblical Hermeneutics*. Orbis Books, New York: Maryknoll, 1987.

Keamey, Richard. *Modern Movements in European Philosophy*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994.

Palmer, Richard. *Hermeneutics*. Evanston: North Western University Press, 1969.

Puthenpurackal, Johnson. *Heidegger Through Authentic Totality to Total Authenticity*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1987.

Ricoeur, Paul. Existence and Hermeneutics, in *The Conflict of Interpretation*. Translated by Don Ihde. Evanston: North Western University Press, 1974.



UNIT 4 DECONSTRUCTIVE METHOD

Contents

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 The Seminal Idea of Deconstruction in Heidegger
- 4.3 Deconstruction in Derrida
- 4.4 Structuralism and Post-structuralism
- 4.5 Sign, Signifier and Signified
- 4.6 Writing and Trace
- 4.7 Deconstruction as a Strategic Reading
- 4.8 The Logic of Supplement
- 4.9 No Outside-text
- 4.10 Difference
- 4.11 Let Us Sum up
- 4.12 Key Words
- 4.13 Further Readings and References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

It is very hard to restrict deconstruction as a method. In fact, the key thinker of deconstruction, Jacques Derrida has always resisted pinning it down as a method. However, in this unit, we shall briefly discuss the various aspects of deconstruction starting from its seminal idea found in Heidegger. In order to have a better grasp of deconstruction as a strategy, we also deal with related concepts in Derrida's Philosophy such as difference, trace, supplement and arche-writing.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Deconstruction is a method or a school of philosophy today. This practice of textual analysis is used to dissect numerous writings (philosophy and literature), to reveal their shifts and confusions of meaning by means of a *reading* focusing on the assumptions implied and omissions unveiled by the text itself. This concept, participating in both philosophy and literature, won a great reputation in the United States of America, where it is equated with the postmodern philosophy, and more generally to the different approach of continental philosophy in Europe. If the term "deconstruction" was first used by Heidegger, it is the work of Derrida which has systematized its use and theorized its practice.

4.2 THE SEMINAL IDEA OF DECONSTRUCTION IN HEIDEGGER

The term *deconstruction* in Derrida appears for the first time in *Of Grammatology* translated without explicit Heideggerian terms. Derrida explained that he wished "among other things," to

provide a translation for the German terms of *Destruktion* and *Abbau*, that Heidegger employs in *Being and Time*, Derrida believes that his translation is more relevant than the classical translation of *Destruktion* and *Abbau* as *destruction*, insofar as it does not refer so much to the destruction of metaphysics, to reduce it to nothingness, than to show how it was built.

Both *Destruktion* and *Abbau* in this context meant an operation on the *structure* or traditional *architecture* of the founding concepts of ontology or of Western metaphysics. But in French the term “destruction” too obviously implied annihilation, a negative reduction closer to the “demolition” found in Nietzsche, which Derrida rejected. In fact, the word *deconstruction* appeared from 1955 in French philosophy in the context of the translation of the text of Heidegger “Contributions to the question of Being” (*Zur Seinsfrage*). Granel Gerard chose this term “deconstruction” to translate *Abbau* the German word that he wanted to distinguish from “destruction” (translation of *Zerstörung*). In Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*), *Destruktion* addresses the concept of time, it must be shown by successive steps the experience of time was covered by metaphysics, making us forget the original meaning of being as a temporal being. The three steps of this deconstruction will go down the history of Western Philosophy:

1. Kant’s doctrine of schematic and time as the preliminary step of a problematic of temporality.
2. The ontological foundation of the *cogito ergo sum* of Descartes and the resumption of the medieval ontology in the problematic of *res cogitans*.
3. The treatise of Aristotle on time as *discrimen* of the phenomenal base and limits of the ancient ontology.

However, if Heidegger announces this deconstruction at the end of the Introduction to *Sein und Zeit*, this part of the book, which was to be, according to the plan of 1927, was never written as such. At most, we can consider his other works and conferences that partially touch upon it, starting with the book *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, published in 1929.

4.3 DECONSTRUCTION IN DERRIDA

In reflecting on his own and recovering the notion of deconstruction, Derrida intended the meaning of a given text (essay, novel, newspaper article) is the result of the difference between the words used, rather than referring to things they represent; it is an active difference, working in the hollow sense of each word, in a manner analogous to the differential meaning of Saussurean linguistics. To mark the active nature of this difference (instead of the passive nature of the difference relative to judgments about contingent), Derrida suggests the term *differance*, a sort of portmanteau word combining the present participle of the verb “to differ” and “to defer”. In other words, different meanings of a text can be found by decomposing the structure of language in which it is written.

Deconstruction is not intended as a method, nor a philosophical system, but rather a practice. His detractors often accuse him of its convoluted meaning. On the day of the demise of Derrida, the *New York Times*, written by Jonathan Kandell, headlined thus: “abstruse theorist is dead.” Unloved and paradoxically little known in France, where deconstruction remains attached to the

figure of Derrida, it has been subjected to violent attacks both in the continental Europe and in the United States of America as well. Derrida has replied to a particularly aggressive criticism of the American philosopher John Searle in his book, *Limited Inc.* (the book's title is a pun on the name of the philosopher: "Inc". is a rough translation of the French SARL).

4.4 STRUCTURALISM AND POST-STRUCTURALISM

The term "post-structuralism" refers to a critical perspective that emerged in the seventies and dethroned structuralism as the dominant figure of thought of language and text. To understand post-structuralism, it must be considered in relation to structuralism. Deconstructionist critics agreed with the poststructuralist view of language, according to which a signifier (form of a sign) does not refer to a defined signified (the content of a sign), but only to other signifiers.

Derrida opposes the centre inherent in the structuralism of the structure. With Claude Levi-Strauss as a representative of structuralist thought, Derrida shows that with the prohibition of incest, the nature/culture opposition and the universal/normative structure can no longer hold: "The incest prohibition is universal [natural], but it is also a prohibition, a system of norms and prohibitions [culture]." Derrida rejects the metaphysical history and the hierarchical dichotomies that have survived so far and on which all *logical* reasoning (*logos*, meaning speech) of the world was founded. Derrida rejects structuralism and the Saussurean schema (the relation between signifier and signified) is therefore revised. The structure that Derrida rejects is the binary opposition signifier/signified. This structure is in fact the structure of the history of thought, which conceives the world in terms of a system of oppositions leading to infinity: logos/pathos, soul/body, same/other, good/evil, culture/nature, man/woman, intelligible/sensible, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing, day/night, etc.

4.5 SIGN, SIGNIFIER AND SIGNIFIED

In order to properly explain the theory of Derrida, which falls both on philosophical and semiotic framework, it is important to define the concepts that shape his thought. Given the close weaving of several of these concepts with one another and the impossibility of defining one without considering the other, each of these brings together several concepts. The relation between the signifier and the signified is no longer one of structuralism. Hence, there are two ways of erasing the difference between the signifier and the signified; the classical one consists in submitting sign to thought, the other precisely is to challenge the system in which the preceding reduction functioned starting from the opposition between the sensible and the intelligible. Note that, according to structuralism, the signifier is the sensible part of the sign, for it is grasped by the senses thus allowing us to have access to the signified. As far as the signified is concerned, it corresponds to the idea, to the immaterial and intelligible concept. It is this opposition that Derrida criticizes. The Derridean concept of the sign is thus always linked to the structure of the Western philosophy. The direct relationship between the signifier and the signified is revisited. Let us take the example of water: While reading the word "water," we can think of drops of water, a lake, the chemical symbol H₂O, etc. We do not necessarily think of a still image of water, a universal mental representation. Thus each concept (meaning) to which the "water" may refer, sends back to another signifier. This infinite chain of signifier to signifier results in an endless game and opens the text, shifts it and makes it moving.

4.6 WRITING AND TRACE

Words refer to other words. The grammatology of Derrida proposes that writing is originary in the same way as voice, a constant tension without power struggle. Therefore *writing* cannot be a reproduction of the spoken language since neither came first; similarly, *writing* is not a simple written form of a word, but the articulation and inscription of the *trace*. The *trace* conveys the impossibility of the origin and of a centre. It is the non-origin of the origin. It is the absolute origin of sense in general. In the words of Derrida, “*the trace is the difference* which opens appearance [*l’apparaître*] and signification.” He further asserts that if it belongs to the movement of signification, then “signification is *a priori* written, whether inscribed or not, in one form or another, in a ‘sensible’ and ‘spatial’ element that is called ‘exterior’.” It is also significant to note that Derrida considers the trace as an arche-writing not only because it is the first possibility of spoken word but also because it is the first possibility of written word (*graphie*).

The concept of “*graphie*” depends on trace in so far as the latter is the common possibility to all communication systems. When we associate the *trace* with the *graph* (gestural, visual, pictorial, musical, verbal), the *trace* becomes *gram* (letter). Only at this point appears outside (opposite of inside), as a spatial and objective exteriority. The arche-writing of which Derrida speaks is in fact a generalized form of writing to be understood in terms of *difference*. This difference (the *a* here is the *trace* and the *gram*), as temporalization, is itself the trace of the written in the spoken word. For example, the punctuation marks are supplement to speech, and not its reproduction.

According to Derrida, the *text* cannot be explained by its origin source (author, society, history or context), since repetition is at the origin. The *text* is writing and writing is unintentional language. It is language in relation to speech that implements it. However, only reading makes the text and writing possible. What characterizes writing is *textuality*, which is both closure and non-closure of the text. As Derrida states in his monumental work *Writing and Difference*, “One can conceive of the closure of that which is without end. Closure is the circular limit within which the repetition of difference infinitely repeats itself. That is to say, closure is its *playing* space. This movement is the movement of the world as play.”

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your Answer

1) What is Post-Structuralism?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2) Explain the Derridean concept of sign.

.....

.....

.....

3) How Derrida's grammatology is related to Writing?

4.7 DECONSTRUCTION AS A STRATEGIC READING

The method of deconstruction is not negative. Deconstruction is primarily to reverse the principles of Western philosophy by emphasizing the role of margin and non-privileged, with the basic concepts under erasure in order to demonstrate how these principles were designed and their opposites, neglected. In an attempt to explain his project, Derrida remarked that an opposition of metaphysical binary concepts such as speech/writing and presence/absence is not merely an opposition but it establishes a hierarchy and an order of subordination. Derrida was interested in a particular opposition, the opposition between speech and writing. Deconstruction cannot proceed immediately to neutralization: it must – by a double gesture, a double science, a double writing – practice an overturning of the classical opposition in the system. Thus deconstruction takes place in two stages. First is the phase of reversal, since the binary pair is hierarchical, we must first destroy the exercise of power by one term of the pair over the other. Writing must take precedence over speech, the other over the same and the absence over the presence. Next comes the phase of neutralization. The binary logic and its dual thinking have to be totally uprooted. Thus the new terms become undecidable, thus making them unclassifiable and they amalgamate the two poles previously opposed.

In his essay titled "Plato's Pharmacy," Derrida has adopted a deconstructive reading of Plato's famous work *Phaedrus*, in which opposites poles meet and merge. *Phaedrus* recounts the myth that Theuth, the inventor of writing proposed to King Thamus writing as a remedy against forgetfulness, but the king considered writing as a poison as it kills the live memory. Thus the term *pharmakon* can mean both cure and poison; the same word has two opposite contexts. While Teuth uses this word in the sense of cure, the king chose the meaning of poison. Derrida in his reading of *Phaedrus* shows that *pharmakon*, both as remedy and poison, already enters into the body of speech with all its ambivalence. This charm, this virtue of fascination, can be alternately or simultaneously beneficial and harmful. It is significant that Socrates himself compares writing, the written text, to a *pharmakon*. "You seem to have discovered a drug for getting me out," he says, "A hungry animal can be driven by dangling a carrot or a bit of greenstuff in front of it; similarly if you proffer me speeches bound in books I don't doubt you can cart me all around Attica, and anywhere else you please" (*Phaedrus* 230d-e).

But Derrida is more concerned with this practice within a given language. What is important to him is that even in the original text Plato himself was bending the term to fit his needs, namely, stressing the caustic side of the 'drug' in association with writing (and myth) to belittle it in the face of speech. Derrida further adds that "if the *pharmakon* is ambivalent, it is because it

constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other (soul/body, good/evil, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing, etc.).” We can say that deconstruction shakes the distinctions provided by the ontology, between presence and absence, between the fullness of life and death; it focuses its attention on to leaving traces or inheritance beyond the living present of life. Derrida himself summarizes the operation of deconstruction as a rejection of the possibility of aggregation. “If totalization no longer has any meaning, it is not because the infinity of a field cannot be covered by a finite glance or a finite discourse, but because the nature of the field—that is, language and a finite language—excludes totalization.” It is finite language which excludes totalization as language is made up of infinite signifier and signified functioning inter-changeably and arbitrarily, thereby opening up possibilities for infinite play and substitution. Derrida explains this free play through the concept of supplementarity.

4.8 THE LOGIC OF SUPPLEMENT

Derrida deconstructs the hierarchy between speech and writing through the “logic of supplement.” The term “supplement” is borrowed from Rousseau, who describes writing as a supplement of speech, the latter representing the former. The natural condition of language is the speech and writing presents itself as a dangerous supplement insofar as it does violence to the natural character of language. The term “supplement” has two meanings. It can first mean an addition to something which is already sufficient in itself. But it can also mean something more to accomplish a thing incapable of self-accomplishment. If writing is a supplement to speech in the second sense, it can become dangerous. It can affect the naturalness of speech and can even supplant it.

Admittedly, Rousseau, according to Derrida, repeats the inaugural movement of Phaedrus. If the history of metaphysics is the history of the determination of being as presence, if it is intertwined with that of logocentrism and if it is understood entirely as a reduction of the trace, the Rousseau’s work seems to occupy a singular situation between the *Phaedrus* of Plato and the Encyclopedia of Hegel. Thought is analyzed by speech while speech is analyzed through writing. The art of writing is only a mediated representation of thought and representation is the loss of presence.

For Derrida, writing can be a supplement to speech insofar as the latter can be “supplemented,” that is to say it suffers from a lack which can be completed. Derrida explains this lack as follows: speech is not a thought fully present to the listener, but an acoustic symbol representing thought. Like in the case of writing, speech is only a mediation of thought and this is why writing can complement it. The alleged derivation of writing has been possible on one condition: that the language called “original” has ever existed, it was never touched by the writing, it was always and already writing.

Writing is indeed a “dangerous supplement,” not because it could affect the purity of speech, as Rousseau feared, but because its ability to complement speech and even supplant it shows that speech has flaws that are usually attributed to writing. Writing is a supplement to the extent that it fills a lack in speech. This is a new meaning of “dangerous supplement.” Speech itself is

mediation of something and like writing, it is also a supplement. Note the important thesis of Derrida: a signifier both completes what it signifies, and adds something new to it. If speech is a supplement, what it complements must be insufficient in itself, otherwise speech cannot represent it. What is represented by speech must also be a supplement and it must signify or represent something else. The result is a chain of supplements leading to a full and self-sufficient presence. The consequence of this thesis is that in the language, there is only a chain of signifiers, each signifier pointing to another signifier.

4.9 NO OUTSIDE-TEXT

The paradox is that a sign can never represent the presence itself, as presence is self-sufficient, nor can the sign function as a signifier or supplement. What exists is a world of representations and representations of representations, ad infinitum. Each signified is also a signifier for another signified. Derrida describes the final reconstruction of presence: “there is no outside-text” [*il n’y a pas de hors-texte*]. To better understand this famous aphorism of Derrida, let us recall that, according to him, deconstructive reading is installed in the space between what the author means and what the text says of which the author himself is “taken-up” by surprise. The deconstructive reading must identify the chasm between what is said and intended meaning; this is not possible by so-called conventional and reproductive reading, which is however important, according to Derrida, to avoid any kind of interpretation: “[Without] all the instruments of traditional criticism..., critical production would risk developing in any direction and authorize itself to say almost anything.” And immediately, Derrida recognizes the inadequacy of this traditional reading despite its importance: “but this indispensable guard-rail has always only *protected*, never *opened*, a reading.”

In all Metaphysics, especially in that of Husserl and Heidegger, we may find what “exceeds” Metaphysics: the traces of before, after and outside. But such a reading requires a simultaneous passing through and transgressing Metaphysics. In this context, Derrida remarks that the only way to be faithful to a tradition and to keep it alive is to transgress it. In other words, to keep a tradition alive, we should not be faithful to it to the point of reproducing it mechanically. We must keep alive the possibility of reading otherwise, to explore through conventional requirements without abandoning them, whatever they exclude, marginalize and forget. Deconstructive reading transgresses this guardrail. This transgression is a passage to limits and to frontiers, but it evades a transcendental signified which would be outside text and beyond history; it remains always and already embedded in social, political and historical networks, which Derrida calls “arche-text” and sometimes simply “text.”

In this context, the adage “there is no outside text” means that there is no reference without difference, that is, without the use of a differential system. “There is no outside-text” does not mean that there is nothing outside of words, or that everything can be reduced to linguistic concepts. In the words of Derrida: “I never ceased to be surprised by critics who see my work as a declaration that there is nothing beyond language, that we are imprisoned in language; it is, in fact, saying the exact opposite. The critique of logocentrism is above else the search for the ‘other’ and the other of language.” In his epilogue to *Limited Inc.*, Derrida once again resumes his definition of text: “I wanted to recall that the concept of text I propose is limited neither to

the graphic, nor to the book, nor even to discourse, and even less to the semantic, representational, symbolic, ideal, or ideological sphere. What I call 'text' implies all the structures called 'real,' 'economic,' 'historical,' 'socio-institutional,' in short: all possible referents. Another way of recalling once again that 'there is nothing outside the text' ... It does mean that every referent, all reality has the structure of a differential trace, and that one cannot refer to this 'real' except in an interpretive experience. The latter neither yields meaning nor assumes it except in a movement of differential referring."

4.10 DIFFERENCE

The term *différance* was coined by Derrida when he gave a lecture in 1968 to the French Society of Philosophy. In itself, it represents a synthesis of philosophical and semiotic thought of Derrida. All concepts defined earlier are involved in this theory. The grapheme *a* points to several aspects of the practice of this theory:

1. *Différance* is the difference that pulls down the cult of identity and dominance of the same over the other; it means there is no origin or more precisely originary unity). To differ is not to be identical.
2. *Différance* mark a difference in spelling, written by *a* instead of *e*; we see this difference, but we cannot hear it.
3. *Différance* evokes the meaning of displacing, eluding and shifting.
4. *Différance* is a future in progress (struggle against the fixed meanings); it is the displacement of signifiers which signify the margins because there is no original and organized transcendental signified.

The writing of *différance* refers to itself as it breaks away from the concepts of signified and referent. The emphasis of the theme of writing works as an antidote against idealism, metaphysics and ontology.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your Answers

1) Spell out the two stages of deconstruction according to Derrida.

.....

.....

.....

2) Why is writing a dangerous supplement according to Derrida?

.....

.....

.....

3) What does Derrida mean by "there is no outside-text"?

.....

.....

.....

.....

4) Enumerate the four-fold aspects of Difference.

.....

.....

.....

.....

4.11 LET US SUM UP

A deconstructionist approach allows us to create a constant tension between dualisms in any binary opposition, bringing the two poles of the pair to an equal footing. Thus meanings of words become undecidable so as to go beyond binary thinking. This theory is adopted by literary writers, including feminists, who, by the deconstructionist approach and through the strategy of *differance*, give rise to new terms that go beyond the dualisms in general but more specifically beyond the opposition such as man/woman, self/other and pathos/logos.

To deconstruct, is to go beyond all rigid conceptual oppositions (masculine/ feminine, nature/culture, subject/object, sensible/intelligible, past/present, etc.) and not to deal with these concepts as if they were opposed to each other. Each pole in the binary carries within it, the trace of the opposite pole. Thus for example, the androgynous person bears traces both of masculine and feminine, the inclusion of the observer in a scientific experiment in pursuit of its objective purpose, and the law of might, which governs the nature reverberate in organizations and social structures.

4.12 KEY WORDS

Differance: Differance is a play on the French ‘*differer*,’ which means both “to defer” and “to differ.” Derrida uses both of these meanings to describe his concept. With words, Derrida suggests, the meaning is always “deferred” as a single word cannot give a complete description. A word needs other words to give it context; therefore its meaning is deferred until more information is given.

Trace: According to Derrida, there is no true meaning of all human words (and even human thoughts). The meaning of any word can only be expressed compared to other words. What every word contains within itself is only shadows of other related words, which Derrida calls trace.

Graphie: written form of a word.

Pharmakon: It meant both the disease and its cure to the ancient Greeks. It also means both medicine and poison and from which we get “pharmacy” and “pharmaceutical.”

Logocentrism: It is a term used by Derrida and other exponents of deconstruction to designate the desire for a centre or original guarantee of all meanings, which in Derrida's view has characterized Western philosophy since Plato. The Greek word *logos* can just mean "word," but in philosophy it often denotes an ultimate principle of truth or reason, while in Christian theology it refers to the Word of God as the origin and foundation of all things. Derrida's critique of logocentric thinking shows how it attempts to repress difference in favour of identity and presence: the philosophical "metaphysics of presence" craves a "transcendental signified" ultimately self-sufficient meaning (e.g. God, Man, Truth). The most significant case of logocentrism is the enduring phonocentrism that privileges speech over writing because speech is held to guarantee the full 'presence' and integrity of meaning.

4.13 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Culler, Jonathan. *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. London: Routledge, 1983.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. Translated by Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Plato's Pharmacy," in *Dissemination*. Translated by Barbara Johnson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, p. 61-84.
- Kearney, Richard. *Dialogues with the Contemporary Continental Thinkers*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.