

WESTERN PHILOSOPHY I

Post Graduate Programme in
Philosophy

M23PH01DC

Self Learning Material



SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

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Vision

To increase access of potential learners of all categories to higher education, research and training, and ensure equity through delivery of high quality processes and outcomes fostering inclusive educational empowerment for social advancement.

Mission

To be benchmarked as a model for conservation and dissemination of knowledge and skill on blended and virtual mode in education, training and research for normal, continuing, and adult learners.

Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.

Western Philosophy I
Course Code: M23PH01DC
Semester-I

Master of Arts Philosophy
Self Learning Material



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Documentation

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Message from Vice Chancellor

Dear

I greet all of you with deep delight and great excitement. I welcome you to the Sreenarayanaguru Open University.

Sreenarayanaguru Open University was established in September 2020 as a state initiative for fostering higher education in open and distance mode. We shaped our dreams through a pathway defined by a dictum 'access and quality define equity'. It provides all reasons to us for the celebration of quality in the process of education. I am overwhelmed to let you know that we have resolved not to become ourselves a reason or cause a reason for the dissemination of inferior education. It sets the pace as well as the destination. The name of the University centers around the aura of Sreenarayanaguru, the great renaissance thinker of modern India. His name is a reminder for us to ensure quality in the delivery of all academic endeavors.

Sreenarayanaguru Open University rests on the practical framework of the popularly known "blended format". Learner on distance mode obviously has limitations in getting exposed to the full potential of classroom learning experience. Our pedagogical basket has three entities viz Self Learning Material, Classroom Counselling and Virtual modes. This combination is expected to provide high voltage in learning as well as teaching experiences. Care has been taken to ensure quality endeavours across all the entities.

The university is committed to provide you stimulating learning experience. The PG programme in Philosophy is conceived to be a continuum of the UG programme in Philosophy as it has organic linkage with the content and the form of treatment. In fact is a progression of the finer aspects of theories and practices. Having realised the limitations of empirical methodology in exposing the concepts in Philosophy, the university has taken special care to follow illustrative methodology throughout the discussions. It is expected to lessen the heaviness of the content. We assure you that the university student support services will closely stay with you for the redressal of your grievances during your studentship.

Feel free to write to us about anything that you feel relevant regarding the academic programme.

Wish you the best.



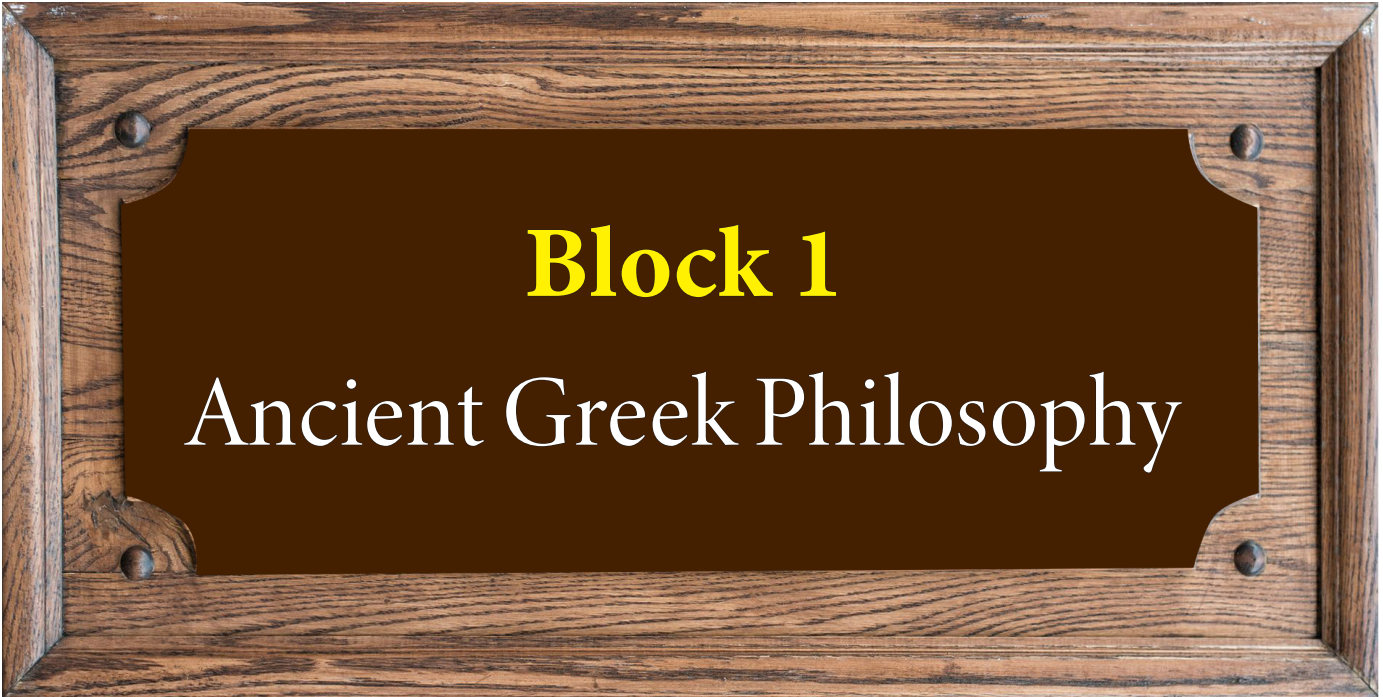
Regards,

Dr. P.M. Mubarak Pasha

01.11.2023

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A wooden frame with a dark brown center containing the text 'Block 1' and 'Ancient Greek Philosophy'. The frame is made of dark wood with visible grain and four small round knobs at the corners. The center is a solid dark brown rectangle with slightly rounded corners.

Block 1

Ancient Greek Philosophy

UNIT 1

Pre-Socratic Philosophy

Learning Outcomes

By studying this unit, the learner will be able to:

- discuss the historical context of Pre-Socratic philosophy
- identify prominent Greek thinkers and their diverse world views such as pluralism, atomism and sophism
- analyse fundamental philosophical problems and inquiries in the Pre-Socratic time especially with regard to nature/cosmos
- appreciate multifarious speculations about universe
- evaluate how Greek thinkers addressed the problem of Change

Background

Ancient Greece was vibrant with rich celebrations of mythical and supernatural entities hailed through captivating poems and enchanting stories. The Greeks sought to evoke the awe and wonder stirred by the gods, goddesses and fantastical creatures of their mythology. Their deep-rooted fascination with the mythic realm was reflected in their engagement with abundant artistic and literary endeavours. The epic poems like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, credited to the legendary poet Homer, celebrated the heroic deeds of mythical figures intertwining mortal lives with divine interventions. These stories were not mere forms of entertainment or amusement for the ancient Greeks but served to transmit cultural values, deepen and explore the complexities of human existence and convey timeless truths. The gods and goddesses with their intricate relationships, passions and flaws provided a social and cultural canvas upon which the Greeks projected their own desires, fears, anxieties and aspirations. By embracing the mythical and supernatural in their literature and artistic expressions,

the ancient Greeks nurtured a profound sense of wonder, inviting subsequent generations to ponder over the mysteries of the universe and contemplate the intricate tapestry of human existence.

Every era has distinct methods of enquiry or frameworks of thinking about the world and approaching the reality. Every thought is a product of its own time. The artistic and aesthetic framework of thinking that hailed in the ancient Greece contributed to its great cultural and intellectual development and made it the birthplace of Western civilization. Pre-Socratic era of the ancient Greek is approximately dated between the 7th and 5th centuries BCE. The origin of ancient Greek thought can be traced back to the Pre-Socratic philosophers who primarily focused on metaphysics and cosmology with a more scientific or naturalistic explanation of the universe. The Pre-Socratic philosophers made investigations into the nature with emphasis on observation and reason and replaced the supernatural beliefs and 'mythic narratives' about the origin and governance of the universe prevalent in the ancient Greece with more 'naturalistic explanations'. This revolutionized the intellectual landscape of the western thought with various philosophers putting forth their own unique understanding of the cosmos and the nature of reality.

Key Concepts

Naturalism, Pluralism, Atomism, Sophism, Relativism

Discussion

1.1.1 Introduction to Pre-socratic Philosophy

Philosophy as a method of enquiry

Philosophy has an encompassing outlook, approach, and method of inquiry that seeks to unravel the fundamental questions about the nature of our existence, knowledge, values, and reality. Early Greek thinkers critically engaged with the world, questioning assumptions, exploring diverse perspectives, and seeking deeper understanding of the Universe as a whole. They offered analytical, conceptual and logical toolkit to examine complex issues and uncover hidden complexities. Through philosophical inquiry, they started to develop intellectual skills such as critical thinking, logical reasoning, and

ethical analysis, enabling them to navigate the intricacies of the taken for granted assumptions and viewpoints. Philosophy in the ancient Greece fostered intellectual curiosity, encouraged open-mindedness, and instilled a sense of wonder about the mysteries of life.

Philosophy and the development of other disciplines

The Early Greek thinkers popularly known as Pre-Socratic philosophers did not attribute themselves to any school of thought. They differed radically, but all shared a similar intellectual attitude and showed enthusiasm for a natural enquiry. They were active in many fields such as astronomy, physics, biology, practical engineering, mathematics and logic and did not think that any of these disciplines were outside the realm of philosophy. They also produced an abundant number of books in many of these fields. While philosophy played a central role in the birth and development of various disciplines mentioned above, over time, these disciplines began to emerge as distinct fields with their own specialized methods, theories and approaches.

Challenging traditional myths and assumptions

Pre-Socratic Philosophy marks the formative period of the Western philosophical thought which emerged in ancient Greece prior to the teachings of Socrates. Around a century before the birth of Socrates, Greek thinkers introduced a new philosophical outlook to the world. They embarked on a quest to challenge traditional myths and stories and sought after rational explanations for the world around them. They introduced new ways of thinking about the nature and our place in it. In a different sense, they viewed that the natural world (the entire universe) can be explained without any need to refer to anything beyond nature itself. This marked the birth of Western philosophy and initiated a conversation that continues to shape philosophical discourse. The great conversation of the western philosophy was a proto-scientific thought of Ionia.

Rational inquiry and rational explanation of the world

The new philosophical outlook emerged in Greece prioritized questioning the nature of the world surpassing the reliance on mythological narratives and religious traditions. The ancient tales of Homer and Hesiod, with their Gods and divine genealogies, appeared inadequate for thinkers striving for reasoned explanations of reality. Nevertheless, the questions raised by these myths were genuine inquiries: What is the true nature of reality? How did it come into existence? Where do we fit within it? What is our relationship with the governing

forces? How should we lead the best possible life? Western philosophy emerged when thinkers attempted to address these questions more rationally than myths allowed.

Speculation about cosmology

Explanation about nature

What is the universe composed of?

Although their ideas were often speculative, which is a mode of thinking or reasoning that goes beyond what can be directly observed or verified through empirical evidence, they had got a rational/scientific orientation. The fundamental characteristic of Pre-Socratic philosophy is its departure from mythical and religious explanations of the world, as well as its emphasis on rational inquiry and the search for fundamental principles that underlie the universe. It reflects a shift towards more critical and analytical approach to understanding reality, employing reason and observation to unravel the mysteries of existence. Pre-Socratic philosophy was a sum total of cosmological speculation, naturalistic explanation, reconciliation of the unity with the diversity of the world and rational discourses and argumentations about the nature.

In their quest to understand the nature and origin of the cosmos, the philosophers explored fundamental questions about the composition of the universe. Their enquiries and investigations aimed at understanding the fundamental elements, structures, and processes that make up the universe as a whole. They raised wide range of scientific, philosophical, and cosmological queries that explored the nature, origin and evolution of the cosmos. Their prime questions were; what is the primary stuff out of which the universe was formed and what are the principles and rules which govern its functioning?

Naturalistic explanation is an approach of understanding and explaining the universe based on natural laws, processes and phenomena without invoking supernatural or metaphysical entities. This approach is grounded in the principles of science and the observable world and strives to uncover the underlying mechanisms and processes that give rise to the observed phenomena in the universe. The naturalistic explanation came in conflict with the supernatural or divine narratives of the natural phenomena prevailing in their times. The Greek philosophy emerged when the philosophers replaced the myths and stories and metaphysical conceptions about the universe with the theories that attempted to explain the workings of the world based on observable processes and principles. However, one should not overstate the case. What was put forth as

Understanding nature
through laws and
principles of nature itself

naturalistic explanations and scientific theories based on observable processes and principles in the ancient Greece can very well be looked down today as mere myths. As it is clear, there were gaps in explanations, overt and covert influence of the myths and stories and, breaks in the connection between evidence and their assertions. It needs to be emphatically said that, as every thought is the product of its own time, the ancient Greek philosophy has mythological, religious and metaphysical origins. The fundamental point is that they took a bold leap in adopting a critical attitude in understanding nature.

1.1.2 Ionian Natural Philosophers

Exposure to multi-
cultures and intellectual
innovation

Ionian thinkers from Miletus emerged as key figures of the pre-Socratic philosophy bringing a rational approach to understanding the nature of the universe. The ancient city of Miletus in Ionia - located in the present western Turkey- witnessed a flourishing development of the Greek philosophy. The intellectual/philosophical pursuit of this city needs to be understood in its historical and cultural background. Ionia was situated on the eastern coast of the Aegean Sea and occupied a central position within the ancient Greek world. The Ionian city-states, including Miletus, were famous for their maritime trade, cosmopolitanism, and cultural exchanges with neighbouring civilizations such as Egypt and Mesopotamia. This exposure to diverse cultures, ideas, and commercial activities fostered an environment conducive to intellectual exploration, innovation and sophistication.

Questions about
composition of
the universe

The investigation into the basic stuff of the universe was the first step of the philosophical development of the ancient Greece. Thales of Miletus was the first in a series of thinkers known as the Pre-Socratics who lived in Greece in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. After Thales, his disciples and disciples of the disciples, such as Anaximander, Anaximenes and Heraclitus, all asked the questions about the basic element or substance out of which everything originates. However, all of them answered the question differently based on different factors, such as historical, cultural and geographical. Thales of Miletus, regarded as the first philosopher, affirmed that water was the fundamental element that constituted the basis of all things. For Thales, the water represented the primary substance from which everything emerged and to which everything returns. While Thales may have been influenced by the

cosmological belief of his time which considered water as the primal substance, scholars argue that the notion can also be traced back to story of the early Greek mythologies in which the primeval deity Oceanus represented the endless body of water that surrounded and gave birth to the world. In sum, he may have both observed the transformative nature of water form through evaporation, condensation, and solidification and have been influenced by the above mythology. This intertwined relationship between Greek myth and philosophy needs to be taken care of. He emphasized the unity and interconnectedness of the world, suggesting that all matter ultimately derived from water.

Philosophical speculations about the underlying stuff

Anaximander, a student of Thales, expanded upon this idea and proposed a limitless, boundless and indeterminate substance to be the underlying principle of the universe. According to Anaximander, the diversity of the world emerges from this boundless entity, representing a departure from a singular focus on water. Anaximenes, another disciple of Thales, offered a different perspective, positing air as the primary substance of the cosmos. He argued that air was the universal and omnipresent element that undergoes processes of condensation and rarefaction (two qualities or properties of air) which give rise to the various phenomena observed in the world. This conception suggests that the different states of matter and manifestations in the cosmos are merely transformations of air.

1.1.3 Parmenides and Heraclitus: Problem of Change

Being/permanence and
Becoming/flux

Parmenides and Heraclitus proposed theories of permanence change (being and becoming) respectively and made a huge impact on the development of the pre-Socratic philosophy. Parmenides hailed from Elea and Heraclitus from Ephesus, the regions known for their unique cultural and intellectual vibrancy. Parmenides' philosophy reflected the intellectual atmosphere of Elea, which was characterized by a desire to seek stability, unity and permanence in the face of a changing world. At the same time, Heraclitus' philosophy was aligned with the dynamic and ever-changing nature of Ephesus, a bustling trade centre and a melting pot of diverse cultures and ideas. The contrasting views of Parmenides and Heraclitus can be seen as products of their respective geographical and cultural backgrounds. Elea's focus on stability and unity shaped

Parmenides' emphasis on the unchanging nature of reality. In contrast, the dynamic environment of Ephesus influenced Heraclitus' emphasis on the ever-changing nature of existence. This suggests that geographical contexts are not intellectually neutral. Rather socio-cultural-political contexts give rise to unique philosophical traditions.

Influence of social and cultural changes of Athens

Both lived during a period of significant historical and cultural shifts in ancient Greece. The 6th and 5th centuries BCE marked the era of the Persian Wars and the subsequent rise of Athens as a dominant city-state in the Greek world. This period witnessed advancement in trade, technology, and political systems, contributing to an increased exchange of ideas and the flourishing of philosophical inquiry. This time was also marked by the emergence of the polis (city-state) as the central unit of political organization. The transition from traditional tribal societies to city-states brought about social and cultural changes, impacting the philosophical perspectives of thinkers like Heraclitus and Parmenides. Their philosophical inquiries into the nature of reality, change, and knowledge were influenced by the shifting socio-political landscape and the intellectual ferment of their own space and time.

If anything 'exists', that means there is an indivisible and unchanging entity

Parmenides is known as founder of the 'Eleatic School' of thought: Zeno of Elea, Melissus of Samos, and Xenophanes of Colophon are some of its major thinkers. The philosophy of permanence propounded by Parmenides turned to be the corner stone of Eleatic School. According to Parmenides, being is the ultimate reality, an indivisible and unchanging entity that is eternal and devoid of any potential for change or becoming. In this view, being is pure existence, a perfect and complete whole that is not subject to generation or destruction. Parmenides believed that the senses are deceptive and cannot provide reliable knowledge about reality. He maintained that the world of appearances, characterized by constant change and variability, is illusory and should be dismissed as mere opinion. According to him, genuine knowledge can only be derived through reason and logical deduction, leading to an understanding of the true nature of being.

Parmenides sought for the permanent substratum amid changing phenomena. Russell says in *A History of Western Philosophy*: "Philosophers, accordingly, have sought, with great persistence, for something not subject to the empire of

Reality is 'not subject to the empire of time'

Time. This search begins with Parmenides.... When you think, you think of something; when you use a name, it must be the name of something. Therefore, both thought and language require objects outside themselves. And since you can think of a thing or speak of it at one time as well as at another, whatever can be thought of or spoken of must exist at all times. Consequently, there can be no change, since change consists in things coming into being or ceasing to be."

Dynamic and transformative nature of whatever exists

Heraclitus, in opposition to Parmenides, is known for his philosophy of flux and universal change and presented a radically different perspective on the nature of reality. He proposed that everything is in a constant state of flux and that a continuous process of change, opposition, transformation and becoming were fundamental aspects of the universe. "All things come into being through opposition, and all are in flux, like a river." For Heraclitus, fire symbolized the dynamic force underlying this perpetual change, representing the transformative nature of existence. According to Heraclitus, there is no stable or fixed reality; rather, the world is in constant motion, undergoing continuous shifts and transitions.

Contrasting views about the nature of existence

While there is no clear evidence of a direct philosophical exchange between Parmenides and Heraclitus, their ideas are often presented in contrast to one another. It is commonly understood that Heraclitus responded to Parmenides's concept of being and permanence with his theory of universal flux. Heraclitus aimed to challenge Parmenides's notion of a stable and unchanging reality by emphasizing the dynamic and ever-changing nature of existence. Heraclitus made a significant influence on subsequent thinkers such as Plato and the Stoics.

Opposing forces are inherent parts of an interconnected whole

The concept of universal flux encompasses various interconnected ideas in Heraclitus' philosophy. One of the most fundamental points that Heraclitus wants to convey here is that opposites are intimately intertwined and reliant upon each other. He believed in the interconnectedness, interdependence and ultimate unity of the opposites. According to him, the world is in a constant state of flux and opposing and conflicting forces are not only interconnected but also necessary for the dynamic harmony and balance of the universe. This is called the 'unity of the opposites.' For instance, opposites such as day and night, light and darkness, hot and cold, life and death, being

Darkness contains within
itself the seeds of light
and vice versa

and non-being, all the opposing forces are not separate and standing alone entities, rather different manifestations of the same underlying reality and thus parts of an interconnected whole. The unity of opposites means that every state of being contains within it the seeds of its own transformation into its opposite. For example, the transition from day to night represents the unity of opposites as the brightness of the day gradually gives way to the darkness of the night. It is this constant interactions and tensions and the dynamic interplay of the opposing forces that create a balance and allows for the continual process of transformation and renewal. In other words, one cannot exist without the other, and each relies on the other for its existence and significance.

Permanence is illusory
and all is in flux

The notion of universal flux has rich implications for Heraclitus' understanding of human existence and knowledge. This notion stands in stark contrast to the static and immutable conceptions of reality and the traditional notions of knowledge and truth prevalent in earlier philosophical and mythological traditions. It invites the human beings to critically examine their assumptions about stability and change, challenging them to question the fixed categories and boundaries they often impose on the world. It emphasizes the fleeting nature of individual experiences and the importance of embracing the transitory nature of life. Plato famously ascribes to Heraclitus the view that "you cannot step twice into the same river" highlighting the impermanence and continual flux of our experiences and perceptions. Also, it affirms that nothing is fixed or absolute but rather emerges through a dynamic process of ongoing inquiry and dialogue with the ever-changing world. For example, what makes a river? The river is nothing but the force of the flowing water struggling with and resisting against the opposing forces of the containing banks. Without the opposition between the banks and the water, there is no river. The view encourages us to have openness to new perspectives, a willingness to embrace the flux, a recognition of the inherent impermanence and interconnectedness of all things and thus fosters in us a deeper appreciation of the dynamic and evolving nature of reality.

1.1.4 Pluralistic Philosophers

Multiple fundamental elements and principles

There is neither an underlying substance out of which everything originates, nor a fundamental principle in the functioning of the cosmos. The monistic view that there is a fundamental stuff is to reduce the complexity of existence to a single substance (monistic reductionism). Rather, different elements or principles coexist and interact, giving rise to the diversity and complexity observed in the world. This approach that posits the existence of multiple fundamental elements or principles as the foundation of reality and rejects the monistic view is called pluralistic philosophy. Within the realm of Pre-Socratic philosophy, several thinkers adopted pluralistic perspectives, challenging the monistic and deterministic perspectives of Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes that seek to reduce reality to a single fundamental element or principle.

Complexity and diversity of the natural world

Pluralistic philosophers recognized the complexity and diversity of the natural world and attempted to explain it by postulating the existence of multiple elements or principles. Their philosophies embraced the idea that reality is composed of various components that interact and combine to create the observable phenomena. The adoption of pluralistic thinking paved the way for a more nuanced understanding of the natural world, acknowledging the multiplicity of factors and the dynamic interplay between them. The enduring influence of pluralistic thinkers can be seen in the continued development of philosophical thought throughout history. Their ideas laid the groundwork for later philosophical frameworks, such as the elemental theories in ancient and medieval philosophy, and influenced scientific theories concerning the composition and behaviour of matter.

No single and fixed underlying reality

Empedocles from Acragas (present-day Agrigento, Sicily), a famous figure in the pre-Socratic philosophy, played a significant role in the development of pluralistic thinking in Pre-Socratic philosophy by presenting a pluralistic worldview that challenged the notion of a single underlying reality. His contributions to ancient philosophy offered a unique perspective on the nature of reality, combining elements of cosmology, metaphysics, and ethics.

Whatever happens in nature is the result of intermingling of the four elements

Empedocles upholds the view that world is not governed by one elemental substance but by four: water, earth, air, and fire. These elements are not constant but undergo mingling and intermixing, giving rise to the ever-changing world of becoming. He believed that these four elements are eternal, unchangeable, and indestructible, serving as the foundational components of all things in existence. The pluralistic philosophy has an orientation towards the view which upholds the unity of opposing forces. Empedocles's fundamental proposal is that the world is governed by two opposing principles, love and hatred, which are respectively understood as forces of attraction and repulsion. He tries to find a middle ground between the theory of Anaximenes which stated that the fundamental substance that constitutes the universe is air and the processes of condensation and rarefaction, acting upon air, give rise to the different elements and phenomena observed in the world, and the theory of Heraclitus, which emphasized the doctrine of universal change. For Empedocles, the natural states and phenomena we observe are the results of the mixing and intermingling of the four essential elements.

Cyclical recurrence of natural phenomena

The world process, according to Empedocles, follows a cyclical pattern. In the initial stage, the four fundamental elements are completely mixed together, forming a spherical order. During this phase, love dominates, and there is an absolute tranquility, excluding any presence of hatred. As the process unfolds, hatred gradually enters the sphere, initiating the separation and disunification of the elements. Once the separation is complete, the elements gather together again, driven by the continued function of love to mingle and unite the diverse elements. This cycle persists until all elementary particles are combined, mirroring the initial state. Hatred then recommences its work, initiating the process anew. This cyclical nature of the universe implies that there is no definitive beginning or end. Empedocles' aim was to strike a balance between the ideas of Heraclitus, emphasizing change, and the Eleatics, who argued for the permanence and unity of being. The concept of the cyclical nature of the universe challenged the notion of a linear and deterministic view of time and existence. Instead of a single origin or a final culmination, the cosmos is seen as an ever-changing and dynamic system.

In Empedocles' philosophy, the interactions of the four elements and the interplay between Love and Strife account

Holistic understanding of the natural world

for all the phenomena observed in the natural world. From the growth of plants to the motion of celestial bodies, Empedocles sought to explain the diversity and transformations through the dynamic relationships of his elemental principles. His ideas laid the foundation for a holistic understanding of the natural world and emphasized the interconnectedness and interdependence of its constituent elements.

1.1.4.2 Anaxagoras

Multitude of distinct seeds as the building blocks of reality

Anaxagoras, hailing from Clazomenae (in modern-day Turkey) made significant contributions to the pluralistic thinking. He asserted that reality consists of an infinite number of minute particles called 'seeds' or 'homoiomers.' The seeds possess distinct qualities and characteristics, setting them apart from one another. The diversity and complexity existing in the world arise from the interactions of these seeds. The seeds combine and separate, forming various substances and objects. Anaxagoras also rejected the notion that a single element or principle could account for the myriad phenomena present in the universe. Instead, he emphasized the multitude of qualitatively distinct seeds as the fundamental building blocks of reality.

Intelligence as the ultimate ordering principle

Anaxagoras introduced the concept of *nous*, which can be translated as 'mind' or 'intelligence,' as the ultimate ordering principle of the universe. The *nous* is responsible for the organization and arrangement of the seeds. It is through the influence of this intelligent force that the seeds come together in specific combinations, giving rise to the diverse forms and structures observed in the natural world. The concept of *nous* played a crucial role in Anaxagoras' pluralistic worldview, serving as the guiding force behind the dynamic interplay of the seeds and the generation of diverse phenomena.

Multifaceted understanding of reality

The pluralistic perspective challenged the prevailing monistic views of that time and offered a more intricate and multifaceted understanding of reality. By highlighting the existence of countless distinct seeds which are different in qualities and introducing the concept of *nous*, Anaxagoras emphasized the complexity and diversity of the natural world. His ideas influenced thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle and contributed to the ongoing exploration of the nature of existence and the principles governing the universe.

1.1.4.3 Leucippus and Democritus

Universe is comprised of indivisible atoms

Leucippus and his disciple Democritus, from Abdera in present-day Greece, argued that the universe is comprised of indivisible and indestructible particles called atoms. These atoms possess different shapes, sizes, and arrangements, and it is through their combinations that various substances and objects are formed. This philosophy is called atomistic philosophy. Atomism, as advocated by Leucippus and Democritus, offered a unique pluralistic perspective by suggesting that reality is composed of an infinite number of discrete atoms, each contributing to the richness and diversity of the natural world.

Atomistic view against the monistic view of the universe

The concept of atomism was also a departure from the prevailing monistic views of their time. Leucippus and Democritus postulated that the diversity observed in the universe could be attributed to the different arrangements and interactions of atoms. The atoms move randomly in the void, colliding and forming new configurations. These configurations give rise to the myriad objects and phenomena in the world. The variations in the properties of atoms, such as their size, shape, and arrangement, account for the differences in the qualities and characteristics of substances.

Atomic view as the basis of the modern understanding of matter

According to the atomistic perspective, there exists a multitude of distinct atoms, each with its own unique properties and behavior. This philosophy moved away from any simplistic understanding of the universe and focused on a comprehensive and systematic account of the natural world, considering the immense diversity and complexity that arise from the interactions and combinations of atoms. The influence of atomism extended beyond philosophy and permeated scientific thought, laying the groundwork for modern understandings of matter and providing a basis for the development of atomic theory in later centuries.

Tiny, indivisible particles called atoms as the building blocks of matter

1.1.5 Sophists

A group of traveling intellectuals and teachers emerged in Ancient Greece during the 5th century BCE who taught and educated the public for money. They were primarily concerned with the practical aspects of life, such as rhetoric, persuasion, preaching and the art of effective communication.

Sophists, the
travelling teachers

They travelled across the cities teaching young men how to argue persuasively and win debates and had a pivotal role in shaping and developing philosophical and intellectual discourses during their time, although their ideas and methods were often met with criticism and controversy.

Persuasions and
relativist standpoints

The Sophists are known for rhetorical persuasions and relativist standpoints in Athens. It is said that prior to the fifth century B.C.E., virtue or excellence was predominately understood in association with aristocratic warrior virtues such as courage and physical strength. However, as a shift in the Athens in the latter fifth century B.C.E., virtue or excellence was understood in terms of one's ability to influence and persuade his/her fellow citizens in social and political gatherings through rhetoric. The unique sophistic education both emerged out of and manipulated this shift. It is important to note that many of Plato's works -referred to as Socratic Dialogues - engaged in serious discussions about nature and features of virtue, whether it is acquired by practice or comes by nature and what makes a society and state just, etc. Moreover, Plato's consideration of the dialectic throughout the works as the best means for rigorous education program driving philosophical investigations also is an important point.

"Man is the measure of
all things"

Protagoras, Gorgias, Antiphon, Hippias, Prodicus and Thrasymachus are the most famous representatives of the sophistic movement. Protagoras' famous dictum "man is the measure of all things (*homo mensura*), of things that are, that they are, and of things that are not, that they are not" later turned out to be the foundation of the Sophists' philosophy. The dictum stresses that truth, knowledge, and morality are subjective and can vary from person to person, space to space, culture to culture. This relativistic account of the truth was embraced by the Sophists as their central theme.

According to the Sophists, there were no absolute truths, and everything is a matter of perception. They believed that what was true for one person might not be true for another, and that truth was determined by social and cultural conventions. While rejecting the notions of absolute truth or universal knowledge, they focused on practical wisdom and the ability to argue from multiple perspectives. They believed that humans are the ultimate arbiters of truth and knowledge and that knowledge was subjective – derived and shaped by individu-

No absolute knowledge,
truth or reality

al experiences, cultural and societal values. This perspective challenged the traditional Greek idea of seeking absolute truths and objective knowledge. According to the Sophists, reality is a complex and ever-changing phenomenon. Considering the diversity of human experiences, exposures and perspectives, they emphasized that reality could be interpreted differently by different individuals. This relativistic stance towards reality challenged the prevailing metaphysical and ontological views of the time and also had a lasting impact on philosophical and intellectual movements, such as existentialism and postmodernism in the twentieth century.

Socrates and Plato's en-
gagement with
the sophist

Socrates and Plato, the founders of the Greek philosophy, shared a common belief in the existence of objective reality, knowledge and truth. For them, knowledge was something that could be discovered through reason and logical inquiry. They argued that there were absolute truths that existed independently of human perception and that could be known through the use of reason. Their engagements with Sophist philosophy in the later years made substantial contributions to the richness of the western philosophy.

Summarized Overview

The methods of enquiry or the frameworks of thinking vary time to time and space to space and in the shift of those frameworks, new philosophies and worldviews emerge and develop. When stories, myths and narratives were replaced with speculations, observations, experimentations and explanations about the natural world, there was a paradigmatic shift in human kind's approach to the universe. This is clear in our day-to-day understanding and interpretations of the natural phenomena. In a religious/mythological society, while falling of a leaf from the tree will be interpreted as the power of the intention or action of the God or of the mythic entities *prima facie*, in a society with naturalistic approach, the efforts will be made to explain the same thing according to natural laws and mechanistic principles of the universe as to why the leaf falls downward and not upward. The philosophy behind seeking explanations of the natural phenomena is rooted in the idea that the phenomena and events in the universe are orderly and intelligible and that they can be understood and explained by human beings through rational inquiry. It assumes that there is an underlying order and regularity to the universe and those explanations can be developed to account for observed phenomena.

The philosophy of explanation, while not dismissing awe or wonder about the universe, stresses the point that nature or natural phenomena are not unintelligible mysteries, rather events which are explainable and intelligible. This philosophical outlook is associated with the scientific method which aims to uncover causal relationships and provide explanations for natural phenomena. The scientists employ empirical evidence, experimentation and theoretical frameworks to develop models and theories that account for the observed patterns and behaviour of the natural world. The modern scientific assumption that the explanations about the cosmos are not arbitrary, mystical or mythological, but are grounded in observable facts and logical reasoning officially started from the ancient Greek. The narratives existing till then were primarily focused on storytelling and engaging the audience on an emotional and imaginative level. Their purpose was to entertain, convey experiences or explore themes and ideas through a sequence of events or characters. They often aimed to create a sense of connection, empathy, or entertainment. The explanations, on the other hand, are intended to provide understanding or knowledge about a particular subject or natural phenomenon. Their primary goal is to inform, clarify or provide insight into the cause-and-effect relationships, mechanisms, or underlying principles of a given topic. It is with this explanatory approach to the nature, the western philosophy officially emerged.

Self-Assessment

1. What is the difference between atomistic and pluralistic philosophy?
2. Why Sophists are unique and are thought to have brought in a paradigmatic shift in the western intellectual tradition?

Assignments

1. Take any two philosophical schools of the ancient Greece and compare and contrast their views on the cosmos and the nature of reality.
2. Myths, stories and narratives about the origin and nature of the universe were replaced with speculations, observations, experimentations and explanations about the natural world. There emerged the ancient Greek philosophy. Elaborate.
3. Differentiate between the scientific and mythological outlook about the world grounded in the origin of the Greek philosophy.

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2. Cottingham, G. John (2021). Ed. *Western Philosophy: An Anthology*, United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 2

Plato

Learning Outcomes

The unit will enable the learner to:

- discuss the architectonic nature of Plato's thought, the systematic and hierarchical organization of a philosophical system
- identify the metaphysical teachings in Plato's philosophy, especially his two-world theory or copy theory
- explain the philosophical content of the Socratic dialogues, especially with regard to Plato's theory of knowledge
- appreciate Plato's method of dialectic as the means of knowledge

Background

Socrates introduced a new framework of thinking about the human beings and the cosmos. The aesthetic framework of thinking filled with poems and myths was replaced with the dialectical framework, introduced by Socrates and popularized by his great student Plato. The dialectical framework was different from the aesthetic framework as the former was meant to move towards better knowledge. The foundational principle of this framework is that each thing, including concept, entity or being, consists of and is made up of forces of its own opposites and contradictions and it is these contradictions that trigger the movement of the history, nature or human kind. Being the preacher of Socratic Method and philosophy, Plato started to shape and develop the philosophy in a systematic way. He developed the philosophy like architecture with a systematic and structured arrangement of concepts, principles and arguments in a coherent way. Plato officially initiated a system building for philosophy where various branches and elements of the philosophical system give a unified and inte-

grated understanding about human beings and their relation to the world. His philosophy needs to be seen in the context of non-systematic and relativistic attitudes of the Sophists who preceded him in the ancient Greece. Developing an analytic mind from the philosophical teachings of Socrates, Plato made deep philosophical conversations about various branches of philosophy such as metaphysics, politics, ethics, psychology and epistemology. He not only showed a deep inter-connectedness of the concepts and ideas that he had developed, but also that of the branches of philosophy.

Keywords

Ideas/forms, Anamnesis, Platonic dualism, Dialectic, Recollection

Discussion

1.2.1 Architectonic Nature of Plato's Philosophy

Plato as the official system builder in philosophy

Plato is known as the official system builder in philosophy. He laid the groundwork for enduring philosophical concepts and greatly influenced and contributed to the subsequent intellectual and philosophical landscape of the west. Born in Athens in the 4th century BCE, Plato was a student of Socrates and the mentor of Aristotle. His philosophical ideas were presented through a unique literary form known as the Socratic Dialogues, where philosophical inquiries were explored through conversations and dialogues between Socrates and various interlocutors. His important works are *Apology*, *Crito*, *Euthydemus*, *Meno*, *Parmenides*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium* and *The Republic*.

Architectonic philosophy

There is an architectonic nature to Plato's thought. The phrase 'architectonic' indicates the systematic and hierarchical organization of a philosophical theory or system. It involves the arrangement of concepts, principles and arguments in a coherent and structured way, suggesting a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. The architectonic approach in philosophy seeks to establish a framework that encompasses the various branches and elements of the philosophical system, allowing for a unified and integrated under-

standing of its components. It involves identifying the foundational principles, core concepts and relationships between different parts of the system, thereby providing a cohesive structure for the exploration of philosophical ideas.

Plato's comprehensive worldview

Plato's ideas form a cohesive and hierarchical framework in which each concept/idea fits into a larger whole. With this approach, Plato makes out of his philosophy, a comprehensive worldview that encompasses metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and political philosophy. The conception of justice in Plato is one area where this architectonic nature is clearly evident. It has roots in his metaphysical and ethical theories and is interwoven into the fabric of his philosophy. In *The Republic*, Plato presents a comprehensive account of justice, both at the individual and societal levels. The justice is not merely a social construct or a set of rules imposed by authorities; rather, it is an inherent quality that reflects the harmony and balance of the soul and the state.

Parts of the soul and the harmony in individual life

In his architectonic philosophy, Plato starts with parts of the soul. An individual has three distinct parts of the soul: reason, spirit and desire. The justice happens, for Plato, when each part of the soul performs its appropriate function in a harmonious and balanced manner. The reason is always superior to emotions, feelings and desires. The rational part of the soul should govern and guide the spirited and appetitive parts and ensure that they act in accordance with reason and the pursuit of virtue. Knowledge and virtue are guided by the reason. When the soul is just, each part fulfils its proper role and functions, resulting in inner harmony and well-being. Plato extends this concept of justice from the individual level to the realm of the state to suggest the parallels existing between the structure of the individual soul and the organization of the ideal city-state. The emphasis is on the interplay between individual virtue, social order and the pursuit of the Good, demonstrating a systematic approach to ethical and political philosophy.

Conceptualizing individual, soul, state and philosophy within an over binding structure

In Plato's vision, a just society is one in which the rulers, who possess wisdom and philosophical knowledge, govern with the ultimate aim of promoting the well-being and virtue of the citizens. Each member of society has specified and stipulated roles and functions, and justice is attained when everyone fulfils their prescribed duties and contributes to the overall harmony and flourishing of the state. The point is that Plato places

the individual and his/her elements of the soul, the state and philosophy within an over binding order, structure and systematic organization.

Interconnectedness of concepts in Plato

At the metaphysical level, Plato's conception of forms or Ideas representing the perfect and unchanging archetypes of all things in the empirical world also has an intertwined relation with his conception of the good, right and justice. In other words, the Form of the Good, the ultimate reality and source of all knowledge, plays a central role in Plato's understanding of justice. The justice is intimately connected to the Good, and that the just individual or society aligns itself with the transcendent truth and harmony represented by the Form of the Good. The concept of justice is not only connected with theory of forms or ideas but also with various issues in Plato's philosophy such as education, politics, and the arts. Plato investigates the role of education in cultivating just individuals, the structure of an ideal state that promotes justice, and even the proper forms of artistic expression that align with the principles of justice.

1.2.2 Plato and the Sophists

Socio-cultural background of Plato's philosophy

Any thought or philosophy needs to be understood in its socio-cultural and political context. In a different sense, every thought emerges from a specific socio-cultural landscape. About the socio-cultural landscape of the ancient Greece, it was famous for its cultural heritage and artistic achievements. It was the birthplace of drama, poetry, sculpture and architecture. Plato lived in a time when the Greek society was shifting into city-states (*polis*) structure where citizens had actively participated in political affairs and public life. Athens, Plato's own city, was a prominent city-state known for its democratic system and intellectual vibrancy. In that sense, social interactions, artistic climate and civic engagement played a crucial role in shaping philosophical ideas.

About the philosophical background, Plato's philosophy can be mainly seen as an attempted response to two philosophical schools; Eleatics and the sophists. It responds to the doctrine of Monism which defines the Eleatic philosophy, of which Parmenides and Zeno are the main proponents. The strict Monism attributed to the Eleatics holds that at every level, despite appearances and differences, there are not a vari-

Plato's response to Eleatic and the sophists

ety of things, rather only one. Plato challenges and rejects this doctrine that all things are, of some level, one using the Theory of Forms, which is central to his metaphysics. The theory of forms affirms that there exists a realm of forms/ideas in contrast to the appearances of the empirical/physical world. He thus replaces monism with dualism.

Rebuttal of the relativistic views

Plato's search for objective knowledge, truth and reality, founded on logical argumentation and reasoning, is a rejection of the relativistic accounts of knowledge, truth and reality propounded by the sophists. His stress on virtues and moral values is also a rebuttal of the relativistic moral values of the sophists. In one sense, the Theory of Forms, and the whole enterprise of the *Republic*, can be read as an attempt to find a solid grounding for moral values in rational principles.

Allegory of the Cave and two symbols

Through the famous Allegory of the Cave in *The Republic* Plato puts forth a powerful response to the philosophical views advocated by the Sophists, stressing the stark contrast between their relativistic and subjective conceptions of knowledge, truth and reality and the existence of objective knowledge, truth and reality. The objective and universal truths which transcend individual opinions and subjective perceptions and experiences, Plato shows here, can be ascertained through reason and rational inquiry. The allegory portrays some individuals as prisoners confined within a dark cave since birth who can only see the shadows cast on the cave wall by objects behind them. They are deprived of the reality per se and the shadows are their sole perception of reality.

Shadows of the real in the cave/prison

The allegory is meant to symbolize the state of ordinary human beings who are immersed in a world of sensory experiences and illusions and distinguish them from the philosophers who get the real grasp of the reality. In many Socratic dialogues, including the *Sophist*, Plato distinguishes between the philosophy and sophistry. It is possible that Plato wants to symbolize the prisoners in the cave, who are trapped in a world of shadows, copies, imitations and illusions as the sophists and their followers, and the one who escapes the cave in order to ascent to the realm of pure knowledge and truth as the philosopher. The most fundamental criticism against Sophists can be seen in the very style Plato had established and propagated; rational enquiry and contemplation, instead of persuasive communication and rhetoric.

Philosopher is the one who escapes the cave

1.2.3 Theory of Forms/Ideas

Platonic dualism

The theory of forms, also known as the theory of ideas is the edifice of Plato's metaphysics and epistemology or 'Platonism.' Plato's attempt is to cultivate our capacity for abstract thought. Philosophy was a relatively new invention in Plato's times and was messed up and competed with mythology, tragedy, and epic poetry as the primary means by which people could make sense of their place in the world. Like philosophy, art and mythology provide concepts that help us to understand ourselves, but art and mythology do so by appealing to our emotions and desires. Philosophy, in contrast, appeals to the intellect. The theory of forms differentiates the abstract world of thought from the world of the senses where art, poetry and mythology operate. Plato argues that abstract thought is superior to the world of the senses and perceptions. By investigating the world of forms, Plato hopes to attain a greater knowledge and wisdom.

Dualistic metaphysics with two levels of the world

Plato presents a dualistic metaphysics. According to this, the world exists on two levels. One is the sensuous dynamic world in the physical realm and the other is the rational or transcendental world of ideas. The physical/empirical world is constantly changing. The objects, things or beings come into existence, emerge and pass away. For instance, the human beings are born, grow up, perish and pass away. Everything in the physical world is liable to change, transformation and mutation and therefore the physical world cannot be the source of true knowledge. The transcendental world exists over and above the sensuous physical world. This transcendental world is the world of ideas, forms or concepts, not that of matter. Whatever exists in the physical world is a copy or imitation of the form/idea of that object, thing or being in the realm of ideas/forms.

Idea of a table versus this particular table

According to Plato, the forms/ideas are perfect and unchanging, while the physical world is imperfect and constantly changing. The forms are the true objects of knowledge and the physical world is merely a shadow or copy or imitation of the world of forms. The idea or form recognises the fundamental traits shared by numerous particulars. It is the essence of things - the common or general characteristics found in particular things. As the essence is something which consists of the universal form, the idea is universal and general. It does

Universal versus particular

not represent any particular thing in the physical world, the fundamental feature of which is change and mutation. For instance, the idea of a table represents not 'this table' or 'that table', but the general or universal table. The idea of a human being represents not 'this man' or 'that woman' but the universal humanness. According to the theory, the realm of abstract, eternal forms or ideas exists independently of the physical world. The relation between ideas in the transcendental world and the things in the physical world has been explained by Plato in his dialogues by copy theory and participation theory.

Idea of something is unbounded by space and time

The idea of something or being resides in many individual entities. The idea is perfect and possesses the degree of perfection that individual particular things may lack. For example, the idea of a table is perfect, universal and one while the particular table varies more or less from this perfect idea. The idea of humaneness is perfect and remains the same, untouched by the individual man's birth, old age, death and decay. This essence is eternal, unchangeable and imperishable. The idea is the universal substance, unbounded by space and time. It is immaterial and is not found in the sensuous world. The idea is indestructible and hence must be beyond space and time. The ideas/concepts have objective existence. All concepts like goodness, beauty, virtue etc. are objective realities. For Plato, these ideas have their own divine realm and are non-spatial and non-temporal.

Reconciling all-change theory and non-change theory

Plato's attempt in the two-world theory is to present a synthesis of Heraclitus's all-change theory and Parmenides' no-change theory. Naturally, certain aspects of things constantly change, while others remain the same. For example, a tree passes through different stages of growth, from a seed to a gigantic tree. Despite these changes and transformations, the tree remains the same. In the two-world concept, Plato reconciles 'change' and 'permanence'.

1.2.4 Theory of Knowledge

Epistemology or the theory of knowledge occupies a central place in Plato's philosophy. Plato asserts that true knowledge can only be attained through rational inquiry and the contemplation and comprehension of the forms. Here he challenges the notion that sensory perception alone can lead to genuine understanding because, according to him, the physical world is

Knowledge as a business
of contemplation
and reason

characterized by constant change and illusion. In the theory of knowledge, he advocates for the cultivation of reason and the engagement in dialectic, a method of inquiry involving critical examination and rigorous questioning. Through dialectic, individuals can ascend from the world of appearances to grasp the transcendent truths of the Forms.

How to define
the knowledge?

In the famous Socratic dialogue *Theaetetus*, Plato explores the nature of cognition and knowledge, and it is one of his most important works on epistemology. In the dialogue, Socrates, the main interlocutor, engages with two mathematicians, Theaetetus and Theodorus, in long dialectical exchanges on the central question “what is knowledge?”. The dialogue proceeds with Theaetetus offering a series of definitions of knowledge while Socrates testing each of Theaetetus’ definitions by subjecting them to critical scrutiny and showing each of them to be inadequate. Theaetetus’ attempts to define the knowledge can be divided into four sections in which he gives four different answers to the question “what is knowledge”: (i) Knowledge constitutes various arts and sciences; (ii) Knowledge is perception; (iii) Knowledge is true judgment; and (iv) Knowledge is true judgment with an ‘account’ (Logos).

X cannot be defined
by its examples

To explain the progression of the dialogue, Theaetetus responds to Socrates’ question at first by giving a list of examples of knowledge, such as geometry, astronomy, physics and arithmetic, along with the crafts or skills (*technai*) of cobbling, shoemaking, carpentering, and the like. He calls them ‘knowledges’ presumably considering them as the various branches of knowledge. However, Socrates rightly rejects this response by observing that Theaetetus’ answer provides only a list of instances of things of which there is knowledge.

The thing which is
common in various
examples of knowledge

Socrates mainly makes two complaints against this response in the dialogue. Firstly, he says that his interest is in the common /general nature of all the various examples of knowledge, not numerous kinds of knowledge. Secondly, Theaetetus’ response is circular and rotary, because even if one knows that cobbling is “knowledge of how to make shoes” and carpentering is “knowledge of how to make by shaping the woods,” one cannot know what cobbling or carpentering is unless one knows what knowledge is. Moreover, a definition could be briefly and concisely stated, whereas enumerating several kinds of knowledge is ‘an interminable diversion.’

The enumeration of the several kinds of knowledge is not the definition of knowledge. The question ‘what is clay?’ can only be answered by ‘clay is moistened earth,’ and not with ‘there is one clay of image-makers, another of potters, another of oven-makers.’ That means, knowledge is not the various arts and sciences, Socrates affirms.

Knowledge is perception

Theaetetus’s second response to Socrates’ question about the definition of knowledge is that “knowledge is nothing other than perception.” But Socrates equates this definition, in his attempt to refute it, with Protagoras’ thesis that “man is the measure of all things” (*homomensura*), which entails that things are to any human just as they appear to that human. That is, the above definition supports Protagoras’ analysis “that the wind is cold to the one who feels cold, but not cold to the one who does not feel cold.” According to Protagoras’ view, things/knowledge is subjective and relative person to person. Socrates then also adds that, in its turn, the definition entails Heraclitus’ view that “All is flux” meaning that there are no stably existing objects with stably enduring qualities. Moreover, in perception, many times we are misled like a straight stick appears to us as bent in the water. Thus, Socrates affirms, this cannot be the definition of knowledge.

Defining true judgement only by defining a false judgement

The third response is that “knowledge is true judgment.” Here, Theaetetus formulates the identification of knowledge with true judgment. But Socrates raises an issue that one cannot make sense of the notion of ‘true judgement’ properly unless he/she can explain the notion of ‘false judgement.’ Socrates then examines the meaning of ‘false judgement’ with some unsuccessful ways of looking at it. He considers the false judgment as (a) “mistaking one thing for another,” (b) “thinking what is not,” (c) “other-judgment,” (d) inappropriate linkage of a perception to a memory and (e) potential and actual knowledge and refutes each one of them. For example, to refute the first case, he insists that one cannot judge falsely that one person is another person, whether one knows one of them, or both of them, or neither one nor the other. About the second argument concerning false judgement as “thinking what is not,” Socrates presents an analogy between sense-perception and judgment which goes like this: if one hears or feels something, there must be something which one hears or feels. Likewise, if one judges something, there must be something that one judges. In other words, one judging “what is not” would

amount in that case to one's judgement having no object or one judging nothing (one making no judgment at all). Thus, this cannot be a proper account of false judgment. Socrates then goes on to refute the last definition "knowledge is true judgment with account (logo)" as well.

Three kinds of knowledge

Socrates and Theaetetus in the dialogue attempt to reach a final and yet inconclusive definition of the knowledge in the dialogue "knowledge is justified true belief." However, before that, Socrates introduces mainly three kinds of knowledge; knowledge by acquaintance, knowledge of how to do things and knowledge by description. The knowledge by acquaintance is a kind of objectual knowledge that is based on direct perception or 'contact' with the object of knowledge. This is direct and unmediated, and it provides us with immediate and certain knowledge of the object. We acquire knowledge by acquaintance, when we see a tree directly and have a direct perception or 'contact' with the tree.

Know-how is the practical knowledge

The knowledge of how to do things (know-how), Plato introduces through Socrates, is also known as practical knowledge and it refers to the knowledge that is necessary to perform a particular action or task. The know-how is distinct from knowledge by description and knowledge by acquaintance, as it is not simply a matter of knowing the facts about a particular thing (knowledge by description) or having direct experience with it (knowledge by acquaintance). Rather, it is a knowledge that is acquired/attained through practice and repetition and it involves a mastery of certain skills or techniques. For example, if you want to learn how to play a musical instrument, you need more than just knowledge by description (i.e., reading about how to play the instrument) or knowledge by acquaintance (i.e., hearing someone else play the instrument). Here, you need to develop a practical knowledge of how to play the instrument, which can only be acquired through practice and repetition.

Plato here emphasizes the point that epistemologists are interested not on the procedural (know-how) knowledge or acquaintance knowledge, but on knowledge by description, the knowledge that is acquired through language and description. This is propositional knowledge. A proposition is anything that is expressed by a declarative sentence which intends to describe a fact or a state of affairs, such as "human beings

'knowledge-that' as the
field of epistemology

are mortal" (instance for a true proposition) or " $2+2=7$ " (instance for a false proposition). Propositional knowledge involves a grasp of the truth or falsity of a statement or proposition. As the propositional knowledge is properly expressed using 'that'- clauses, such as "He knows that Washington is in United States" or "He does not know that $2+2=4$ " is also known as "knowledge-that." Needless to say, Socrates stresses, propositional knowledge encompasses knowledge about a wide variety of matters such as scientific knowledge, mathematical knowledge, geographical knowledge, self-knowledge and knowledge about any field of study.

Necessary and sufficient
condition of knowledge

Plato, having narrowed the focus into propositional knowledge, tries to make a clear analysis of the concept of knowledge by setting necessary and sufficient conditions which determine whether someone knows something. He explores more deeply the questions such as what does it mean to know something, rather than believe, or, what is the difference between someone who knows something and someone else who does not know it? The dialogue goes on with an observation that knowledge is a mental state. The idea that knowledge exists in one's mind suggests that unthinking things cannot know anything. Plato asserts that knowledge is a specific kind of mental state as "that"- clauses can also be used to describe someone's desires and intentions and yet they cannot constitute knowledge.

We can only know
what do we believe

Plato here introduces three conditions for something to be knowledge; the belief condition, justification condition and truth condition. The first condition for knowledge is that it should be a belief held by someone. Without having belief about a particular matter, one cannot have knowledge about the same. In other words, you can only know what you believe. The belief represents an individual's subjective acceptance or conviction regarding a proposition or claim. It mirrors the mental state of the person who is holding the belief. The notion of knowledge then primarily acknowledges the subjective aspect of human cognition and affirms that knowledge involves an individual's conviction or acceptance of a claim. For example, while studying for a history exam, a boy comes across a historical fact which states, "India became independent from the British in 1947." Based on this information, the boy forms his belief that the Indian independence occurred in 1947. This belief is a necessary step towards his knowledge about Indian independence in 1947.

Knowledge is the justified true belief

However, we have experience that most of our beliefs are not knowledge. That means, belief is a necessary condition for the knowledge, but not a sufficient one. Plato makes the point that in our journey to acquire knowledge, we are trying to increase our stock of true beliefs and to minimize the false beliefs. There arises the truth condition. A belief must be true in order to be knowledge. If the historical records confirm that the Indian independence occurred in 1947, then the boy's belief is true. But then again only true belief cannot constitute knowledge. For example, in a case wherein the boy holds the belief that Indian independence occurred in 1947 and the historical records confirm the same, he still cannot be said to have knowledge. If his belief is not justified by good reasons or evidence. That is the justification condition. Here, the boy is having a reasonable justification for his belief about Indian independence in 1947 as his textbook is a reliable source of historical information. In sum, in the Socratic dialogues, Plato makes a distinction between mere belief/opinion (*doxa*) and knowledge (*episteme*). The term *doxa* refers to the common belief and popular opinion while *episteme* refers to the justified true belief. That means, knowing the truth is different from believing something to be true. Mere belief/opinion does not amount to knowledge.

1.2.5 Method of Dialectic

Assisting to give birth to ideas and see if they are alive or dead

Plato's writings are in the form of dialogues and are in the logical format of deduction. For him, knowledge is possible through questioning and not through teaching. The art of questioning that Plato learnt from his teacher Socrates enables the student to bring out the knowledge that he already possesses. Questioning is a process of dialectics that refutes the former false opinion and helps to achieve a more refined one. Dialectics is the art of thinking about concepts. In dialectics, one examines one's assumptions and basic concepts. Socrates introduces himself as an intellectual midwife who undertakes to assist one in giving birth to his/her ideas and in judging whether or not they are legitimate children.

Assisting to give birth to ideas and see if they are alive or dead

The theory of recollection, also known as the theory of anamnesis, one of the central concepts that address the nature of knowledge and the immortality of the soul comes strongly in the Socratic dialectic. According to Plato, knowledge is not something acquired from the outside world but rather a

Knowledge through questioning, not through teaching

process of recollecting or remembering what the soul already knows from its pre-existence. Plato presents an argument to support the theory of recollection in his dialogue *Meno*. He engages in a conversation with a slave boy and demonstrates that the boy, without any prior learning, is capable of solving complex geometric problems. Plato argues that this ability to solve problems is evidence that the boy's soul already possesses knowledge and is merely recollecting it through the process of questioning and eliciting correct responses. This dialogue illustrates Plato's belief that knowledge is not acquired through sensory experience but is a matter of remembering what the soul already knows through constant examination, reflection and questioning.

Plato's challenge to the sophists' idea of education

Plato's criticism of the Sophists is closely intertwined with his views on education. He argues that education should not solely aim to cultivate rhetorical skills but should primarily focus on the pursuit of truth and the development of virtuous individuals. He maintains that education should involve rigorous philosophical inquiry and the exploration of abstract concepts to foster critical thinking and moral development. For Plato, education is the means by which individuals are equipped to engage in the pursuit of objective truths and to embody virtuous qualities that contribute to a just and harmonious society. Through dialectic, he offers profound insights into a wide range of philosophical themes and concepts and presents compelling arguments against the Sophists' relativistic perspective on truth, their prioritization of rhetoric, and their rejection of absolute moral values.

Preference of theoretical knowledge to practical knowledge

Plato also addresses in the dialectic the sophists' view of knowledge. While the Sophists focused on practical knowledge and the ability to effectively manipulate language, Plato endeavours to uncover the nature of genuine knowledge. He posits that true knowledge entails apprehending universal concepts or forms that exist beyond the physical world. He contends that the Sophists' preoccupation with practical skills neglects the pursuit of genuine wisdom and understanding. According to him, the recognition of abstract concepts and the contemplation of higher truths are essential to attain the true knowledge.

Summarized Overview

Any organized, systematic and comprehensive approach to understanding the human being, world, knowledge, and reality (including Plato's architectonic philosophy) needs to be put into minute scrutiny. That is so because every human attempt to construct an organized system is an attempt to detach or abstract human beings from their life-worlds and experiences. The over-emphasis on universal concepts and eternal truths neglects the particularities and complexities of individual experiences and socio-cultural contexts. Platonic approach, for many, tends to overlook the diverse and ever-changing nature of reality and human existence by reducing them to static and fixed categories. The major philosophical task of the later philosophers especially that of the postmodernists and deconstructionists was to reject any kind of a unified and coherent philosophical framework. The hierarchical structure with the realm of forms/ideas representing the highest and purest form of knowledge and the realm of physical world representing a copy or imperfect reflection has an inherent elitism – belief or doctrine that a select group or elite possesses inherent qualities, abilities, or authority that make them superior to the rest of society, and, essentialism – concept that refers to the belief that objects, entities or categories have essential qualities or characteristics that define their identity and distinguish them from other things. It implies that only a select few can attain true and perfect knowledge, while the majority are left with imperfect representations. The philosophers in later modernity, in contrast to Plato, emphasized the inherent complexities, uncertainties and contradictions that permeate within human existence and the world and argued that reality and knowledge are multifaceted, fragmented and non-essentialist in their attempt to resist any singular grand narrative or systematic framework.

Self-Assessment

1. “Knowledge is nothing other than perception.” Assess.
2. What do we mean by Plato's architectonic philosophy?

Assignments

1. Dialectic is a means of education and Socrates is doing intellectual midwifery. Elaborate
2. Debate on Plato's definitions of knowledge in the Socratic dialogues.
3. Comment on the significance of Universals in Plato's philosophy

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Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 3

Aristotle

Learning Outcomes

The unit will provide the learner:

- a philosophical context to and general outlook of Aristotle's philosophy
- an understanding of the converging and diverging points between Plato and Aristotle
- a brief overview of the fundamental concepts in Aristotle's metaphysics such as actuality and potentiality and four causes
- an idea about the significance of Aristotle's natural philosophy

Background

Aristotle did not build a fresh philosophical system. Rather, he responded to the heated intellectual discussions and debates Plato initiated. Aristotle's philosophy can be seen as building upon and responding to the ideas put forth by the earlier thinkers especially his great teacher Plato. A central aspect of Aristotle's philosophy is his teleological view of the natural world. While the atomists held a mechanistic understanding of the universe envisioning the cosmos as a vast assemblage of tiny, indivisible particles called atoms engaged in constant motion, colliding and combining to form all matter and phenomena, Aristotle argued that universe was teleological moving and aiming at fulfilling specific ends. According to the teleological understanding of the universe, everything in nature has an inherent *telos*, or goal which determines its development and behaviour. The teleological perspective influenced his views on biology, physics, and metaphysics.

Keywords

Form and matter, Potentiality and actuality, Causality, Knowledge, Theory of change

Discussion

1.3.1 Aristotle's Criticism of Plato

Divergence from Plato

Aristotle, the great student of Plato made substantial contributions to various fields including metaphysics, ethics, politics, biology, and logic. He was more empirically minded than both Socrates and Plato. His emphasis on empirical observation and the study of nature influenced the development of philosophy as a holistic system as much as biology as a scientific discipline. His philosophy needs to be primarily considered in its relation to the intellectual landscape Plato had developed. Aristotle's response to Plato's philosophy was multifaceted. While his philosophy was much influenced by that of Plato, he also developed his own philosophical system that diverged from Plato's in various ways.

No separate world of forms and ideas

Aristotle's critique of Plato's theory of forms stands as a significant diverging point with Plato. The material world and the world of ideal forms do not exist separately, according to Aristotle. Rather, he argued, the forms exist within the objects themselves and stressed the unity of form and matter. The forms are not independent entities existing separately from the physical world, rather, they are immanent within the substances in the physical world, shaping their essence and defining their identity. While Aristotle agrees with Plato that the forms/ideas make or shape the essence of the things, he disagrees with the latter on the separate existence of forms. The rejection of the separation between the world of matter and the world of ideal forms stems from Aristotle's critique of the dualistic nature of reality that Plato advocated.

The key contention between Aristotle and Plato is about the concept of universals. While Plato proposed that universals are existing independently by transcending individual objects or matter and having a higher level of reality, Aristotle

Intertwinement of the universal (essence) and the particular (matter)

Concrete universal versus transcendent universal

Inseparability of form and matter

dismissed the notion of a separate realm for universals. Rather, he proposed that the universals are inherent in particular objects or matter. Aristotle emphasized that universals/forms are abstractions that we (minds) derive from our experiences of physical objects, in order to recognize and categorize the similarities between various objects. Aristotle also rejected the theory of participation which Plato had proposed to establish the connection between two worlds – the material world participates in the ideal forms suggesting that physical objects only possess a partial reflection of the true reality found in the world of forms. According to Aristotle, the essence of an object/matter is not a separate entity but is found within the object/matter itself and the material substances have their own inherent characteristics and do not rely on participation in external ideas for their existence or identity. This rejection of transcendent universal marks a fundamental departure from Plato's philosophical framework. In opposition to the transcendent universal, Aristotle introduces the concept of concrete universal. The concrete universal is the universal which determines or contains its own particularization.

Dismissing Plato's dualism which suggests that reality consists of two fundamentally different entities or principles such as idea/form and matter, Aristotle proposed hylomorphic dualism which posits that objects and entities in the world are composed of two inseparable aspects, form (or essence) and matter. The form and matter, according to this view, are not only inseparable, but also interdependent and exist together in a unified manner. The form or idea is the properties and qualities that define an object or entity, while matter is the underlying physical substance or material that gives it its particularity/individuality. The form cannot exist independently of matter and the matter cannot exist without form. In other words, the form is immanent within matter as much as the matter is immanent within the form. The hylomorphic framework, which is in direct opposition to Platonic dualism, incorporates dualistic elements in Plato and integrates form and matter into a unified whole giving rise to a holistic perspective to nature.

In the hylomorphic framework of the natural world, form is the universal aspect of objects, the essential unity shared by all things of the same type. For instance, the form of a (particular) chair should be understood as belonging to the (universal) form of the chair. In other words, the form of a particular

Hylomorphism as a framework of thinking about the world

concrete chair (this or that chair) is constituted by the essential qualities of the class to which it belongs. The form here denotes the ‘whatness’ of the thing, which is the essential determination or organic structure of things. While we perceive an object only when it receives its form, it, however, becomes this or that chair by including complex qualities such as colours, textures, and flavours, not just shapes. In short, form is the principle that *determines a matter*, making objects into individual *substances* such as a man, horse, dog, plant and so on.

Physical world and beyond the physical world

The core question between Plato and Aristotle is about the nature of reality, and the relationship between the physical world and abstract concepts. Aristotle upheld the immanence (immanent world view) which refers to the idea that ultimate reality or the divine exists within the material world and is inherent in its processes, structures, and beings. In an immanent world view, the highest or most essential aspects of existence can be found within the realm of everyday experience and there is no distinct, separate, or transcendent realm beyond the physical world. Here, the focus is on understanding and exploring the inherent qualities and principles within the natural and observable world. Plato’s transcendence/transcendent world view, on the other hand, suggests that there is a realm or reality that exists beyond or outside of the physical world. It suggests that there are aspects of existence that surpass or go beyond the limits of our ordinary experience and sensory perception. Transcendence implies a sense of something greater or higher that transcends the boundaries of the material world and the concept of ‘transcendent’ often includes notions of the divine, absolute truths or ultimate realities that are beyond the reach of our senses and rational comprehension.

1.3.2 Actuality and Potentiality

Aristotle’s focus on natural world

Aristotle focused on study of the natural order through which he aimed to unravel its fundamental principles. His natural philosophy can be seen as a systematic and comprehensive extension of the study done by his ancient Greek predecessors. He was much concerned with the essence of the natural world and the methods by which we can explain it. He affirmed that nature operates based on a set of principles that account for the various processes observed in the natural world. He further stated that natural world not only comprises a plurality of individual substances or objects, including plants,

animals, and humans but also encompasses the phenomena of change and growth.

Roots of the change in actually and potentially

Aristotle introduced the concepts of actuality and potentiality while explaining the phenomena of change, growth and transformation in the nature. Take an example of bricks and boards getting transformed into a house. The process of building a house is the actuality of the buildable materials qua buildable. The materials such as bricks and boards are potentially a house. The potentiality refers to the possibility or capability of something happening or becoming actual or true in the future as in the case of the bricks and boards which have the possibility or capability of becoming an actual house. The actuality with which Aristotle identifies change is that of the bricks and boards, not qua bricks and boards, but qua buildable. The moment the process of building the house is completed, the potentiality of bricks and boards has been replaced by a corresponding actuality- that of the completed house. In Aristotle's framework, actuality and potentiality are indeed relative concepts. In the example of clay turning in to a brick, the clay represents the potential while the brick represents the actual. However, in construction of a house, brick becomes the potential and the house becomes the actual.

Fulfilment of a definite existence

In short, actuality refers to the state of being or existence in its fully realized and complete form. It represents the actualized potential or the fulfilment of what something can become. Potentiality, on the other hand, signifies the inherent capacity or possibility for change, growth or development. It is when something being in a state of becoming or having the potential to manifest in various ways. The concepts of form and matter and actuality and potentiality share some similarities but are not exactly the same. While the concept of form and matter is related specifically to the composition and nature of individual objects in the natural world, the concept of actuality and potentiality has a broader scope and can be applied to various aspects of existence. It encompasses a more general metaphysical framework that extends beyond the realm of individual objects.

Having capacity to 'become a definite existence

Explaining the changes in the world

The process of becoming and transformation became a central inquiry in Aristotle's metaphysical exploration. He was particularly interested in the explanation of changes occurring in the natural world particularly concerning the exis-

tence of physical objects. It is in this background, Aristotle recognized that all sensible things in our world are composed of two essential principles called matter (*hule*) and form (*mor-
phe*), elucidating how physical objects come into existence.

1.3.3 Theory of Knowledge

Scientific approach
to knowledge

Aristotle's epistemology needs to be considered and understood in relation to Plato's. His one major criticism against Plato, apart from the one against two-world theory, is on latter's view on the nature of knowledge and the role of the senses. While knowledge is solely derived from innate ideas or abstract reasoning and is merely about the recollection of the same for Plato, Aristotle places a strong emphasis on empirical observation and the senses as the basis for acquiring knowledge.

Empirical observation
and universal
generalisation

According to Aristotle, knowledge begins with the senses, as they provide the raw data from which understanding and knowledge are derived. Through careful observation of the physical world, we can discern patterns, similarities, and differences, ultimately leading to the formulation of universal principles and generalizations. Here both the particular aspects and the universal aspects partake in the constitution of the knowledge. Like the synthesis of form and matter, the synthesis of empirical observation and knowledge also helped Aristotle in building up a more integrated and holistic understanding of the nature.

Induction and deduction

From observing
individual instances to
general principles

Aristotle's epistemological framework is fundamentally founded on the concept of 'episteme' which refers to scientific knowledge or understanding based on empirical observation, systematic investigation and logical reasoning. The episteme, according to Aristotle, is the highest form of knowledge characterized by its universal and necessary nature and is attained through rigorous inquiry, where one progresses from observations of individual instances to general principles through the use of deductive reasoning. Both the deduction and induction are significant in Aristotle's epistemology. While Aristotle acknowledged the importance of sensory experience in constitution of the knowledge, he also recognized that our senses can be fallible and subject to illusions. This led to debates on how to reconcile the potential limitations of the senses with the quest for objective knowledge.

1.3.4 Substance and Being

Primary and secondary categories of being

The theory of substance and being pertains to the fundamental nature of existence and conveys the distinction between different levels or categories of reality. Aristotle, in contrast to Plato, believes that substance is the primary category of being and is the individual entity or thing that exists independently and is not predicated upon anything else. It is the ultimate subject of predication and serves as the foundation upon which all other properties and attributes are based. The primary substances are particular individual objects such as a specific human being or a specific tree and the secondary substances are universal categories or kinds that encompass multiple individual substances such as 'humaneness' or 'tree-hood.' Substance here refers to the underlying essence or nature that defines the identity of a thing.

Methods to understand the process in natural world

While there are connections among three theories, such as theory of substance and being, theory of form and matter and the theory of potentiality and actuality, they address different aspects of Aristotle's philosophical system. The theory of substance and being deals with the categorization and nature of reality, the theory of form and matter focuses on the composition and structure of individual objects, and the theory of potentiality and actuality explores the dynamics of change and realization. However, all these theories are intertwined and contribute to Aristotle's comprehensive understanding of the nature of being and the processes within the natural world.

Debates on what is the identity of objects

The distinction between primary and secondary substance has contributed in later ages to understanding the essence and identity of objects. It allowed for a nuanced analysis of individual entities while recognizing the shared characteristics that help us to classify objects into broader categories. This distinction provides a framework for exploring the relationship between the particular and the universal in our understanding of the nature of being.

1.3.5 Four Causes: Material, Formal, Efficient, and Final

Aristotle observes that material objects undergo processes of changes and these changes are not arbitrary but have

Principles governing the change

underlying causes. Explaining these causes and the nature of change has been a fundamental concern driving Aristotle's exploration of the natural world. He seeks to uncover the order and principles that govern the processes of change, employing concepts such as potentiality, actuality, form, and matter to delve deeper into the workings of nature.

Matter as the cause

Aristotle believes that we can claim to truly understand something only when we have grasped its causes and that, asking for a cause is essentially seeking an explanation for why something is the way it is. He identifies four fundamental causes that underpin any process of change: material cause, formal cause, efficient cause, and final cause. The material cause is determined by the physical substance or matter that comprises the object undergoing change. It refers to what a thing is made of. For example, the material cause of a table may be the wood from which it is constructed, while for a statue, it could be bronze or marble. Aristotle illustrates the material cause through the example of a sculptor fashioning a statue from bronze. The qualities and properties of the bronze, such as its malleability, colour and weight represent the material cause from which the statue is formed. This first type of cause, often referred to as 'cause as matter' is defined as the constituent from which something comes into existence. It highlights the role of the material substrate or matter as the foundation of the object's being.

Form as the cause

The formal cause pertains to the arrangement, shape or appearance of the changing or moving object. It encompasses the pattern or structure that becomes embodied in the fully realized object. It determines the specific essence or nature of the object providing the framework through which it is produced. For instance, the formal cause of a statue is the overall plan or idea conceived by the sculptor which determines its form and shape. It represents the 'what-it-is-to-be' of the object such as the statue's particular shape. It emphasizes the significance of form or pattern in defining the object's identity and characteristics.

The efficient cause, also known as the moving cause, refers to the active agent or agency that produces the object as its effect. It denotes the source or initiator of the object's change or stability. For example, in the case of a table, the efficient cause could be the carpenter or the art of carpentry itself. It

Agency and goal
as the cause

represents the primary source or force responsible for bringing about the transformation. In the context of a statue, the efficient cause encompasses the tools, such as chisels, used by the sculptor in the process of sculpting. The efficient cause, therefore, represents the agency behind the change or movement, distinct from the object itself. The fourth type, the final cause, addresses the purpose or goal towards which the process of change is directed. It signifies the reason or intended end for which the object is made. In other words, it explains the *teleos* or objective of the object. For instance, the final cause of a seed might be its development into an adult plant, while in the case of sculpting, it is the attainment of a fully realized and completed statue. This cause highlights the ultimate aim or function of the object and the role it plays within a broader context.

Understanding
multi-dimension
of an object

All four causes contribute to the understanding of an object's existence and the nature of its change. Consider the production of a table as an artefact. The wood serves as the material cause, representing both the substance from which the table is made and the subject of change in its production. The formal cause is embodied in the specific structure and design of the table which determines its appearance and arrangement. The efficient cause resides in the carpentry, the art or craftsmanship responsible for the table's production. Finally, the final cause explains the purpose of the table, such as its intended use for dining. The theory of cause provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the various aspects and dimensions of an object's existence and its transformations.

Summarized Overview

Through his philosophy focussed on explaining the things and analysing the changes they undergo; Aristotle's attempt was to set out a framework that would make change intelligible. This was the need of the time in the face of influential Parmenidean arguments against the possibility of change. Aristotle's observation was that every change or growth or transformation in the natural world involves three essential ingredients; a pair of opposed characteristics or states or conditions (from which and to which the change occurs) and a subject which underlies, undergoes and persists through it. Some X goes from being Y to being not Y or vice versa. Aristotle applied this concept of change not only in natural phenomena or events but also in dogs, cats and human beings. A singer, for example, comes to be because someone goes from being unsinging to being singing. A statue comes to be because some shapeless and formless bronze takes

on a definite shape and form. Contrary to what Parmenides argued, coming to be does not involve the contradiction of getting something from nothing; rather, it involves getting something which is Y from something which is not Y.

Self-Assessment

1. Analyze Aristotle's philosophy of change especially, the potentiality and actuality
2. How is Aristotle's philosophy diverging from Plato's?

Assignments

1. Elaborate major philosophical differences between Plato and Aristotle especially with regard to the metaphysics.
2. Discuss Aristotle's four causes and its relevance.
3. Write an essay on Aristotle's focus on the study of nature.

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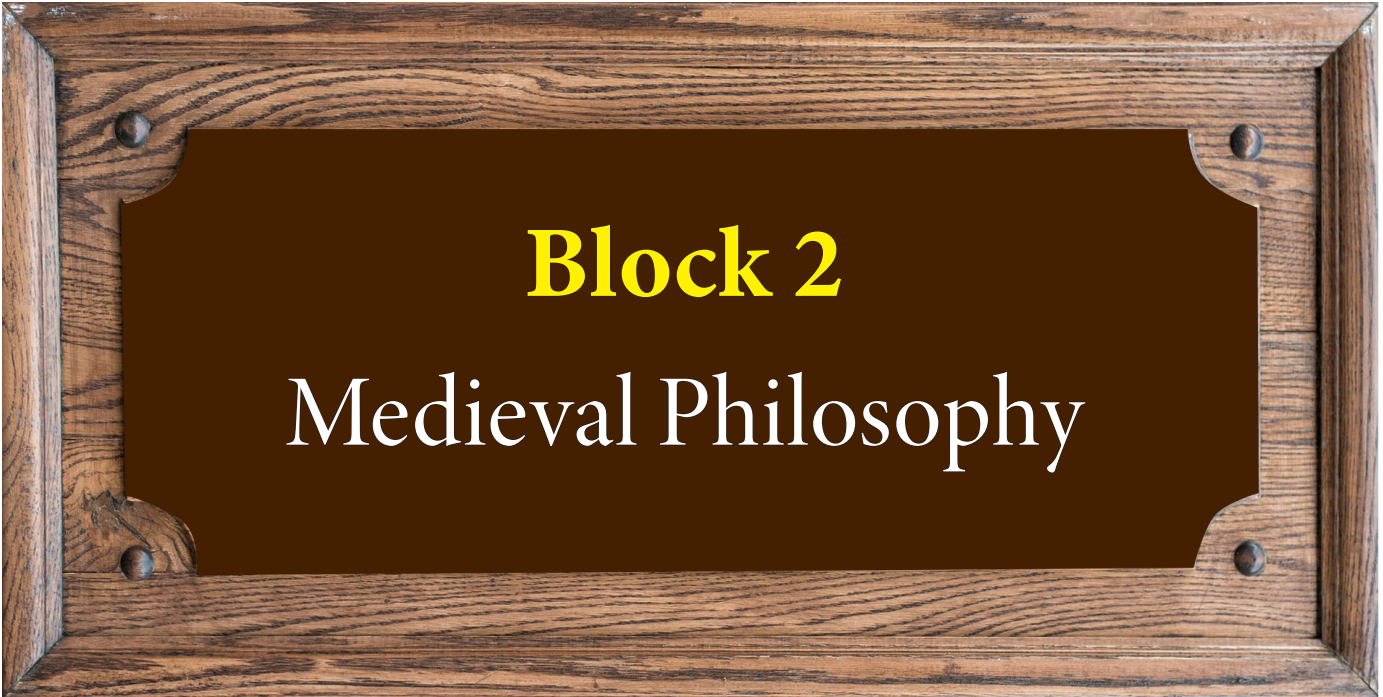
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Suggested Readings

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

A wooden frame with a dark brown center containing the text 'Block 2' and 'Medieval Philosophy'. The frame is made of dark wood with visible grain and four metal corner fasteners. The center is a solid dark brown rectangle with slightly rounded corners.

Block 2

Medieval Philosophy

UNIT 1

Introduction to Medieval Philosophy

Learning Outcomes

The unit will enable the learner to:

- familiarize with historical and cultural background of the medieval period
- describe a general overview of other major philosophical traditions in the medieval period
- analyze theological foundation of the Catholic philosophy
- identify general characteristics and major discussions of medieval philosophy

Background

Medieval period spanning from AD 400-1400 century, witnessed a radical change in the intellectual framework in Europe. The period was characterized by a significant cultural shift as Christianity became the dominant religion in Europe and began to shape intellectual life in new and important ways. The convergence of various historical, cultural and political events in the medieval period provided fertile ground for the emergence and development of Catholic philosophy. In the case of political system and power, the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the political fragmentation followed the fall in the 5th century CE created a void in intellectual, social, cultural, political and educational centres. The decline of the Roman educational system led to the disintegration of formal philosophy studies and a loss of centralized intellectual institutions. The rampant Christianization of the Roman Empire significantly influenced the intellectual landscape of the medieval period. With Christianity becoming the dominant religion, theological and philosophical discussions became intertwined, and Christian theology became the framework of philosophical inquiries.

Monasticism as a religious practice and way of life spread across Europe when individuals, often referred to as monks or nuns, dedicated themselves to a contemplative and disciplined life in a secluded and communal setting. Some monastics lived solitary lives, while many others lived together in monasteries or convents, forming communities focused on spiritual growth, prayer and devotion to religious principles. Many monastic scholars engaged in learning, preserving and interpreting classical knowledge, including philosophical works ensuring the survival of ancient texts and philosophical ideas. Catholic Church, using its influence on the religious, political, cultural and institutional sphere, introduced, supported and implemented a dominant intellectual movement or method called Scholasticism which sought to reconcile faith and reason, theology and philosophy. The focus of Scholastic philosophy on systematic reasoning and faith seeking understanding contributed to the intellectual and institutional dominance of the Catholic philosophy. The Islamic Golden Age witnessed a flourishing of scholarship and intellectual exchange, leading to the translation of Greek philosophical works into Arabic. Muslim philosophers like Avicenna and Averroes played a vital role in preserving and expanding the scope of Greek philosophy and its integration into Islamic thought. The philosophical flourishing in the Islamic world had an impact on Europe. The universities emerged across Europe in the 11th century marked a significant development in the history of education. They provided structured academic environments with philosophy being one of the foundational disciplines offered in their curriculum. The proliferation of philosophy classes in universities nurtured intellectual growth and facilitated philosophical debates and discussions.

Key Concepts

Medieval period, Catholic philosophy, Theology, Faith, Reason, Revelation

Discussion

2.1.1 Historical Context: Departure from Ancient Greek Philosophy

Synthesis of classical philosophy with Christian theology

Medieval philosophy refers to the philosophical thought or framework that emerged during the Middle Ages in Europe in a vast time of around thousand years. Medieval age, according to historians, typically spans from AD 400-1400 century encompassing the decline of the Western Roman Empire and extending to the Renaissance period. The Medieval

period witnessed a grand synthesis of classical philosophy with Christian theology, known as the ‘Catholic synthesis,’ which became the foundational principle of medieval philosophy.

‘Medieval’ and ‘Modern’
are historical
categorisation

Thinkers did not place
themselves in categories

Theological foundation
and framework of
philosophy

As thinkers of any age did not attribute themselves into philosophical groups or schools with regard to intellectual similarities or differences or chronological orders, the Medieval thinkers also did not claim that they were medieval. It was in the seventeenth century that the expression ‘Middle Age’ was first used to describe the period between the ‘ancient’ and ‘modern’ worlds. Through later historians’ historical writings, a radical opposition was imprinted in the popular consciousness between the Middle Ages and the initial phase of the modern period known as the Renaissance which began in the 14th century in Italy and gradually spread to other parts of Europe, reaching its peak during the 15th and 16th centuries. The Enlightenment period, which began in the late 17th century, projected itself as the era of knowledge, reasoning and thinking and was fundamentally concerned with this-worldly-affairs dismissing the medieval period which, according to it, was fundamentally engaged with God, beliefs and the otherworld.

The medieval period departed from the ancient philosophical framework initiated and established by ancient Greek thinkers. Medieval philosophers, the historical successors of the philosophers of antiquity, replaced the naturalistic philosophical framework of ancient Greece, which involved observing, analyzing and explaining natural phenomena and underlying rules, with a theological framework centered around philosophical questions about God. The fundamental enquiry was about God, his existence, and his eternity, about immateriality of the intellect and soul and about the creation of the world and so on. This transformation was brought in by shifts in various realms and contexts of human life such as cultural, religious, and intellectual in that time. During this era, Christianity emerged as a dominant religious and cultural force in the Europe exerting a significant impact on intellectual pursuits. The medieval departure from ancient Greek philosophy reflected a strong desire by the religious leaders to reconcile ancient philosophical inquiry with Christian teachings, thus giving rise to a distinctive philosophical tradition.

Integration of theology
and philosophy and
faith and reason

The new worldview promoted and propagated by the Church emphasized the integration of theology and philosophy and faith and reason, leading to a re-evaluation of ancient Greek philosophical perspectives which Russell calls the Catholic philosophy as the philosophy of Catholic church which emerged as the result of mutual accommodation of Christian belief and Classical western thought. Many historians of philosophy argue that modern philosophy, despite claiming to have completely departed from the Church, is still influenced by ethical and political problems derived from Christian views of moral law and Catholic doctrines on the relations between Church and State.

2.1.2 Catholic Philosophy and other Medieval Traditions

Catholic synthesis from
Augustine to Renaissance

Russell insists to use the phrase ‘Catholic philosophy’ to refer to the philosophical thought and perspectives during the medieval period in Europe for its association with the Catholic Church. He also affirms that actual period of the Catholic philosophy is the time from Augustine to the Renaissance in which the major concern of the greatest philosophers of the age was building up or perfecting the Catholic synthesis.

Intellectual exchanges
and cross-cultural
interactions

Russell explains two crucial stages in historical trajectory of the Catholic philosophy, suggesting that intellectual exchanges and cross-cultural interactions during these times contributed to the enrichment and advancement of philosophical thought in both the Islamic and Western worlds. He states: “it (catholic philosophy) passed through centuries of dormancy in the West, while at the same time it began afresh in the Islamic world. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries philosophy reemerged in a new Europe, in altered form and against resistance. Then, both augmented and challenged by the work of Islamic and Jewish thinkers, it enjoyed in the thirteenth century a golden age of systematic analysis and speculation corresponding to a new degree of rationalization in politics and society” (*A History of Western Philosophy*).

The insistence to use the phrase ‘Catholic philosophy’ instead of the ‘medieval philosophy’ is significant as the former specifies the Christian philosophy and recognises the existence of diverse philosophical traditions during that time.

Four major traditions of medieval thought - Catholic, Islamic, Jewish and Latin

As it is obvious, the medieval philosophy encompassed a wide range of philosophical schools and traditions, fundamentally the four traditions developed and flourished in different languages, cultures and geographical locations. 'Arab' philosophy – took place in Islamic lands and was written mostly in Arabic and sometimes in Persian; 'Jewish' philosophy – took place in Islamic and Christian countries through the works of Jews written in Arabic and Hebrew; 'Latin' philosophy – produced and propagated in the Christian Europe and was mostly written in Latin, the main language which was considered for higher learning in Europe and, 'Byzantine' philosophy – written in Greek in the Christian empire of Byzantium.

Intellectual exchanges and their impact across traditions

Along with severe intellectual influence and impact of classical thought, the medieval age witnessed tremendous intellectual exchanges across these traditions, specifically between Islamic philosophers and Catholic philosophers, and had an impact on each other, especially in the case of Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Ibn Rushd (Averroes), and Al-Farabi from the Islamic intellectual tradition. The intellectual debates occurring from within and without each tradition made the medieval philosophy livelier at that point in time. Avicenna is reported to have said that he had read Aristotle's metaphysics forty times and had learned it by heart without understanding it, and he could only understand the theory of being qua being by reading al-Farabi's commentary on Aristotle.

Interlinkage of four traditions

The four traditions must be considered as interlinked so closely that while their differences deserve consideration and attention, they are best understood as a whole. The reason is that all four traditions belong to cultures that belonged to three monotheistic revealed religions: Islam, Judaism and Christianity. While the relations between religious doctrines and philosophical speculation in alliance with them varied from one tradition to another at a single point in time and within each tradition at different periods, the questions and concerns at the interstices and intersections of philosophy and theology and the limitations and constraints exercised by revelation were similar in all three religions. This had a profound influence on the philosophical work produced within their range.

The Catholic philosophy spread and got dominance through Catholic faith. A great majority of the population in Europe including most of the lay rulers who governed territories

Emergence and establishment of Catholic philosophy through authority and power

and regions and exercised authority over secular matters rather than spiritual and religious affairs themselves were intensely convinced of the truth of the Catholic faith. The Catholic philosophy spread across Europe using the authority of the clergy and their central role in intellectual activities. The sociopolitical, cultural and economic circumstances and the specific institutional settings for practicing philosophy, arranged and supervised by the clergy were some of the crucial factors in the growth and spreading of the Catholic philosophy.

Virtual monopoly of Catholic church over philosophy

The Church, as a prominent social institution which was built upon a creed, partly philosophical and partly concerned with sacred history, brought philosophical ideas into a closer relation to social and political circumstances and fostered a theological approach to philosophical enquiry. Russell states about virtual monopoly of Catholic church over philosophy: "Until the fourteenth century, ecclesiastics have a virtual monopoly of philosophy, and philosophy, accordingly, is written from the standpoint of the Church. For this reason, medieval thought cannot be made intelligible without a fairly extensive account of the growth of ecclesiastical institutions, and especially of the papacy"

2.1.3 Major Debates in Medieval Philosophy

Shift from natural philosophy to theological philosophy

The foundational characteristic of medieval philosophy is its deliberate and effortful departure from the Greek naturalistic philosophy. There was an emphatic shift from philosophical enquiry about the 'natural' to the 'super-natural'. The theological issues, such as God, his nature and eternity, proofs for His existence, eternity or definite beginning of the world, human reason and divine revelation, prescience of God and the problem of evil and sin, divine omniscience and human freedom, divine creation of the universe, soul and immortality, etc became the matters of prime philosophical enquiry in all traditions of medieval philosophy. Philosophical issues were primarily looked at, examined and approached from a theological foundation.

The history of Catholic philosophy can be divided into two significant periods with regard to its unique affiliation to two major classical philosophical traditions. The first period dominated by Saint Augustine, who along with his successors, were following the Platonist tradition and the second period

Platonism and Aristotelianism in Catholic philosophy

culminating in Saint Thomas Aquinas, for whom and for his successors, Aristotle far outweighed Plato. Just as Aristotle reconciled Plato's philosophy with his own, Aquinas attempted to reconcile Augustine's philosophy with Aristotle's and blended their ideas to create a unique and influential philosophical and theological system. Aquinas was heavily influenced by the works of Augustine and recognized the value of latter's ideas, particularly in areas, such as the nature of God, the problem of evil and the significance of grace. At the same time, he also appreciated Aristotle's emphasis on reason, natural philosophy, and ethics. Aquinas thus believed that both Augustine and Aristotle had important insights and sought to synthesize their philosophies into a coherent whole. The Neo-Platonism and neo-Aristotelianism are evident in Augustinian and Thomist metaphysical and epistemological views respectively.

Natural theology and divine theology

The medieval philosophers divided theology in to two branches; natural theology and divine theology. Both had sufficient followers. The natural theology relies on human reason and observation of the natural world to explore and understand the existence and attributes of God. It seeks to arrive at theological conclusions through rational inquiry and philosophical arguments, independent of divine revelation or sacred texts. It often draws on philosophical reasoning, empirical observations, and logical analysis to demonstrate the existence of God and explore God's nature. Thomas Aquinas, Anselm of Canterbury and Duns Scotus engaged in natural theology, presenting various arguments for the existence of God, such as the cosmological argument, teleological argument, and ontological argument. Their philosophical point is that reason and the study of the natural world could lead to knowledge about God, His attributes, and the order and design found in creation. To put it differently, knowledge about God and the proofs for his existence rationally and logically gets evolved or derived from the study and observation of nature.

Understanding existence of God through human reason and observation

The divine theology, also known as revealed theology, relies on divine revelation as the primary source of knowledge about God and religious truths. It is based on the belief that God reveals Himself and His will to humanity through sacred texts, prophets, and other forms of divine communication. It encompasses the study of sacred scriptures and religious traditions to understand God's plan for humanity and the nature of divine truths. The divine theology focused on the study of

Understanding
existence of God
through revelation
and sacred texts

Internal nuances in the
medieval philosophy

Prioritisation in the
medieval philosophy

Scholasticism as a system
approach of reconciling
faith and reason

Augustine on faith
illuminating reason

the Bible, both Old and New Testaments and the teachings of the Church. Theologians and scholars engaged in exegesis, hermeneutics and systematic analysis of sacred texts to extract theological insights and formulate doctrines. Both the branches provided a framework for understanding the different sources and methods of acquiring knowledge about God and religious truths.

There existed qualitatively differential treatments of philosophy and theology even with the common theological orientation of the philosophy and the internal nuances and differences in this regard must be acknowledged and understood. Commonly taken, all of them grappled with the interplay between theology and philosophy, faith and reason or, revelation and reason, but particularly considered, some of them prioritized the role of revelation/faith as the foundation of knowledge, while some others did the opposite.

Scholasticism, as a dominant philosophical and theological approach, developed within the broader framework of medieval Catholic intellectual tradition. It was characterized by the use of dialectical reasoning, drawing heavily on Aristotelian logic and philosophy, to reconcile faith and reason. Scholasticism aimed to harmonize Christian doctrine with the teachings of ancient philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle and to explore complex theological questions through rigorous intellectual inquiry. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) and John Duns Scotus (1265-1308) made substantial contributions to this intellectual movement. However, not all Catholic philosophers were strictly adherents of Scholasticism as there were other philosophical traditions like Augustinianism within the Catholic tradition.

Augustine of Hippo (354-430) viewed faith as a prerequisite for reason. He believed that faith was essential for reason to function properly and that without faith in God and the teachings of the Church, reason could lead to errors and false conclusions. In this view, faith is a gift from God that illuminates the human reason, which alone is insufficient to grasp the mysteries of God, and enables a person to seek and comprehend truth more effectively. His successor, Aquinas presented a systematic synthesis of faith and reason. He emphasized the compatibility of faith and reason and developed a comprehensive theological system known as Thomism. Ac-

Aquinas on reason
leading mind to God

According to Aquinas, faith and reason both discover and lead to truth, but they approach it from different perspectives. Aquinas believed that a conflict between reason and faith is impossible as both originate from God. The reason can lead the mind to God and illuminate and enrich the understanding of revealed truths, creating harmony between philosophy and theology. Thus he defended the reason's legitimacy especially in Aristotle's works.

Anselm on legitimacy of
revelation over reason

Saint Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) emphasized the role of faith as the foundation for knowledge. Anselm's approach is known as *fides quaerens intellectum* which means "faith seeking understanding." He argued that faith is the starting point for knowledge, and it is through faith that one can attain a deeper understanding of the divine mysteries. That is, faith for Anselm is more a volitional state than an epistemic state. However, Anthony Kenneth views that Anselm's attempt was not to replace faith with understanding.

Faith seeking
understanding

Medieval philosophy's
strong rebuttal
of skepticism

Among the various ancient schools of philosophy, none posed a more serious challenge to Christianity than skepticism. One can be a Christian and a Platonist, like Augustine, or a Christian and an Aristotelian, like Aquinas, or conceivably even a Christian and a Stoic. But it is inconceivable how the beliefs of a Christian could be reconciled with a skeptic's suspension of all belief. According to the skepticism, the human mind can only maximally attain a high degree of probability of something to be true and cannot attain a certainty of any knowledge. Consequently, the medieval philosophers had to strongly take on skepticism as any sort of denial of the possibility of the knowledge would primarily have an impact on the theological side wherein the believers are obliged to know the God who is the omniscient.

Summarized Overview

The medieval philosophy, as it follows ancient 'naturalist' Greek philosophy and precedes enlightenment philosophy, is most of the time dismissed as a sum total of dogmatic religious doctrines. While it has its roots in and foundation on theology, the quest for philosophical examination and analysis of theological issues has been evident. As much as the ancient philosophy is intertwined with myths and metaphysical entities in its origin and growth, the philosophy in the medieval period is entangled with theological issues and concerns. As much there existed theological orientation of the philosophy, there also existed a strong philosophical orientation of theology and theological issues. The rigorous philosophical orientation of theology is visible in the fact that foundational concepts of the medieval philosophy such as God's eternity, prescience and omniscience were debated in their inextricable linkage to the pre-deterministic future of the human being and the problem of evil and sin. The pre-deterministic future takes away all sorts of responsibility and agency of the evil acts from the human beings. The lack of responsibility and agency of the evil acts and deeds for the human beings turn God's reward or punishment including existence of heaven or hell illegitimate. The point that if God must know past, present and future of all human beings and things in the world, then his knowledge is deterministic and prevents human agency, freedom and responsibility, is a rigorous philosophical issue in general and an epistemological issue specifically at the same time.

Self-Assessment

1. What is difference between natural theology and divine theology?
2. How was the relationship between faith and reason in medieval philosophy?
3. Write on the relation between Catholic philosophy and other medieval traditions.

Assignments

1. Elaborate the key characteristics of medieval philosophy. How does it differ from philosophical thought in ancient Greek?
2. Explain the major themes discussed in medieval philosophy and find their significance in the development of medieval philosophy.
3. Explain the role of theology in medieval philosophy. How did theologians during this period approach philosophical questions?

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Suggested Readings

1. Wulf, Maurice De. (1909). *History of Medieval Philosophy*. Translated by Patrick Coffey. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.
2. Wulf, Maurice De. (1910). *Scholasticism Old and New: An Introduction to Scholastic Philosophy Medieval and Modern*. Translated by Patrick Coffey. London: M. H. Gill & Son, Ltd.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 2

St. Augustine

Learning Outcomes

The unit will enable the learner to:

- analyze Augustine's integration of classical and Christian thought and the theological foundations of his philosophy
- identify Augustinian concepts of God and human being, skepticism, theory of knowledge and the problem of sin and evil
- describe the role of reason and divine illumination in Augustine's philosophy, especially epistemology
- appreciate the philosophical complexities in Augustine's theology

Background

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE), a significant figure in medieval philosophy, approached his philosophical endeavors with an unwavering faith and a strong belief in divine revelation. The divine foundation he laid enriched and elevated the pursuit of philosophical knowledge, leading Christian intellectuals of his time to follow what they considered the philosopher's way. He examined the history of philosophy, recognizing his predecessors' approximations towards truth while offering his own insights and juxtaposed Christian teachings with the works of ancient philosophers, particularly the Neoplatonists, whom he esteemed almost-Christians. Augustine delved into various philosophical debates of theological issues, including the contradictory nature of human reason with divine revelation, that of the omnipotence and omniscience of God with human agency, freedom and responsibility and that of the pre-determined fate with the problem of sin and evil.

Keywords

God, Creation, Human reason, Divine will, Pre-determination

Discussion

Quest for truth bridges the gap between theology and philosophy

Bertrand Russell draws a comparison between St. Augustine and the Russian writer Leo Tolstoy and acknowledges that there are similarities between the two figures, particularly in their passionate nature and their profound quests for truth and righteousness. His quest for truth led Augustine to tremendously contribute to medieval philosophy by bridging the gap between theology and philosophy and faith and reason, and laying a foundation for rich intellectual exploration.

Augustine's path of religious and philosophical exploration

Russell highlights Augustine's early life, characterized by a tumultuous and less virtuous youth. Augustine was known to have engaged in various indulgences before experiencing a significant spiritual transformation. Despite his early struggles, he possessed a strong inner drive to seek truth and righteousness, which eventually led him on a path of religious and philosophical exploration. Similar to Tolstoy, Augustine developed an intense sense of sin and guilt, particularly in his later years. This sense of sin heavily influenced his life and philosophical outlook, leading to a stern and ascetic lifestyle. Russell uses the term 'inhuman' to describe Augustine's philosophy, suggesting that his emphasis on the weight of sin may have led to an austere and rigid approach to life and ethics.

Two cities; City of God and the earthly (human) city

Augustine's *The City of God*, written from A.D 413 to 426 at a time when the Roman Empire was under threat from successive barbarian invasions, is considered great synthesis of classical and Christian thought. In the work, Augustine explores the nature of two cities, their origins, their ultimate destinies and their impact on human history, society and individual soul. His socio-political thought centres on the concept of these two distinct cities: the City of God and the earthly City.

The City of God is a spiritual community of those seeking to love and serve God, transcending physical boundaries and affiliations. In contrast, the earthly city is a flawed community

City of God transcends
all earthly boundaries

driven by selfish pursuits of wealth, power, and pleasure. Augustine believes Christians must live in the earthly city while embodying the values of the City of God to transform society. “Though there are many great nations throughout the world living under divergent systems of religion and ethics, and diversified by language, arms, and dress, nonetheless it has come to pass that there are only two principal divisions of human society, which scripture allows us to call two cities” (*The City of God*, XIV. 1).

Human struggle between
the spiritual
and the material

Augustine’s point is to discuss how both cities coexist in the temporal world, influencing and shaping each other, and yet remain distinct in their ultimate destinies. He also delves into the discussion about how God governs the affairs of both cities. The overarching theme is the struggle of the humans between the spiritual and the material, the eternal and the temporal, and the call for individuals to align their lives with the values of the City of God while living in the earthly City. He emphasizes that the state should maintain order and justice, but its authority is derived from God, making moral principles and guidance from the Church crucial in shaping laws and policies. He also stresses the importance of individual responsibility and the limitations of earthly governance, warning against excessive trust in earthly rulers, asserting that true justice, peace and authority stem from God and can only arise through inner transformation guided by spiritual principles.

Limitations of the
earthly City and the
human governance

2.2.1 On God

God as the supreme
source of all existence

Augustine’s philosophy places God as the supreme source and center of all existence. According to his theological perspective, human comprehension of God can solely be attained through divine revelation and the grace of God, highlighting the indispensable role of divine guidance in grasping the nature of the divine. This epistemological stance underscores the significance of faith and divine intervention in the pursuit of higher knowledge and understanding.

In Augustine’s framework, God stands as the pinnacle of truth, the ultimate source from which all knowledge and existence emanate. This divine-centric approach infuses his philosophical inquiries with a sense of reverence and humility, acknowledging the limitations of human intellect in compre-

God transcends
human cognition

Interplay between human
cognition and divine
intervention

God's creation of the
universe out of nothing

Greek view of world
emerging from a pre-ex-
isting eternal matter

Augustine's view of God
bringing the world
from nonexistence

hending the divine essence without divine assistance. Embracing the belief that divine revelation unveils truths inaccessible through human reasoning alone, Augustine unveils the transcendent nature of God that transcends human comprehension.

The notion of divine grace further accentuates the inseparable bond between the human intellect and divine guidance. According to Augustine, divine grace acts as the guiding force that illuminates the path to divine knowledge, lifting the veil of human limitations and enabling souls to transcend the finite and embrace the infinite. In this intricate interplay between human cognition and divine intervention, Augustine weaves a philosophical tapestry that harmonizes faith and reason, uniting the terrestrial (earthly and worldly) with the celestial (other-worldly and divine).

Bertrand Russell, like many other historians of philosophy, considers the period between Augustine and the Renaissance as actual period of the Catholic philosophy because in it philosophers made strenuous effort to build up and perfect the Catholic synthesis. Russell affirms that notion of creation out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), a cornerstone of Christian theology, finds its origin in the teachings of St. Augustine, who merged Christianity and Platonism, creating a synthesis of thought. Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle envisioned creation as the imposition of form upon a preexisting primitive matter by a divine artificer or architect. In contrast to the Greek view, Augustine firmly asserted that God's creative act brought substance itself into existence, transcending any preexisting material. Augustine argued that God's power extended to creating not only order and arrangement but also the very substance of the world from nothing.

This groundbreaking departure from Greek philosophy's conceptions of eternal and uncreated substance had significant theological implications. Augustine's affirmation of creation *ex nihilo* paved the way for orthodox Christian beliefs, firmly rooted in the Old Testament's teachings, which declared that the world was brought forth from nonexistence by God's divine will and power. This bold assertion set Christianity apart from the prevailing Greek views on creation and divine craftsmanship, challenging the notion that the world emerged from a preexisting eternal matter.

Throughout the course of Christian history, however, the idea of creation out of nothing faced sporadic challenges,

Pantheistic view that world is an integral part of God

Augustinian view that God brought world into existence from nothingness

God's triune existence

God is omnipotent and omniscient

leading some to embrace pantheism. Pantheism is the idea that God and the world are inseparable and that everything in the world is an integral part of God. This perspective, absorbed most fully by Spinoza's philosophical system, intrigued many mystics throughout the Christian era, making it difficult for them to maintain strict orthodoxy. Mystics often grappled with the idea that the world could be external to God, and their struggles with this concept have occasionally led them toward pantheistic inclinations. Yet, Augustine himself did not encounter such dilemmas concerning creation. Firmly grounded in the explicit teachings of Genesis, the first book of the Bible in the Old Testament, which is considered to be the foundational scripture of Judeo-Christian traditions, Augustine embraced the notion of creation out of nothing and aligned his view with the core tenets of orthodox Christianity. His understanding of creation *ex nihilo* played a crucial role in shaping his theory of time, as it intertwined the temporal unfolding of the world with the divine will and act of bringing all into existence.

Augustine presents a comprehensive understanding of God that centers on the concept of the Trinity, along with the attributes of omnipotence and omniscience. The Trinity represents the belief in one God existing as three distinct persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. Augustine firmly holds that the Trinity serves as the key to comprehending the nature of God, with each person of the Trinity being equal in power and glory. His exploration of the Trinity delves into the complex interplay between the divine persons and their roles in the divine plan, offering a rich understanding of God's triune existence.

The omnipotence refers to the all-powerfulness of God. In this view, God possesses infinite and unlimited power, being able to do anything that is logically possible. And, the omniscience refers to God's attribute of being all-knowing or having complete and infinite knowledge meaning that God is aware of everything; past, present, and future and possesses knowledge of all truths. All three Abrahamic religions, the Judaism, Christianity and Islam affirm the omnipotence and omniscience of God, if not the triune existence of God. For Augustine, God's omnipotent nature gives Him power to accomplish anything that is logically possible and allows Him to create and sustain the universe, reflecting His infinite power beyond human comprehension. However, Augustine also ac-

knowledges the limits to divine power, proposing that certain logically impossible actions such as creating a square circle is beyond God's capabilities. This conceptualization leads to the well-known 'omnipotence paradox' which engages debates on the nature and extent of God's power.

God knows the past, present and future of everything

God's omniscience is not only an inherent attribute necessary for creation and sustenance of the universe, but it also grants Him comprehensive understanding of every aspect of existence. This all-encompassing knowledge includes all events and phenomena (mental, physical and metaphysical), including the thoughts and intentions of every individual. The omniscience also plays a significant role in understanding God's providence and guiding believers in their lives.

God's decisive involvement in human history and destiny

In Judaic, Christian and Islamic traditions, God's providence refers to the belief that God is actively and purposefully involved in the world, guiding and sustaining all creation. It is the idea that God has a plan and purpose for every aspect of existence and that His divine will governs the unfolding of events and the lives of individuals. In Islamic tradition, God's providence is known as 'Al-Qadr' emphasizing the belief in predestination and the divine decree. In Judaic tradition, it is often referred to as 'Divine Providence,' signifying God's continuous involvement in human affairs, guiding history and human destiny. In Christian tradition, it emphasizes His loving care and benevolence, even in the face of suffering and adversity, with the belief that everything ultimately works for the greater good according to His divine plan and scheme. Augustine upholds the idea of God's providence strongly.

Pre-determination by God curtails human agency, freedom and responsibility

In all the medieval philosophical traditions, God's providence raises complex theological and philosophical questions, particularly concerning divine action and human free will. Theological debates revolve around the balance between God's sovereignty and human agency or divine providence and human choices. Do human beings truly possess free will or are their actions merely the result of predetermined causes? If God is all-knowing and all-powerful, as traditionally believed in theistic religions, then His omniscience implies that He knows the future and everything that will happen, including human choices. The challenging dilemma here is this: If God already knows what choices individuals will make, then does not this imply that human choices and actions are pre-

determined and lack genuine freedom? In that case, are those choices truly free, or are they already predetermined? If God's providence encompasses every aspect of creation, including human decisions, it seems to suggest a form of (theological) determinism, where human actions are part of a preordained plan set by God.

How does evil exist along with a benevolent God?

Also, if humans have free will, how does this coexist with God's divine plan? Some philosophical questions center on the nature of evil and suffering in a world governed by a benevolent and omnipotent God. How can God allow evil to exist while maintaining His providential care? The philosophers grapple with these issues throughout history, exploring concepts like theodicy, which seeks to reconcile the existence of evil with the belief in a benevolent God.

2.2.2 On Skepticism

Augustine's intellectual journeys

Augustine's intellectual journey encompassed a diverse array of philosophical perspectives and world views, traversing through the realms of Manichaeism, skepticism, and Neoplatonism. The Manichaean dualism is a philosophical and religious belief system founded by the prophet Mani in third century C.E which posits a fundamental struggle between two opposing forces like light (good) and darkness (evil) and considers the material world as a realm of darkness and evil, while the spiritual realm as light and goodness. Starting from the Manichaean dualism and passing through skepticism, Augustine's quest eventually culminated in what he fondly referred to as 'our philosophy,' a profound 'understanding' of reality, truth, and the good. By 'our philosophy' he meant a wisdom accessible only through Christian faith. This distinctive approach to philosophy represents a specifically Christian understanding of the world, firmly rooted in the tenets of faith.

Refuting skepticism

Firming his feet in 'our philosophy,' in the later stages of the life, in several of his works including *Contra Academicos*, *On the Trinity* and the *City of God*, Augustine strongly refutes the skeptic position in various places. He affirms that human mind can indeed attain certain knowledge even in the face of potential doubts or errors. He strongly addresses the skeptic question: "How can we know the world with certainty when our senses are deceptive"? At times the deception of human senses is clear as in the case of our perception of a straight

stick in the water to be bent.

I have knowledge about the fact that 'I think'

One of his statements in his book *Soliloquia* is well known for its argumentative strength against Skepticism. He says: "You, who wish to know, do you know you are? I know it. Whence are you? I know not. Do you feel yourself single or multiple? I know not. Do you feel yourself moved? I know not. Do you know that you think? I do." Here Augustine foreshadows significant philosophical dictum in later centuries. His introspection and exploration of the self and confident affirmation of self-awareness that "I know that I think" anticipates or prefigures Descartes' famous cogito ("I think, therefore I am"). He contemplates the nature of knowledge, asking probing questions about the self and its existence.

Self-awareness and thought as the foundation for physical existence

Descartes, the father of modern western philosophy, in his attempt to seek for clear and distinct knowledge, founded his philosophy on the notion of doubting everything, including his own existence. His attempt was to assert the certainty of one's physical/bodily existence even in the face of deceptive senses based on the act of thinking. From the fact that one is thinking or doubting, Descartes asserted that doubting or thinking was the necessary characteristic or condition or proof for one's physical existence. Scholars also view in Augustine's statement a response to Gassendi's *ambulo ergo sum* ("I walk, therefore I am"). While Gassendi's statement posits existence based on physical action, Augustine's emphasis on self-awareness and thought as the foundation of existence offers a profound insight that resonates with Descartes' cogito.

For one to be in error, existence is a necessary condition

One of his fullest defences of the possibility of certainty of the knowledge occurs in *De Trinitate* ('On the Trinity'). In this work, he is ready to admit, for the sake of argument, that the senses may be deceived, when the eye sees the oar as bent or when navigators see landmarks in apparent motion. But I cannot be in error when I say 'I am alive' which is a judgement not of the senses, but of the mind. 'Perhaps you are dreaming.' But even if I am asleep, I am alive. 'Perhaps you are insane.' But even if I am insane, I am alive. Moreover, if I know that I am alive, I know that I know that I am alive, and so on ad infinitum. Sceptics may rubbish those who say that the mind perceives through the senses, but not those who say that it perceives independently. 'I know that I am alive' is an instance of the mind perceiving independently (*De Trinitate*).

In *The City of God*, in response to the skeptic query ‘May you not be in error?’, Augustine also replies, ‘If I am in error, I exist.’ What does not exist cannot be in error; therefore, if I am in error, I exist (*De Trinitate* IX. 26). Each of us knows not only our own existence, but other facts too about ourselves. ‘I want to be happy’ is also something I know, and so is ‘I do not want to be in error’.

2.2.3 Theory of Knowledge and Faith

Interplay of sensory, rational and divine aspects in knowledge

Augustine’s conception of knowledge encompasses both the lowest and highest levels; the sensory understanding, rational judgment, and divine illumination. The lowest level of knowledge arises from sensory data, while the highest level arises from contemplation of eternal truths, achieved with the aid of divine illumination. This interplay of sensory, rational, and divine aspects shapes Augustine’s comprehensive understanding of knowledge and its connection to the divine realm.

Sensory knowledge and intellectual knowledge

Following Plato, Augustine regards the role of sense perception and sensory knowledge in navigating the everyday life, as a starting point and the lowest form, prone to uncertainty due to its reliance on the ever-changing material world. The true ‘intellectual knowledge’ that goes beyond sensory experience, according to him, is attained through rational contemplation of eternal truths, reflecting the unchanging reality. In another sense, while memory and recollection have a role in the process of knowing, introspection and contemplation become crucial means of attaining higher intellectual knowledge.

Contemplation of the eternal realm as a source of knowledge

Augustine differentiates human and animal sensory experiences, attributing a higher status to human sense knowledge. Humans possess the capacity to rationally process and recall sensory information, a capability that animals lack. This rational judgment forms a midway level of knowledge, combining senses and reason to gain practical understanding and efficiently interact with temporal things. In contrast, wisdom involves contemplating the eternal and spiritual realm.

According to Augustine, higher level of knowledge is ‘intelligible realities’ and incorporeal and eternal reasons.’ They are unchangeable and are therefore superior to the human mind; and yet they are in some way connected and linked to the mind. If they are disconnected, it would not be able to

Platonic 'ideas' and
Augustinian
'intelligible realities'

employ them as standards to judge of bodily things. Augustine's 'intelligible realities' or 'incorporeal and eternal reasons' are clearly very close to and are influenced by Plato's Ideas. Augustine here agrees with Plato about the existence of eternal standards, but at the same time disagrees with him about the nature of human access to them. Like the Neo-Neoplatonic thinkers such as Plotinus, Augustine locates the Ideas in the divine mind.

God illuminates the
reason to grasp the
eternal truth

How finite human minds can attain certainty in knowledge of the absolute, eternal truths governing the universe? Augustine addresses this issue by positing his theory of divine illumination, the view that unchanging truth, existing with God enlightens the human mind. The human intellect, according to him, falls short in comprehending eternal truths independently, necessitating divine aid from God's illumination. Russell says: "And that the soul of man, though it 'bears witness to the light,' yet itself 'is not that light,' but God, the Word of God, 'is that true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.'" He suggests that the divine light of God (illumination) allows humans to perceive the eternal truths. Through divine grace, the human mind becomes enlightened, participating in the divine realm's timeless wisdom. In another sense, Augustine here engages with and responds to both Plato and Aristotle. He views that human beings acquire their own ideas not by recollection of the soul (as Plato thought) nor by abstraction from many empirical instances (as Aristotle thought) but by divine illumination.

Pursuit of knowledge is
not an epistemic issue

Pursuit of knowledge for
Divine access

Like most of the medieval thinkers, Augustine did not prioritize formulating a theory of knowledge or constructing a systematic metaphysics. Instead, according to him, the ultimate goal of human existence is to attain true happiness and contentment. In his view, the pursuit of knowledge for intellectual and academic purposes takes a backseat to the quest for genuine happiness. He emphasized, true contentment and sufficiency can only be achieved by discovering the truth. He draws from his own subjective experience, where he felt an intense urge to seek the truth and then elevates this personal inquiry into a spiritual quest, interpreting it as a search for Christ and Christian wisdom. In doing so, he endeavors to universalize this subjective experience through his epistemological doctrines.

The only worth pursuing knowledge is the knowledge of God and self

The crux of Augustine's metaphysical and epistemological view lies in the belief that the only knowledge worth pursuing is the knowledge of God and self. All other forms of knowledge, including metaphysics, logic, and ethics are subordinated to the greater knowledge of God. In essence, Augustine posits that the significance of all knowledge is contingent upon its relation to the knowledge of God. His theory of knowledge, starting from sensory perception and ending and seeking for divine illumination, should be understood in this regard.

'Thinking with ascent' or thinking with approval

The hallmark of Augustine's philosophical stance is encapsulated in the timeless phrase, "Unless you believe, you shall not understand". This motto became the guiding light for the tradition of "faith seeking understanding," which shaped the pursuit of wisdom throughout the Latin West, from Augustine's era to the enduring influence of thinkers like Anselm and beyond. Augustine upheld a conviction that genuine philosophical understanding can only flourish when nurtured by the soil of faith. Anthony Kenneth explains the relation between philosophy and theology, reason and faith in Augustine's philosophy with phrase 'thinking with assent.' He says: "when Augustine talks of faith, he is less concerned to expound its epistemic status than to emphasize its nature as a gratuitous virtue, one of the Pauline triad of faith, hope, and charity, infused in us by God."

Synthesis of divine revelation and philosophical contemplation

Augustine discerned a stark contrast between the philosophers he encountered, whom he characterized as adversaries, and the essence of true philosophy rooted in faith. The philosophers of his time, in their endeavors divorced from faith, fell short of grasping the profound depths of wisdom. For Augustine, such secular philosophy, severed from the guiding principles of faith, was destined to be incomplete, unsatisfactory and an insufficient representation of what true philosophy ought to embody. Thus, Augustine's philosophical exploration transcended the conventional boundaries of mere intellectual speculation. It delved into the sacred realm of Christian theology and its integration with philosophical inquiry. As he forged a harmonious union between faith and reason, Augustine's 'our philosophy' emerged as a great synthesis of divine revelation and philosophical contemplation, providing a unique lens to perceive reality, truth, and the good. With "our philosophy," he meant a Christian understanding of God, oneself, others and

the universe.

2.2.4 Theory of Sin and the Problem of Evil

Sin weakens the human life

Sin prevents access to the Divine realm

Humans need divine grace to overcome the sinful inclinations

The Fall and the inherent corruption of human nature

Interplay between human will and divine grace

Like other intellectual traditions of the medieval age, Augustine's philosophy also considers sin as a deviation from the good, caused by turning away from God. Original sin, stemming from Adam and Eve's disobedience to God, affects all humanity, corrupting human nature and introducing evil. According to Augustine, sin weakens the human will, making it prone to self-centeredness and an inability to choose what is truly good. The sin prevents human beings' access to the Divine realm.

The Fall, representing Adam and Eve's original sin, led to the corruption of human nature and the introduction of evil. Augustine believed that humans need divine grace to overcome their sinful inclinations and choose the good. Grace is a gift from God, freely given to those who seek it, enabling them to achieve redemption. While Islamic philosophy does acknowledge the story of Adam and Eve's expulsion from paradise, it is interpreted differently from the Christian notion of the original sin and its effects on human nature. The Fall does not result in the inherent corruption of human nature. The Islamic philosophy does not stress on the notion of original sin, where all of humanity inherits the sinful nature of Adam and Eve. Instead, it emphasizes personal responsibility for one's actions, and each individual is held accountable for their own deeds. It also serves as a lesson about the consequences of disobedience and the importance of seeking forgiveness from God.

The relationship between human will and divine grace is complex. Human beings have free will, but their choices are bound by their sinful nature. Grace strengthens the will, allowing individuals to choose the good and reject evil. However, not everyone receives God's grace; only those who have faith and seek it can receive this divine gift. In short, Augustine underscores the significance of original sin, the need for divine grace, and the complex interplay between human will and redemption through faith.

The problem of evil, as already discussed, stems from Augustine's conceptualization of God as omnipotent, omnipresent, and eternal. He posits voluntarism, giving primacy to

How God of absolute goodness and evil can co-exist?

the will over intellect, and believes God's choices are unrestricted by external necessities. The problem arises when evil appears to coexist with a God of absolute goodness. "Why there is evil at all, if there is a God of absolute goodness?" Augustine addresses this issue by considering evil as the privation of good, derived from Plotinus' philosophy.

Three types of evil

The evil is classified into three categories: metaphysical, physical, and moral. Metaphysical evil is related to the inherent limitations and imperfections that exist in all created beings. It is a deficiency or lack in any being's perfection. It suggests that as created beings, humans and the world, including everything that inhabits are subject to certain limitations and deficiencies that prevent them from attaining absolute perfection. The physical evil involves privation of essential qualities a being should ideally possess. This type of evil is observed in the presence of suffering, pain, and natural disasters in the world. While it is not the result of a being's wrongdoing but rather stems from the limitations of the physical world and the laws that govern it. It is also understood as a necessary consequence of the fallen state of the world due to the original sin committed by Adam and Eve. Moral evil encompasses actions contrary to God's will, arising from the free will of human beings. It is a product of human choices that deviate from God's divine plan and moral standards. Augustine upholds the significance of free will, presenting it as the intermediary between good and evil.

Higher state of goodness through God's grace

The human will is inherently good, positioned to choose between good and evil. The conscience acts as God's voice, guiding individuals in their moral choices, but it remains the individual's decision to heed or reject this guidance. God does not intervene in the will's choice, making individuals accountable for their actions. And, he emphasizes that grace from God is essential to turn towards true happiness and goodness. With God's grace, individuals can attain a higher state of goodness through their will. The moral evil arises when the will turns away from God and embraces temporal pursuits, causing a lack of goodness within. To achieve the highest truth and happiness, Augustine views God's grace and mercy as vital means. With divine grace, individuals can reach a higher state of goodness by aligning their will with God's.

Summarized Overview

There is an intricate relationship between faith and reason throughout medieval philosophy irrespective of the tradition. Most of the medieval philosophers, including Augustine believed that reason and faith are complementary and that both are necessary for a proper understanding of the world. The reason can lead us to knowledge of the natural world, but faith is necessary for knowledge of spiritual truths. The concept of knowledge fundamentally revolves around our knowledge of God. All knowledge should lead to God. All of the human existence and discourses fundamentally revolve around the ultimate source of existence – God. The intricate relationship becomes explicit when it comes to God’s omniscience and omnipotence. Here the relationship between God and human beings become much more complex. If God knows everything about everyone, then everything happens in the world or everything one human being does is pre-determined by God and therefore, human being is just acting according to God’s plot. Then, how God can punish or reward for one’s activities? Is there any synthesis possible between our rational side and theological side? The medieval philosophy emerged and existed amidst such triggering thoughts.

Self-Assessment

1. What is Divine illumination?
2. What is the theory of sin and the problem of evil in the Augustinian philosophy?

Assignments

1. Analyze the problem of evil in relation to the concept of God’s omnipotence and omniscience.
2. Explain how Augustine’s theory of knowledge departs from the Platonic theory of recollection.
3. Elaborate the contradiction exists between God’s predetermination and human agency, freedom and responsibility.

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UNIT 3

St. Thomas Aquinas

Learning Outcomes

The unit will enable the learner to:

- evaluate historical context of Thomas Aquinas's philosophy, including his influences and intellectual environment
- explain Aquinas's distinct approaches to faith and reason and his arguments for the compatibility of natural reason and divine revelation
- describe the proofs for the existence of God discussed by Aquinas
- analyze the implications of the philosophical arguments related to cosmology, the existence and nature of God

Background

Thomas Aquinas (1225 AD -1274 AD) is widely regarded as one of the most important philosophers in the history of Western thought, and his works have had an extreme impact on both philosophy and theology. He sought to reconcile the teachings of the Catholic Church with the philosophical ideas of Aristotle, which had recently been reintroduced into the Western world through translations of his works from Arabic into Latin. Aquinas is perhaps best known for his 'faith' on natural reason, over and above his faith on revelation, and attempts to put forth rational demonstration of God's existence. He observed the natural world and stated that the existence of God is necessary to explain certain aspects of the world, such as its order and causality, chain of events, category of beings with different degrees and grades, etc. He thus developed a philosophical system that aimed to reconcile faith and reason. He believed that faith and reason are complementary rather than opposed, and that reason can be used to understand and support the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Key Concepts

God, Faith, Natural reason, Sense perception, Understanding, Revelation

Discussion

Blend philosophy and theology

Distinct approaches of philosophy and theology to subject matters

Aquinas on the power of human intellect

Philosophy is founded on natural light of reason

Thomas Aquinas seamlessly blended philosophy and theology while recognizing their distinct approaches to subject matters. In his philosophical journey, he drew heavily from Aristotle's teachings, acknowledging the significance of reason in attaining truth and even rationally demonstrating the existence of God. He was successful in persuading the Church that Aristotle's system was to be preferred to Plato's as the basis of Christian philosophy, in contrast to Augustine who preferred and followed Plato's philosophy.

To preserve the essence and nature of both philosophy and theology, Aquinas faced the challenge of integrating Aristotle's philosophy into his concrete philosophical framework. By upholding objectivity as a crucial characteristic, he justified his approach, distancing himself from the criticisms often directed at other scholastic thinkers. Aquinas's philosophy, rooted in the power of human intellect, revolves around material things' essence as its immediate object, aligning with Aristotle's emphasis on sense experience as the starting point for profound philosophical concepts. He emphasizes on the natural light of reason: "As sacred doctrine is based on the light of faith, so is philosophy founded on the natural light of reason."

2.3.1 God: Nature and Attributes

Distinct subject matters for reason and revelation

Two ways of knowing God; faith and reason

Aquinas approaches the nature of God by integrating both faith and reason however with distinct approaches to their subject matters. Drawing from his belief in the existence of God, he explores God's essence and attributes, seeking to bridge the gap between theology and philosophy. Aquinas conceives God as pure actuality, devoid of materiality, influenced by Aristotle's teachings. He presents two ways of knowing God: faith, as direct knowledge through divine revelation, and reason, as indirect knowledge through a posteriori and concep-

tual understanding. The knowledge of God becomes the supreme goal of human cognition, with God being the beginning and end of all things, the efficient and final cause of creation. Every pursuit of perfection is directed towards the ultimate end—God.

God's goodness as the foundation of all goodness

Delving into God's attributes, Aquinas highlights various aspects of God's nature. He sees God's goodness as the foundation of all goodness in the universe, the ultimate source of morality and ethical values. God's omnipotence is infinite and unlimited, manifesting as the cause and creator of all things, operating within established laws. God's omniscience encompasses infinite knowledge and wisdom, transcending not only everything that exists but also potentialities.

God is eternal and transcends the time

Love, for Aquinas, emanates from God, motivating the creation and sustenance of the world, becoming the origin of all human love and compassion. Additionally, Aquinas believes in God's immutability, as God's perfection necessitates constancy, lacking any need for change. God's simplicity is evident in his indivisible unity, the ultimate reality from which all beings derive their existence. Furthermore, God's eternity transcends time, as the immutable God experiences everything in an eternal present, unrestricted by temporal limitations.

Aquinas also affirms that God is omniscient and omnipotent. But a question troubled him like many other medieval philosophers especially from Islamic intellectual tradition. "Can God know particular things, or does He only know universals and general truths?" As a Christian, who believes in Providence, he must hold that God knows particular things. Nevertheless, there are weighty arguments against the view that God knows each and every particular thing. Aquinas enumerates all such arguments, and then proceeds to refute them. The arguments are as follows:

- singularity being signate matter, nothing immaterial can know it.
- singulars do not always exist, and cannot be known when they do not exist; therefore they cannot be known by an unchanging being.
- singulars are contingent, not necessary; therefore, there

can be no certain knowledge of them except when they exist.

- some singulars are due to volitions, which can only be known to the person willing.
- Singulars are infinite in number, and the infinite as such is unknown.
- singulars are too petty for God's attention. In some singulars there is evil, but God cannot know evil.

God knows each and every specific thing

Aquinas argues God knows singular events as their cause and comprehends things that are yet to exist, similar to how an artisan envisions their creation before making it. God's knowledge also encompasses future contingents since He exists outside of time and perceives all things as present. Moreover, God's knowledge is not merely about physical or natural phenomena. Rather, it extends to our innermost thoughts and desires and He possesses an infinite understanding of all things, even those beyond human grasp.

Divine knowledge and understanding transcends all human limitations

Nothing is entirely trivial, as everything holds some level of nobility. God's knowledge includes even the seemingly insignificant aspects of creation, as they contribute to the majestic order of the universe. To comprehend the universe's beauty and coherence, God must know even its seemingly trivial components. Additionally, God's knowledge embraces evil things, as understanding anything good necessitates an awareness of its opposite. This perspective on God's omniscience reflects the profound depth of divine understanding that transcends human limitations and comprehends all aspects of existence.

2.3.2 Theory of Knowledge

Spiritual connection is knowledge

Aquinas's theory of knowledge emphasizes the transformative nature of knowledge, where the knower extends themselves to comprehend the known. This act of knowledge liberates the self from material confines, creating a spiritual connection between the knower and the known. The spiritual connection in the knowledge is one of the most central points in Aquinas' theory of knowledge. The knowledge is ultimately the knowledge of the God. For humans, while knowledge be-

gins with sense perception, a corporeal nature that shares similarities with the known object, the higher beings like angels do not share this limitation.

Two cognitive faculties;
sense experience and
intellect understanding

Aquinas upholds a theory of knowledge which is realistic with two main sources, sense experience and intellectual understanding. Following Aristotelian tradition, he believed that both sense perception and intellectual understanding of the reality ('action of the agent intellect'), which are intimately together, have their roles in the process of knowing anything. According to him, the cognitive faculties, sense and intellect are in potency - the sense toward the individual form and the intellect toward the form of the universal and are thus naturally capable of acquiring knowledge of their proper object.

Aquinas prefigures Kant

Anthony Kenneth says that Aquinas cannot be attributed to either of the empiricist, rationalist or illuminist groups. Kenneth sums up Aquinas' theory of knowledge prefiguring Kant's theory of knowledge in 17th century. He says: "Without the senses no object would be given to us; without the agent intellect no object would be thinkable. Thoughts without phantasms are empty; phantasms without species are darkness to the mind." That is to say, the sense organs perceive external qualities like color, sound and taste, creating sensations. The internal sensation processes these impressions into phantasms, forming the basis for understanding, judgment, and reasoning, which deals with universal meanings derived from sense experience.

Equality of intellect and
object in grasping
the truth

The *intellectus agens*, a special power of the intellect that illuminates the phantasm, transforming it into an intelligible species, is not a separate intellect common to all, as some believed, but a distinct faculty in each individual. Truth, according to Aquinas, lies in the equality of intellect and object, leading to genuine knowledge. While the faculty of judgment deals with attributing predicates to subjects, discursive reasoning involves deriving knowledge of particulars from the universal through syllogistic demonstration.

Aquinas acknowledges that divine help is necessary for the knowledge of any truth, although humans possess a natural capacity to understand many things without special revelation. That is, there is a crucial role of faith in comprehending doctrines like the incarnation and the nature of the

Interplay between sense experience, intellectual understanding and divine revelation

trinity, which are known solely through revelation. His theory of knowledge highlights the interaction and interplay between sense experience, intellectual understanding, and the role of divine aid in the pursuit of truth.

Unaided reason and things which are beyond its scope

Aquinas distinguished, as a major contribution to the medieval epistemology, between truths accessible through natural reason and the truths known only by the light of faith. He believed that while the natural reason could grasp certain truths about God's existence - omniscience, omnipotence, and benevolence - it cannot grasp the doctrines like the Trinity and the Incarnation which were considered mysteries and are beyond the scope of unaided reason and consequently accessible solely through revelation.

Existence of God is presupposed by faith

The above distinction is basically between the role and scope of natural theology and the revealed theology. The natural theology deals with truths about God derived and extracted from natural reason and rational justification, while the revealed theology deals with the mysteries of faith. The faith, in Thomistic view, involves believing in something based on God's word, whereas the existence of God is presupposed by faith and not part of it.

2.3.3 Cosmology or philosophy of the world

God as centre of cosmological view or worldview

Aquinas's cosmological view centers on God as the creator of the ordered and purposeful universe. He believed in the *exnihilo* creation, asserting that God is the First Cause and sustainer of all things. For Aquinas, the universe reflects God's greatness and perfection, and studying the natural world leads to a deeper understanding of God.

Aquinas's departure from Aristotle on relation between God and the world

Aquinas presents a departure from Aristotle himself, despite all his commitment to the latter, in defining the relationship between God and the world. While Aristotle's Greek dualism upheld the idea of uncreated matter co-eternal with God, Aquinas follows Augustine and rejects this notion, asserting that the world was created by God through a free act, bringing it into existence from nothing. He identifies God as the uncaused Cause and immovable Mover of all within the created realm, thus eliminating any limitations on divinity.

Additionally, Aquinas diverges from Aristotle's denial of providence. According to Aristotle, the world moved to-

World moves towards a point according to God's knowledge and intelligence

wards God as an attraction point, but God was unaware of this process and played no role in its ordering. In contrast, Aquinas emphasizes that God is providence itself, knowingly and intelligently ordaining all perfections and occurrences in the world. Aquinas argues that Divine Providence can coexist with human freedom without diminishing its significance or restricting it in any way.

God is the ultimate cause

Influenced by Aristotle and Christian teachings, Aquinas sought harmony between reason and faith, considering both essential for comprehending the universe. He introduced the “hierarchy of causes” to explain the relationship between God and the universe. God serves as the ultimate cause, and everything else derives existence and properties from God, forming a causal chain down through various levels of being.

Four types of causes

Aquinas identified four types of causes, following Aristotle, each operating within a hierarchical framework: material, efficient, formal, and final causes. This hierarchy places God as the ultimate cause, orchestrating the ordered and purposeful universe. Everything in the universe serves a specific purpose within God's plan, reflecting His wisdom and goodness. The universe's structure and order are not random but intelligently designed by the Creator.

Understanding the universe leads to comprehending the God

Aquinas emphasized that understanding the universe's purpose and structure deepens our comprehension of God. He encouraged observation and experimentation to gain insights into God's mind and plan for humanity. Aquinas's cosmological perspective underscores the intricate connection between God's creation and the pursuit of knowledge about the universe's workings and ultimate purpose.

2.3.4 Proofs for the Existence of God

Demonstration of God's existence through reason

Aquinas believed that the existence of God can be proved by reason independently of revelation and was determined to provide rational justifications for the same. He sought to establish these arguments based on sensory experiences and rational intelligence, without relying on revealed theology and its dogma or presuppositions. He firmly believed that philosophy and faith could complement each other, and he embarked on the journey of demonstrating God's existence through reason in his famous book *Summa Theologica*.

Principle of motion and the efficient cause

Aquinas presents five proofs, each beginning with a familiar characteristic of the world around us. The first proof, the principle of movement or motion, asserts that everything in motion requires a mover. “Movement is a passage from potency to act.” Aquinas says: “whatever is moved is moved by another”. This suggests that if there is a movement ultimately there should be a mover; the chain of motion cannot extend infinitely. We know that there is a movement. Therefore, the movement culminates in an unmoved or ultimate mover, a necessary being that sets everything in motion – the God. The second proof is causality (cause-effect relation) or the efficient cause, which is a physical argument, taken from Aristotle. A cause is anything that contributes to the producing of a thing. That which is produced by cause is effect. Aquinas observes that in the world every effect has a cause. However, there cannot be an infinite regress of causes. Hence, there must be a first cause, uncaused itself, which he identified as God - the ultimate origin of all causes.

Contingency and grades of perfection

The third proof focuses on contingency – the state of coming into existence and passing away. Aquinas argues that contingent beings cannot be self-existent; they must rely on a necessary being that explains their existence. This necessary being, the reason behind all contingencies, is none other than God. In the fourth argument, Aquinas explores the degrees/grades of perfection present in the world. He observed varying degrees of goodness, truth, and perfection in all things. The existence of such degrees implies an entity with the highest degree of perfection, which Aquinas identified as God, the standard of ultimate perfection.

Necessary being as that which has no cause

The third argument about the contingent being and necessary being is similar to the idea of ‘necessary being’ propounded by Islamic philosopher Avicenna and got acceptance in medieval philosophy in general. Avicenna introduced a division of being into two important types, necessary being and possible being (there is no such thing as impossible being) in order to explain the concept of God. According to him, the division into necessary being and the possible being conveys the foundational distinction between the creator and the creature. God is the sole necessary being while all other beings and things are possible beings. The necessary being is that which, considered in itself, will be necessary to *be* (to exist) and the possible being is that which, considered in itself, has

no necessity to be (to exist). Anthony Kenneth states: “What is necessary of itself has no cause; what is of itself possible has a cause. A being which had a cause would be, considered in abstraction from that cause, no longer necessary; hence it would not be that which is necessary of itself” (2005). Scholars also view that Avicenna’s philosophical argument for ‘necessary being’ needs to be understood in relation to Aristotle’s concept of the first mover and Anselm’s ‘ontological’ argument for the existence of God.

Perfect being on to of the
great chain of beings

The fourth argument about the degree of perfection shows similarity with the ‘idea of hierarchy’ in the medieval visions of order in the universe. The idea of hierarchy assures that some or even every form of being in the orders such as transcendent, intelligible and material – each of them having a particular position and an appropriate function. The idea refers ultimately to “the great chain of being” in the universe as it is believed by most of the medieval philosophers, especially from Abrahamic religions.

Technological order,
purpose or end

Finally, Aquinas turns to teleology, the study of purpose or end. This is also equally a physical argument, like the second one, derived from Stoics, the philosophical school founded in ancient Greece during the 3rd century BC. The Stoicism stressed that one should focus on what is within their control and accept what is beyond their control, leading to a state of inner peace and tranquillity. They also believed in the interconnectedness of all things and the unity of the universe, viewing it as a rational and orderly system governed by natural laws. In this line, Aquinas observed that everything in nature serves a purpose, implying an intelligent guide behind these purposes. This intelligent guide, responsible for the purposeful order in the universe, is none other than God.

Summarized Overview

Aquinas's philosophy is significantly a product of rational reflection without denying the importance of faith. His philosophy especially the rational demonstration for God's existence was mainly drawn from Aristotle's philosophical project which was naturalist more than anything. From the naturalist phenomena of this world, Aquinas was trying to affirm the super-natural entity. Thus he places God as the center of the cosmology who is orchestrating the latter's hierarchical nature of causality, contingency and purposeful order. The goal was to bridge the gap between faith and reason, demonstrating that both avenues of knowledge can converge towards a unified understanding of reality. However, Skeptics argue that the premises of Aquinas's arguments rely on metaphysical assumptions and may not be universally accepted, leading to different interpretations and conclusions. Also, attempting to grasp the nature of an infinite and transcendent being through finite human reason is inherently flawed, according to many. They suggest that the divine nature of God surpasses human understanding, rendering any rational demonstration insufficient to fully capture the essence of God. With all these criticisms, the philosophical trigger in the investigation into these theological matters cannot be dismissed.

Self-Assessment

1. How did Aquinas synthesize faith and reason?
2. What is the concept of necessary being?

Assignments

1. Elaborate Aquinas's understanding of the nature and attributes of God
2. Critically evaluate Aquinas's proofs for the existence of God. Do you think that it is sensible or reasonable to demonstrate God's existence?
3. Comment on Aquinas's theory of knowledge and its relation to faith

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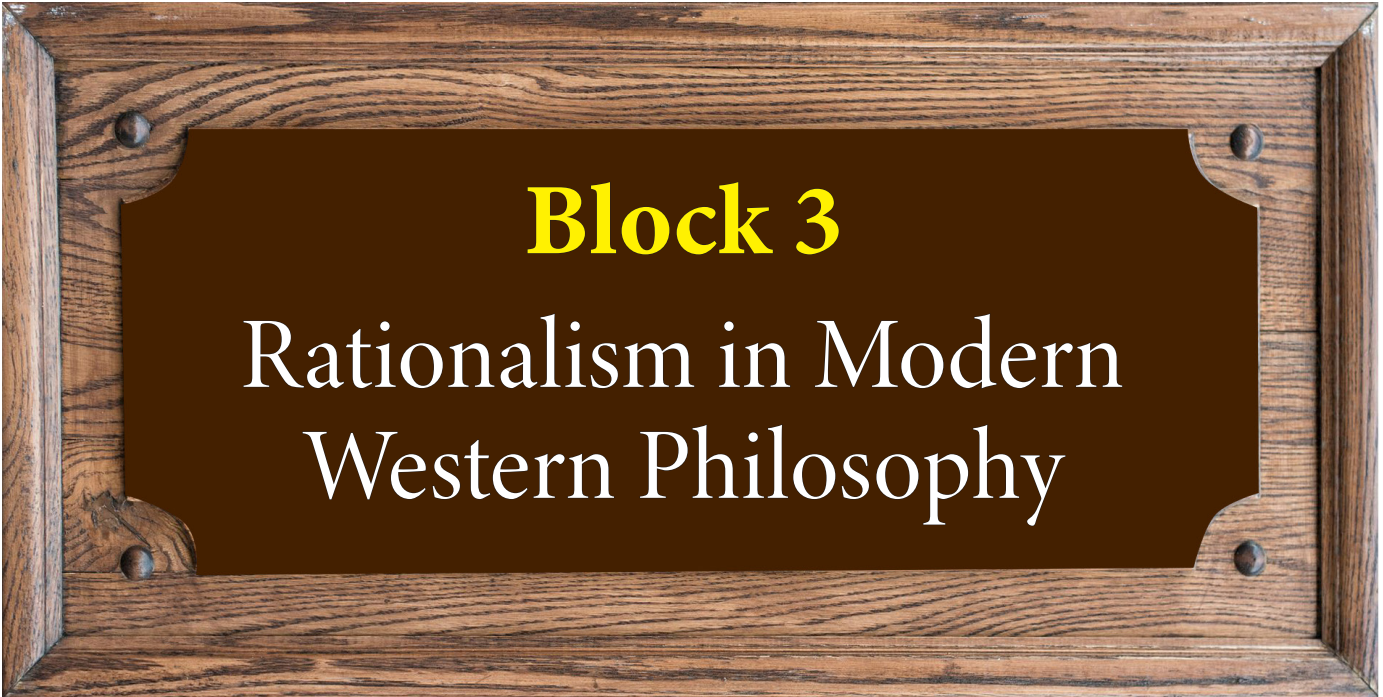
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A wooden frame with a dark brown center containing text. The frame is made of light brown wood with visible grain and four dark brown corner fasteners. The center is a solid dark brown rectangle with rounded corners.

Block 3

Rationalism in Modern Western Philosophy

UNIT 1

Descartes

Learning Outcomes

The unit will enable the learner to:

- familiarize with the modern and scientific turn in philosophy especially since Descartes
- explain the Cartesian method of doubt/initial Skepticism and the official beginning of the rationalist school
- describe the notion of substance specifically the mind-body dualism and its implications
- appreciate the significance of mind/thought/reason over body/matter/world in the rationalist school

Background

Modern philosophy is a unique period in the history of Western thought that emerged in the 17th century in Europe and extended to the 18th and 19th centuries. It marked a radical departure from the dominant medieval scholasticism and embraced a new approach or framework to understanding reality and human knowledge. A confluence of intricate socio-historical, cultural, financial, political, and geographical factors contributed to the end of the Middle Ages and the advent of the modernity. One paramount driver of change was the emergence of a new rich commercial class first in Italy and then in other parts of Europe who were as intelligent as the clergy and well informed in everyday matters and more acceptable to the urban lower classes as champions of civic liberty in contrast to the elite clergy.

Culturally, the end of the Middle Age witnessed a flourishing of intellectual and artistic endeavours. The Renaissance, characterized by its revival of classical learning and emphasis on humanism, the worldview that humans possessed ability to reason, create and achieve greatness in tremendous fields, offered a paradigm shift in intellectual pursuits. This cultural awakening fostered a renewed appreciation for individualism, creativity, artistic expression and scientific inquiry, all of which laid the foundation for the modern scientific and intellectual revolutions. All these were in contrast to the medieval subordination of human endeavours to divine will. Geographical factors such as the rise of strong national monarchies in France, England and Spain along with flow of trade expanded horizons, creating a web of interconnectedness across continents also played a crucial role in the transition from medieval to the modern

In the landscape of modern philosophy, rationalism emerges as a pivotal intellectual movement that places reason and logical thinking at the heart of human knowledge and understanding. Rationalism stands in contrast to empiricism, emphasizing the inherent power of human mind/reason to access truths that are independent of sensory experiences. At the heart of the rationalist debates also lies the question of the relationship between the human mind and body, or the human mind and external world. Descartes (1596-1650), known as the father of modern philosophy and the champion of rationalism, sought to establish a solid and irrefutable basis for knowledge by relying on the innate capabilities of human reason. This was a significant departure from the prevailing medieval philosophical traditions, which often relied on authority, faith and divine revelation and also from that of the contemporary philosophical tradition of the time which significantly relied on sensory observations as sources of knowledge. Descartes was determined to build a systematic philosophical framework grounded in indubitable truth and certainty but beginning from doubt. The modern turn in philosophy begins with doubting everything in contrast to the dogmatic faith. Both modern philosophers and scientists used doubt as a productive tool to attain new insights and knowledge about ourselves and the universe.

Key Concepts

Rationalism, Cartesian Dualism, Initial Skepticism, Method of doubt, Substance.

Discussion

3.1.1 Descartes and the 'Modern' Turn in Philosophy

Descartes as a discoverer

Descartes (1596-1650), a philosopher, mathematician and a man of science brought clear break from the past in the history of western philosophy. While his predecessors like Socrates and Plato engaged with and wrote philosophy as teachers and educators, and while the medieval predecessors like Augustine and Aquinas wrote philosophy primarily as theological preachers, Descartes wrote philosophy as a discoverer and explorer. There is a clear orientation towards scientific discovery in his philosophical journey.

Achieving mathematic certainty

The central question driving Descartes' philosophy was how to achieve mathematical certainty in philosophical inquiry and how to develop a well-organized system with clarity and precision of reason. Mathematics provides the most certain demonstration while proving its conclusion as in the case of $2+2=4$. It is this certainty Descartes demanded while establishing philosophical knowledge. With this purpose in mind, Descartes sought to dispel the uncertainties of scholastic thought and aimed to construct a comprehensive scientific system akin to the clarity and certainty found in mathematics and logic. He prioritized reason over other means such as faith in his pursuit of philosophical truth and formulated a set of self-evident and unquestionable true propositions, free from any presuppositions and assumptions. This contributed to the beginning of the 'modern' turn of philosophy.

Modern turn of philosophy

Pragmatic philosophical approach

Descartes emphasizes the pragmatic aspect in his philosophical approach and included physics or natural philosophy alongside metaphysics, encompassing them under the broad scope of philosophy. He believed in a mechanistic view of the universe according to which everything in nature, including physiological processes and emotions, could be explained mechanistically, without resorting to forms or essences. Also, through the application of the mathematical method to all sciences, he established interconnectedness of all sciences seeking to bring unified, coherent and organically connected body of knowledge.

Metaphysics still as the
foundation of
scientific knowledge

Roots in metaphysics and
inclination
towards science

Philosophical and
physical understanding
of the world

Scientific progress
in physics in
seventeenth century

Descartes used analogy of a tree to describe the structure and order of knowledge. Anthony Kenny says: “Like Bacon, Descartes compared knowledge to a tree, but for him the tree’s roots were metaphysics, its trunk was physics, and its fruitful branches were the moral and useful sciences.” The roots of the tree represented metaphysics, providing a foundational basis for understanding reality and the trunk represented physics, the study of the natural world, which relied on and grew from the metaphysical principles. The trunk got and bore the branches of the moral and practical sciences, representing the applications of knowledge to ethics and useful pursuits. The metaphorical representation stressed the idea that all knowledge is interconnected finding its roots in the fundamental principles of metaphysics. Just as the branches of a tree depend on the strength and nourishment provided by the trunk, the various disciplines of knowledge rely on the robust foundation of metaphysics to thrive and grow.

The analogy of knowledge-tree is clear in Descartes’ chronological structuring or ordering of his writings. In 1641, he wrote his metaphysical masterpiece, the *Meditations*, investigating the fundamental questions about the nature of reality, the self and the existence of God and establishing a new foundation for knowledge based on reason and certainty. In 1644, he presented the *Principles of Philosophy*, an abridged version of his earlier work, *The World*, focused on his physical system and the understanding of the natural world. Finally, in 1649, Descartes composed *The Passions of the Soul*, primarily an ethical treatise exploring human emotions and their moral implications. These works follow the pattern suggested by the tree analogy, with metaphysics at the roots, physics forming the trunk, and the branches extending into the realms of moral and practical sciences.

As we stated earlier that every philosophy needs to be understood from the larger socio-cultural and political environment and the intellectual framework prevailing at that time, it is crucial that we understand the Cartesian philosophy keeping the scientific orientation and progress especially in physics in our minds. The advent of new scientific concepts and approaches in the seventeenth century had a profound and transformative impact on the landscape of modern philosophy. Descartes, one of the torchbearers of this philosophical shift who is considered the founding figure of modern philosophy,

also played a pivotal role as a creator and contributor to the scientific advancements of the seventeenth century.

Impact of physics and astronomy on the Cartesian philosophic outlook

Russell stresses on modern and scientific turn in the Cartesian philosophy: “He is the first man of high philosophic capacity whose outlook is profoundly affected by the new physics and astronomy. While it is true that he retains much of scholasticism, he does not accept foundations laid by predecessors, but endeavours to construct a complete philosophic edifice de novo. This had not happened since Aristotle and is a sign of the new self-confidence that resulted from the progress of science.” Descartes retained the Scholastic notion of God who is a separate and transcendent being that existed outside the physical world and human understanding. However, Russell emphasizes that Descartes could take a modern turn in philosophy.

3.1.2 Rationalism and the Quest for Self-Evident Truths

Reason as the principal means of knowledge

Understanding the universe without taking refuge to God

From rigorous questioning to self-evident truth

Descartes’ philosophical approach was deeply rooted in rationalism, which elevated reason as the principal means to attain genuine knowledge. By championing human cognitive faculty or reason as the key to unravelling truths about the world, without taking refuge in any external authority like divine revelation, modern rationalism laid the groundwork for the development of modern science and the Enlightenment. As a new era of critical and rational thinking, it marked a decisive departure from the philosophies of the past.

In the pursuit of certain and self-evident truths as the foundation of knowledge, Descartes, the central figure of the modern rationalist movement sought to establish an indubitable starting point for philosophy through his famous method of doubt. The cognitive faculty/capacity of doubting or thinking was officially established here as one of the most foundational aspects with which modern philosophy, especially rationalism took a clear break from the medieval past. By subjecting all beliefs, conceptions and assumptions to rigorous questioning, the Cartesian aim was to arrive at irrefutable truths that could serve as the solid ground upon to build a comprehensive philosophical system.

Reason challenging the authority of scripture and tradition

Inaugurated by Descartes, the rationalist thought lies at the heart of Modern Philosophy. Rationalism emphasizes the importance of reason and intellect in acquiring knowledge about the world. This approach with emphasis on reason challenged the prevailing reliance on faith, authenticity and authority of scripture and tradition in the medieval period. Rationalists sought to discover self-evident truths that could serve as the foundation for all knowledge. Descartes pursued his quest for certainty through his method of doubt. If the medieval tendency was seeking certainty and stability acquired through faith, the modern tendency is the enquiry through doubting. As Russell's statement indicated, despite the fact that Descartes retained many of scholastic remnants, he was not ready to accept the medieval foundation and replaced it with a new foundation.

Methodical approach to philosophy

Apart from doubting and reasoning, a key aspect of modern Rationalism is its methodical approach to philosophy. In the context of modern rationalism, it refers to the application of principles and axioms from mathematics, logic and physics to philosophical enquiries and investigations. Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz and other rationalist thinkers aimed to establish a solid foundation for knowledge and truth by adopting and employing a systematic and rigorous approach. They upheld the view that just as geometry and mathematics are built upon self-evident axioms and proceed deductively to derive new solid truths; philosophy could also be approached in a similar manner. With this method, they believe that it would be possible to uncover universal truths and create a coherent and unified understanding of reality. The methodical approach paved the way for a new era of scientific inquiry, as the rationalist thinkers explored the natural world and sought to apply the same principles of logical reasoning and deduction (arriving at universal truths from particular empirical instances) to the study of the natural world.

Application of mathematical and logical axioms to philosophical enquiries

Axiomatic method in philosophy

The influence of geometry upon philosophic and scientific method has been profound. Russell, while explaining the Cartesian philosophy and its methodical approach, makes an observation about the impact of axioms in western philosophy: "Geometry, as established by the Greeks, starts with axioms which are (or are deemed to be) self-evident, and proceeds by deductive reasoning to arrive at theorems that are very far from self-evident. The axioms and theorems are held to be true of actual space, which is something given in experience.

From self-evident principles, through deducting reason, to theorems

It thus appeared to be possible to discover things about the actual world by first noticing what is self-evident and then using deduction. This view influenced Plato and Kant, and most of the intermediate philosophers.”

Criticism against the foundationalism of modern philosophy

Descartes’ rationalist method and the cogito argument faced severe criticism from later philosophers especially for its foundationalism. Descartes sought to build a comprehensive system of knowledge on clear and rigid foundation of few self-evident truths. The search for a secure foundation, according to critics, leads to an infinite regress, where each foundational belief requires further examination and justification. The foundationalism of modern philosophy since Descartes has been an emphatic point of criticism and rejection in what we call ‘postmodern’ philosophy.

3.1.3 Method of Doubt and its Implications

Doubting everything is philosophical and scientific method

Descartes’ foundational epistemological work *Meditations on First Philosophy* served as the platform for his rationalist project. The first step of the Cartesian rationalism was to subject all beliefs and assumptions to a method of doubt or rigorous questioning. Descartes subjected everything including the most reliable sources of knowledge, such as sense perceptions and the existence of his own body and the external world into question. The goal was to set aside any and every belief, knowledge, idea or assumption that could be potentially doubted, leaving only indubitable truths as the basis for knowledge.

Search for indubitable truths as the basis of knowledge

I doubt everything, but I cannot doubt the very fact that I am doubting

After doubting everything, Descartes arrived at the realization that while everything could be doubted, the act of doubt itself cannot be doubted. As long as I doubt, I cannot doubt the fact that I am doubting and that I have a capacity to doubt. That confirmed the existence of a thinking self. This insight culminated in the famous cogito argument *cogito ergo sum*- “I think, therefore I am” (“I doubt, therefore I exist”) and became the indubitable starting point for his philosophy. This dictum is the kernel of Descartes’ theory of knowledge. In other words, it became a symbol of modern celebration of the human mind and its cognitive faculty underscoring the point that human beings can access to any kind of knowledge using their own rational capacity.

Power of human mind and its cognitive faculty

I doubt everything
means I think about
everything

I think about everything
means 'I' who think
is something

Descartes' scepticism as
a way to arrive at clarity
and certainty

Debate between empiri-
cists and rationalists

Ideas with which
we are born

Ideas which we get
prior to any sensory
experience

Anthony Kenny explains the purpose of the Cartesian doubt: "Descartes, in his *Meditations*, set himself the task of liberating philosophy from the threat of scepticism that had developed in the preceding century. In order to do so, first he had to exhibit the sceptical position that he wanted to refute." Russell states: "While I wanted to think everything false, it must necessarily be that I who thought was something; and remarking that this truth, *I think, therefore I am*, was so solid and so certain that all the most extravagant suppositions of the sceptics were incapable of upsetting it, I judged that I could receive it without scruple as the first principle of the philosophy that I sought."

The Cartesian skepticism was called methodical skepticism and was instrumental in his quest for certainty, clarity and a firm basis for the philosophy. This systematic approach to doubt is used as a method for establishing a foundation of certain knowledge, whereas actual skepticism is a broader and more radical questioning of the possibility of any knowledge altogether. While Descartes' skepticism is a stepping stone towards finding foundational truths, actual skepticism calls into question the very nature and reliability of human knowledge and beliefs.

3.1.4 Innate Ideas as Basis of Knowledge

The concept of innate ideas is central to the debate between rationalists and empiricists about the means of knowledge. The rationalists upheld that we are born with certain ideas and thus the reason is the primary source of knowledge, while empiricists believed that all our knowledge comes from experience. The empiricists completely dismiss any sort of innate ideas.

In Descartes' philosophy, innate ideas refer to certain fundamental ideas with which we are born, which are not derived from the external world but are inherent in the nature of the mind itself from birth, independent of sensory experience. Descartes posited the existence of these innate ideas as a way to establish certain and universal knowledge as the foundation of his epistemology. The innate ideas are considered as a doctrine in Descartes's theory of Knowledge.

Plato as the earliest proponent of innate ideas

Knowledge as recollection of ideas which are inherent in the soul

Solid foundation on innate ideas

According to Descartes, God, mathematical truths and the self as a thinking thing are examples of innate ideas. He believed that these ideas are not acquired through the senses or learned from experience but are naturally present in the mind, almost like inherent structures of thought. One of the earliest proponents of innate ideas was Plato, who propagated the realm of forms and ideas and believed that knowledge of abstract concepts such as truth, beauty and justice was innate within us and that we simply needed to recollect this knowledge through the process of philosophical inquiry.

Descartes argued that innate ideas are essential for his method of doubt and for establishing indubitable knowledge. By relying on these innate ideas, he sought to build a secure foundation for his philosophical system, ensuring that certain truths could be known with absolute certainty and that they were not susceptible to doubt (skepticism).

3.1.5 Concept of Substance

One infinite substance and two finite substances

Mind is the immaterial/conscious substance

Body is the material substance with experience

In the *Meditations*, Descartes establishes his foundational metaphysical view of substance. He describes the nature of reality by asserting the existence of three substances, each characterized by an essence. The first and primary substance is God, whose essence is perfection. According to Descartes, God is the only true substance, which means, the only being that is capable of existing on its own. God is the infinite substance. The other two substances are mind and matter, which are created by God. Descartes defines the substance “as an existent thing which requires nothing, but itself in order to exist.”

Descartes posits that the mind and body are two separate relative substances with fundamentally distinct essences. The mind, according to him, is characterized by thought and consciousness and is immaterial and non-extended substance, while the body, composed of matter, is an extended substance and lacks consciousness and thought. The essence of matter is extension in length, breadth, and depth while the essence of mind is thought and consciousness.

3.1.6 Mind-Body Dualism

Two separate substances;
mind and body

Through the dictum “I think, therefore, I am,” Descartes introduced the concept of mind-body dualism, positing that the mind and body are two distinct relative substances with fundamentally different attributes. His point here was to infer the existence of body from the existence of the thought. Descartes’ dualistic principle that human being is a sum total of two distinct relative substances, mind and body challenged the traditional Aristotelian view of a unified integrated human being.

Mechanistic view of
body; body as a machine

Descartes upheld a mechanistic view of the bodies of both humans and animals. According to this view, human body functions like a complex mechanical system, operating according to physical laws devoid of consciousness and feelings or without the need for consciousness or feelings. However, he made a distinction between humans and animals. The humans possess a soul that resides in the pineal gland and the soul is the seat of consciousness which enables humans to have thoughts and experiences. It is through the pineal gland that the mind and body interact with each other (interactionism). The animals lack souls and therefore lack consciousness. That is to say, animals function purely as mechanical beings, governed solely by physical laws.

Mind and body interact

Thought includes various
forms of consciousness

Descartes uses ‘thinking’ in a very wide sense. A thing/being that thinks, according to him, is one that doubts, believes, knows, understands, conceives, affirms, denies, wills, imagines, and feels. In other words, with ‘thought’, he considers here not only the intellectual meditation, but also volition, emotion, feeling, pain, pleasure, mental images, and sensations. All these phases or elements have something in common and that is the fact that they are various items and forms of consciousness. In short, as much extension is the essence of matter, thought is the essence of the mind.

Superiority of
mind to the body

The Cartesian dictum “I think, therefore I am” establishes not only the dualistic nature of mind and body but also the mind’s superiority (or certainty of the mind) to the matter. Secondly, it reinforces the certainty of one’s own mind over the minds of others. As a result, philosophical systems influenced and followed by Descartes often exhibit a leaning towards subjectivism - subjective nature of experience, wherein individual

consciousness becomes the foundation for understanding reality, and the objective study of matter which views the matter as something that can only be known, if at all, through mind's thoughts and perceptions (through inferences drawn from knowledge of the mind).

Representationalist theory of mind; mind represents the material world

Material world is a representational image of the mind

Mind-body dualism and the consequent superiority of the mind led the modern philosophy to uphold the view that the mind represents the material world. The idea that the mind represents the material world through mental images is called the representationalist theory of mind/knowledge in epistemology. The two inclinations mentioned above - subjective nature of experience and the objective study of the matter - are evident in Continental idealism, where subjectivism especially, the constructive capacity of the mind is celebrated as a cornerstone of understanding. The British empiricism critiqued and rejected this subjective turn.

Disembodied cognition; cognition is purely a mental business

Mind-body dualism contributed the concept called 'disembodied cognition' to the later philosophy, especially the epistemology. Inspired by Descartes's clear separation between the thinking mind (*res cogitans*) and the extended body (*res extensa*) and primacy of the mind, the disembodied cognition viewed the cognitive processes as something occurring in the mind (mental phenomena) independently of the physical body or without being grounded in bodily experiences. According to Descartes, the mind is a non-physical substance that thinks, doubts, and reasons, while the body is a physical substance subject to the laws of nature which suggests that mental processes can exist in isolation from the physical body, thereby implying the possibility of disembodied cognition.

Embodied cognition

Intimate relationship between mind, body and environment in cognition

However, the disembodied cognition witnessed severe criticism significantly from the contemporary philosophy, cognitive science and phenomenology. Rejecting the idea of disembodied cognition, many philosophers, cognitive scientists and phenomenologists proposed alternative idea of 'embodied cognition.' The 'embodied cognition' highlighted the intimate relationship between the body and cognition and emphasised that cognitive processes are deeply influenced by the body's sensory motor experiences and interactions with the body, socio-cultural and material environment. According to this view, cognition is situated within a broader context, and it is shaped by the individual's interactions with the environment and cultural, social, and historical factors.

Summarized Overview

The individualistic and subjective character of the modern philosophy is visible in Cartesian philosophy. All knowledge is derived from the certainty of one's own existence, and clearness and distinctness (both subjective) are taken as criteria of truth. The external world was to be inferred from oneself and his thoughts. This notion later developed into the idealistic philosophy that everything is only an emanation of the ego. However, there was also a scientific turn with an objectivistic emphasis. The scientific method of the modern philosophy is also visible in its emphasis on empirical observation of the material world and logical deduction of the conclusion from various particular instances. The scientific method is about uncovering truths about the world through rational inquiry and deduction. Rather than accepting truths on faith or tradition alone, modern rationalism urged individuals to engage in critical thinking, questioning and exploring in order to arrive at truths that are universally valid and undeniable.

Self-Assessment

1. What is the concept of innate ideas according to Descartes?
2. What all are the main characteristics of rationalist philosophy?

Assignments

1. Elaborate the mind-body dualism in Descartes
2. Is our cognition disembodied as Descartes argues? Or, is it embodied? Debate
3. Write an essay on the Method of Doubt in Descartes

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1. Russell, Bertrand. (2016). *A History of Western Philosophy*. Routledge Classics.
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4. Copleston, Frederick. (1962). *A History of Philosophy Vol. 4. Modern Philosophy: From Descartes to Leibniz*. New York: Image books.

Suggested Readings

1. Thilly, Frank. (1982). *A History of Philosophy*. Allahabad: Central Book Depot.
2. Falckenberg, Richard. (2006). *History of Modern Philosophy*. US: Biblio Bazaar.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 2

Spinoza

Learning Outcomes

The unit will enable the learner to:

- explain Spinoza's notion of substance and its comparison with his rationalist predecessor Descartes
- identify the axiomatic/geometric method Spinoza used for philosophical examinations
- analyze the philosophical solution for mind-body relation in Spinoza's philosophy
- appreciate the single substance of God/Nature in Spinoza's philosophy and the concepts of freedom and determinism

Background

Like Descartes, Spinoza, the Dutch philosopher (1632–1677) viewed the quest for certainty and clarity as the sole assurance of human knowledge and understanding. Yet, in contrast to Descartes, he did not aim to establish a philosophical system on the solitary unquestionable premise of the 'cogito'. The statement 'I think' conveyed a purely contingent truth, according to Spinoza, whereas he insisted that all certainties must ultimately rest on a necessity. This quest for certainty and clarity anchored on the necessity led Spinoza to deterministic philosophy – a worldview which posits that all events and actions, including human thoughts and choices, are determined by preceding causes and conditions. The deterministic worldview arises from Spinoza's monistic worldview, where only a single, infinite substance, God or Nature, exists as the ultimate source of everything in the universe.

Key Concepts

God/Nature, Psycho-physical parallelism, Modes, Pantheism, Determinism, Freedom

Discussion

3.2.1 Introduction to Spinoza's Monism

There exists only one substance; monism

Spinoza's (1632–1677) philosophical system is deeply rooted in monism, the metaphysical concept that posits the existence of only one ultimate substance that encompasses all of reality. For Spinoza, this ultimate substance is synonymous with God or Nature. In *The Principles of Cartesian Philosophy* (1663), Spinoza attempts to establish the core axioms that formed the foundation of Descartes' metaphysics and then to deduce from those foundational axioms the substantive aspects of Descartes' philosophical ideas.

Monism as a philosophical outlook

Spinoza's magnum opus *Ethics* (1677) systematically explores his monistic perspective, which profoundly influences his views on the nature of reality, the self, and our relationship with the world. The monistic view that ultimate reality is one unified substance or principle stands in contrast to dualism, which proposes the existence of two fundamentally distinct and separate entities, as in the case of form and matter in Plato, and, mind and body (spirit and matter) in Descartes. The monism also is in contrast to pluralism which suggests that reality is composed of multiple independent substances or principles as it was established by the ancient Greek philosopher Empedocles. Spinoza aims in *Ethics* to attain a secure happiness by approaching as closely as possible an adequate understanding of absolutely everything.

Monism stands in contrast to dualism and pluralism

The Substance, according to Spinoza, is “in itself and conceived through itself”, or is “that the conception of which does not depend upon the conception of another thing from which it must be formed.” A substance must be intelligible apart from all and independent of relations with other things. In other words, a substance cannot enter into relations in to other things and, in particular, can be neither the cause nor the

Substance stands independent of relations to anything other than itself

effect of anything outside itself. Because, to the extent that a thing is caused, it must be explained in terms of other things, and, therefore 'conceived through' other things. In Spinoza's monistic philosophy, a substance therefore cannot be produced by anything else; it is its own cause (*causa sui*). This means that according to Spinoza's definition, the essence of the substance involves existence.

God or Nature as tneecessary existence

According to Spinoza, God or Nature is the single existing thing which exists of necessity and, being the cause of itself persists through all eternity. The all-encompassing substance, which is God or Nature, possesses infinite attributes, while the two primary attributes which are accessible to human understanding are extension (physical dimension) and thought (mental dimension). By asserting that extension and thought are the attributes of one singular and infinite substance that constitutes the fabric of the universe, Spinoza's main philosophical intention is to reject the dualism of mind and body or that of God and world. Descartes affirmed that extension was the essence of matter and thought was the essence of the mind. However, according to Spinoza, mind (thought) and body (extension) are the attributes and are only part of the singular substance and nothing exists outside of it.

Mind and body are only attributes of the single substance

Rejection of the Cartesian view that mind and body are distinct

The human mind and the body do not belong to two different and divergent worlds; rather, as Anthony Kenny puts it, "the mind is man considered as a mode of the attribute of thought, and the body is man considered as a mode of the attribute of extension. Mind and body are inseparable: the human mind is in fact simply the idea of the human body." Here, the inseparability of mind and body in Spinoza's philosophy is clearly seen as the inseparability of the idea and matter, or that of the rational and the empirical world. Spinoza makes this metaphysical idea a foundation for his epistemology and builds up his rationalist theory of knowledge along with three levels of knowledge: imagination, reason, and intuition.

Inseparability of idea and matter

'Everything is God' rejects the idea of transcendent God

The notion of all-encompassing substance makes the God immanent within the universe itself. This view is called pantheism, literally meaning that everything is theistic, and rejects the idea of the transcendent God who is distinct from the world. It posits everything in existence, including the physical world and human beings, as a manifestation of the singular

Reducing phenomena to a single foundation

substance, God. The monism and pantheism can be seen as a philosophical response to the complexities and challenges of understanding the nature of reality. They seek to transcend the dichotomies and find a unified understanding of reality, free from them. The intention is to bring harmony, unity and coherence to the multiplicity of phenomena by reducing them to a singular foundation.

3.2.2 Axiomatic Method and Criticism

Geometrical method in philosophy

Spinoza took Euclidian geometrical method as his model of Objective rational enquiry and drew inspiration from the rigor and clarity of the Euclidean geometry in order to develop axiomatic method. Euclidean geometry, named after the ancient Greek mathematician Euclid, is a branch of mathematics that deals with the study of shapes, sizes and properties of objects in a two-dimensional and three-dimensional space. It is one of the oldest forms of geometry which is studied and utilized for over two millennia. Spinoza adopted the axiomatic method after it became popular in post-Cartesian philosophy.

Philosophical investigation founded on mathematical axioms and principles

Everything is subject to demonstration by presenting proofs

The geometrical method is intrinsic to Spinoza's system, serving both ethical and metaphysical purposes and underlining his conviction that everything was subject to demonstration through the presentation of rigorous proofs. In the axiomatic method, one begins with self-evident axioms and definitions, which serve as the foundational building blocks of his philosophical structure. Spinoza then progressively builds upon them and employs deductive reasoning to derive intricate statements and propositions. This process of logical and systematic deduction results in a coherent and interconnected framework of thought. Through this method, he is committed to a rigorous and precise philosophical approach, akin to the mathematical rigor of Euclidean geometry.

Application of logical deduction in philosophical examinations

From self-evident principles to theoretical formations

There are various self-evident axioms from which Spinoza deduces complex propositions and theorems. The self-existing and infinite substance which possesses infinite attributes, including extension and thought and the mind-body parallelism which states that the mind and body are two distinct attributes of the same substance and both of them are in parallel to each other without any interaction are the foundational axioms from which Spinoza's metaphysics derives. The axiom of in-

From axioms to theories

No individual or thing or concept can be taken in isolation

Everything is interconnected as part of a single substance

Criticism of logical monism

Criticism against mere logical deductions of the conclusions

Significance of empirical observation in making scientific laws

tellectual love of God, according to him, is an essential aspect of virtuous living. He states that the rational appreciation of the interconnectedness of all things in the universe leads individuals to love and align with God, which, in turn, guides them toward harmonious lives.

The axiom of immanent God affirms that God is the underlying substance in the universe that manifests in all things and is not a separate, transcendent entity. The axiom of unity of all existence establishes that since everything that exists is a part of the singular substance (God or Nature), there is an essential interconnectedness of all existence. This leads to the unity of all existence wherein no individual aspect of existence can be taken as isolated or independent of the rest. In this holistic worldview, the boundaries between the physical and the mental, the individual and the universal, become blurred, revealing an intricate tapestry of interrelatedness.

Russell takes a critical stand on Spinoza's metaphysics and his axiomatic method and calls it 'logical monism.' Logical monism is a philosophical doctrine that the entire world is a single substance and none of its parts or components can logically exist independently. The underlying criticism is that, according to this view, every proposition can have a single subject and a single predicate, leading to the conclusion that relations and plurality must be illusory.

According to Russell, Spinoza believed that the nature of the world and human life could be deduced through self-evident axioms and events should be accepted with the same resignation as accepting the mathematical notion that 2 and 2 are 4 as they are equally the outcome of logical necessity. This metaphysics is not acceptable as it is incompatible with modern logic and scientific method. He says: "Facts have to be discovered by observation, not by reasoning; when we successfully infer the future, we do so by means of principles which are not logically necessary, but are suggested by empirical data." In other sense, as an empiricist, Russell contradicts Spinoza's view that logical interrelations among the components of the universe are solely derived from deductive reasoning and contends that scientific laws are best uncovered through observation. Thus, in Russell's view, neither science nor philosophy of our times accepts Spinoza's concept of the substance.

Is Spinoza a pantheist or an atheist?

Anthony Kenny also makes a similar point: “But when Spinoza says that this single substance is ‘God or Nature’, does this mean that he is a pantheist or an atheist? He has been taken with equal justification to be alleging that ‘God’ is just a code word for the order of the natural universe, and to be claiming that when scientists speak of ‘Nature’ they are all the time talking of God.”

3.2.3 Mind-Body Theory (Psycho-Physical Parallelism)

Mind and body act harmoniously

Psycho-Physical Parallelism is Spinoza’s alternative to the Cartesian problem of the interaction between mind and body. It says that the attributes of thought and extension coexist harmoniously as parallel expressions of the same substance. That means, when changes occur in the body, they correspondingly produce changes in the mind, and vice versa. The parallelism ensures that the mind and body remain interconnected without any need for direct interaction. The mind and body are not isolated entities but intertwined aspects of the unified whole that is the substance.

Mind and body act as parallel expression of God/Nature

Challenge to freedom and freewill

The mind-body parallelism serves as the basis for Spinoza’s understanding of human freedom and determinism. Spinoza’s view that everything in the universe, including human actions, is determined by prior causes challenges the traditional notions of free will and the ability to make choices independent of external influences. This is a deterministic world view in which there is no choice for humans to act according to their will and freedom. To put it simply, if all our bodily existence and mental thoughts are modes of God, everything is deterministic and there is no room for human freedom.

Everything is predetermined by God

Deterministic sequence of Nature like the logical sequence of ideas

Human beings are integral components of Nature, and the deterministic sequence of Nature operates with the same unyielding firmness as the logical sequence of ideas. The progression of events in Nature follows with the inescapable determination akin to a mathematical demonstration guided by an all-knowing intellect. In the light of this, what do human freedom, individual agency and moral responsibility truly signify, given that the beginnings of every human action are inherently embedded within the primal concept of God or Nature, just as the beginnings of every event are? For Spinoza, the conception

Human freedom through parallelism of mind and body

of freedom emerges from the parallelism, wherein the mental and physical aspects of an individual are not in opposition but works in unison. When a person acts in harmony with their nature, they are embracing the interconnectedness of their mental and physical attributes, thus realizing true freedom.

3.2.4 Modes

Substance is that which self-sustains and self-caused

Spinoza defines the substance as what exists 'in itself' and requires nothing beyond itself for its being. It is *causa sui* or self-caused. This notion of substance has some resemblance to the 'necessary being' introduced by the medieval philosophers. According to this view, the substance must be infinite and there cannot be two such substances because if there are two such substances, each would limit the other and defeat the infinity.

Everything as manifestations of God

Spinoza's idea of 'modes' gets derived from that of substance. The idea that there can be only one substance which can equally be called God or Nature suggests that individuals or entities of our experience from stones to human beings, including ourselves are not substances, rather modifications or manifestations of the one infinite substance. The modifications or manifestations of the substance are known as 'modes' in Spinoza's philosophical framework.

One substance and myriad modes

The modes represent affections or alterations of the underlying substance and are categorized into various expressions, such as motion and rest within the domain of extension, and intellect and will within the realm of thought. Remarkably, Spinoza's philosophy introduces the concept that the same substance, previously characterized as infinite and ultimate, also constitutes the finite and limited material entities we perceive, including ourselves. In other words, God or Nature, according to Spinoza, constitutes finite and infinite, limited and unlimited material entities.

God or Nature constituting finite material entities

Everything is a mode emanating from God

The modes are finite and contingent and exist solely through their dependence on the substance. Spinoza argues that everything finite in the world, including individual objects, beings, and events, are modes that arise necessarily from the substance. They are expressions of the infinite attributes of God, arising from the necessity of God's existence. As modes, they lack independent and self-sustaining existence; rather, their re-

ality is contingent upon the existence of the substance.

God is not a creator and modes are not creatures

However, the modes are not creatures. Spinoza rejects the idea of a creator God. It is not that a transcendent deity directly creating modes or entities, rather, each mode is generated by the modes that precede it in a continuous chain of causality. This process of mode formation stems from necessity rather than a deliberate divine design that could potentially interrupt the sequence of finite causation. Spinoza posits that the substance, God or Nature, does not directly produce finite modes nor do they immediately follow substances in the order of creation. Instead, there exists specific modes, intermediate and mediate, bridging the gap between the substance and finite modes.

Motion and rest as intrinsic to the Nature

The substance and the modes can be summarily differentiated as follows: the substance is self-causing, eternal, perfect, necessary, independent, immutable with an identity of essence and existence, while the modes are caused by preceding factors and are perishable, imperfect, contingent, dependent, subject to change and with separate essence and existence. The fundamental attributes of extension, motion and rest emerge as intrinsic features of Nature itself. In other words, the movement in Nature does not occur externally or by the intervention of a deity; it is an inherent aspect. This primary characteristic endures, remaining constant, and it is the immediate, eternal mode of God or Nature under the attribute of extension.

3.2.5 Intellectual Love of God

Rejection of the division between the spiritual and the material

By stating that God is immanent in all things, Spinoza dissolves the conventional dichotomies between the sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the material, the soul and the body and leads us to a more profound appreciation of the unity and interrelatedness of all existence. Through this, Spinoza introduces one of the central concepts of his ethical system, the Intellectual Love of God.

Opposition to the Divine reward and punishment

Intellectual Love of God is presented in contrast to the traditional idea of worshipping God. It goes beyond mere emotional or sentimental or fearful attachment to God and challenges the notions of divine reward and punishment. In traditional theistic beliefs, individuals are motivated to act ethically by the promise of heavenly rewards or the threat of

divine retribution. In contrast, Spinoza's ethical ideal encourages virtuous behavior not for the sake of external rewards but for the inherent value of living in harmony with the interconnected web of existence.

Cultivation of the wisdom and revenue for the beauty of Nature

Spinoza presents the Intellectual Love of God as primarily an ethical idea and guides individuals towards virtuous and harmonious lives. By recognizing the interconnectedness of all things and our place within the larger scheme of existence, individuals can act in accordance with their own essential nature and with the nature of the universe. This ethical ideal emphasizes the importance of cultivating wisdom, compassion and harmony with the world around us. Spinoza's pantheistic outlook and the concept of Intellectual Love of God have profound implications for our understanding of the human experience and our relationship with the natural world. By embracing the unity of all things and recognizing the immanence of God in the universe, individuals can cultivate a deep sense of awe and reverence for the beauty and complexity of existence.

The highest form of knowledge

Spinoza considers the love for God or Nature intellectually as the highest form of knowledge. It is a rational and intellectual appreciation of the interconnectedness and unity of all things in the universe and is not reserved for a select few but is accessible to all individuals through reason and understanding.

Summarized Overview

Spinoza's pantheism acknowledges a divine aspect to nature and yet it is distinct from traditional religious conceptions of God. The pantheistic view which states that God is immanent in all things and the universe/nature itself is a manifestation of God wants us to experience a profound sense of awe and reverence for the natural order and its underlying unity. Strictly speaking, it is a rejection of any personal, anthropomorphic God in traditional religious sense. This view could be seen as aligning with atheistic or agnostic perspectives and prompting us to consider Spinoza as a naturalist who seeks explanations based on natural laws and causes, without invoking a supernatural agency. The naturalist view, overriding any supernatural sense, can never be rejected, given the development of the scientific enquiry in his era.

Self-Assessment

1. What is Spinoza's single substance of God/Nature (pantheism)?
2. How is the God in pantheism is different from the God in traditional religious sense?
3. Comment on determinism and freedom in Spinoza's philosophy.

Assignments

1. Write an essay on mind-body relation in Spinoza. Elaborate his Mind-Body Theory (Psycho-Physical Parallelism).
2. Evaluate the axiomatic method in Spinoza's philosophy
3. Spinoza challenged Descartes and rejected the division between mind and body. Discuss.

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Suggested Readings

1. Thilly, Frank. (1982). *A History of Philosophy*. Allahabad: Central Book Depot.
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UNIT 3

Leibniz

Learning Outcomes

The unit will enable the learner to:

- familiarize with general introduction to Leibniz's philosophy in comparison with his rationalist predecessors
- describe the basics of metaphysics and epistemology in Leibniz
- acquaint with alternate theory of substance and the mind-body relation
- appreciate the blend of logic, maths and metaphysics in his rigorous philosophical enquiry

Background

Leibniz (1646–1716) is a significant post-Cartesian philosopher and rationalist who sought to ground his philosophy on reason. Leibniz's philosophy needs to be understood from the context of his rationalist predecessors like Descartes (1596–1650) and Spinoza (1632–1677) and as a response to an engagement with contemporary empiricists especially Locke (1632–1704) who is known as the founder of a school of thought known as British Empiricism. His strong intellectual interdisciplinary pursuits spanning an array of fields, from philosophy, law and mathematics to science, geology and mechanics, earned him the epithet “Aristotle of the modern era.”

Key Concepts

Substance, Monads, Pre-Established Harmony, Principle of Contradiction, Principle of Sufficient Reason

Discussion

Reconciliation of
mathematics and
metaphysics

Leibniz attempted to reconcile the scholastic speculative theology that stresses faith with rational modern philosophy and science. He conceived both mathematics and metaphysics as important sciences that give a strong foundation for all knowledge systems. His mathematical inventiveness, combined with his deep insights into the underlying principles of the physical world, transcended disciplinary boundaries and significantly contributed to both mathematics and science. Leibniz's legacy endures as a testament to the power of interdisciplinary exploration and the transformative impact of ideas that bridge the gap between theory and application.

Emphasis on Philosophy
of Physics and
Mathematics

A rare blend of metaphysics, mechanical physics, logic and maths is visible throughout Leibniz's philosophy. He embraced the modern mechanical physics as the proper method for investigating nature while retaining several key metaphysical concepts of ancient and medieval philosophy. His crucial contribution to the science and mathematics occurs in 1675, when he invented the *calculus*, the instrument for almost all higher mathematics. While a controversy exists between Leibniz and Isaac Newton about who invented the *calculus*, it is by now accepted that both independently developed the *calculus* which turned out to be a groundbreaking achievement that revolutionized the fields of mathematics and science. The essence of calculus lies in its ability to analyze and understand change and motion through the manipulation of infinitesimal quantities. Leibniz's Philosophy of Physics cannot be overemphasized as his quantity of force is akin to what modern physicists call kinetic energy.

Knowledge is basically
attained from reason

Leibniz harboured an array of philosophical concerns that contested the empiricist notion. The empiricists affirmed that whatever (idea) we understand, we understand in virtue of its connection with experience and that the content of every idea is revealed by tracing it back to experience. For Leibniz, our comprehension of things and ideas is not tethered to our experiential engagements with them. Rather, there are ideas which can only be apprehended by the faculty of reason. His point was to establish that from that apprehended content, an intricate web of truths can be derived, enabling us to grasp the true nature of the universe which is unfiltered by the limitations of our fallible sensory organs.

1.3.1 Monadology: The Theory of Substance

Infinite substances

Leibniz constructed his philosophical framework, similar to Descartes and Spinoza, on the foundational concept of substance. However, his divergence from them is starkly apparent in his perspectives on the interrelation of mind and matter, as well as in his enumeration of substances. While Descartes posited three distinct substances - God, mind, and matter - and Spinoza acknowledged only God as the ultimate substance, Leibniz presented a unique perspective of aggregate of substances. According to him, the universe contains infinite substances.

Simple immaterial elements

In one of the most famous treatises written by Leibniz in 1714, *Monadology*, he presents the theory of monads which forms a cornerstone of his metaphysical system. According to *Monadology*, whatever is complex, is made up of what is simple and whatever is simple is unextended. For, if it were extended, it could have been further divided. Also, whatever is material is extended. From these two axioms, he deduces the idea that hence there must be simple immaterial elements. Leibniz calls these simple, immaterial, soul-like entities monads.

Universe is a system of simple substances

For Descartes, there were two relative substances, apart from God, the mind and matter (body) and the essence of matter resided in its extension, essentially rendering extension a defining attribute of matter. Spinoza, on the other hand, assigned both extension and mind/thought as attributes of the only one substance, God, signifying a comprehensive unity between these attributes. Leibniz disputed the compatibility of extension as an attribute of substance. He argued that extension inherently embodies a notion of plurality, thereby making it more suited to an aggregate of substances rather than a singular substance. These boundless infinitely many substances with the properties only of souls are 'monads.'

Monads are building blocks of reality

Monads are indivisible, self-sufficient entities that lack physical extension and composition. The conception of monads as simple substances, devoid of parts, distinguishes them from the composite elements that constitute empirical entities. The monads are the building blocks of reality, elemental units from which all compound substances emerge. Leibniz does not reject that each monad shares certain traits akin to a physical point, albeit in an abstract sense. Yet, he affirms that

the core essence of each monad is that of a soul. With monads, Leibniz basically attacks the underlying idea of the empiricist school that there are composite elements which constitute the empirical/physical entities and the world.

Thought is the only conceivable attribute

Within the monadology paradigm, thought, not the extension, emerges as the sole remaining conceivable essential attribute. As a result, Leibniz negates the genuine existence of matter. In lieu of matter, there is only an expansive assembly of individual souls, each encapsulating the characteristics of a distinct monad.

Self-propelled motion indicates a proactive essence

The concept of *conatus*, which Leibniz introduces, states about the intrinsic tendency of each monad to fulfil its potential through self-driven actions. It represents the innate drive within monads, motivating their inherent dynamism. By this principle of self-propelled motion, Leibniz underscores his departure from mechanistic perspective of the universe prevalent in his era. Monads, rather than being passive elements in a mechanistic world, harbour an inherent proactive essence.

Hierarchical order of monads

The monads, despite their fundamental distinctness, embody a hierarchical order. This hierarchy unfolds in an unbroken continuum, with each monad differing from the next by a minute degree of quality. This principle of continuity reflects in Leibniz's belief in the ordered interconnectedness of the universe. Through this hierarchy, Leibniz emphasizes the principle of continuity, which posits that all entities in existence form a seamless chain, devoid of leaps or disruptions.

1.3.2 Pre-Established Harmony in the Universe

Leibniz's idea about the nature of reality

Like his rationalist contemporaries, Leibniz grappled with profound questions concerning the nature of reality, the relationship between God and the world, and the intricate interplay of mind and body. Descartes and Spinoza, two fellow rationalists, navigated the territory of the physical and mental realms. Descartes postulated dualistic interaction through the pineal gland, while Spinoza negated such interaction entirely. Both Descartes and Spinoza perceived the corporeal universe as a mechanical construct.

The mechanistic conception of the universe attracted criticism from scholars adhering to the scholastic tradition for

Harmonizing the mechanistic and teleological view of the universe

its dismissal of the divine purpose of the universe, especially the teleology. Leibniz embarked on a mission to harmonize these perspectives, constructing a philosophical system that bridged gaps and embraced both mechanistic principles and teleological purpose.

Coherent understanding of individual substances

Spinoza appears to have eliminated the notion of distinct individuals from his philosophical framework, relegating them to mere attributes of an entity that exists in a state between individuality and universality - a peculiar metaphysical amalgam: a universal entity constrained to a solitary instance. On the other hand, Leibniz's philosophical constructs emerge as a response to the quest for a coherent understanding of individual substances, harnessing this understanding to characterize a diverse cosmos - one that unfolds with not a single all-encompassing substance, but rather an infinity of distinct entities.

Harmonious accord between mental and physical events

Leibniz's metaphysical framework eschewed direct causal interaction between mind and body like in Descartes. The mind and body do not casually interact with each other. Instead, they unfold in predetermined alignment as orchestrated by God's divine providence. Leibniz proposed that God, in the act of creation, orchestrated a harmonious accord between mental and physical events. This preordained synchronization ensured that mental perceptions and bodily actions unfolded in perfect harmony, akin to the harmonious arrangement of instruments in a symphony. This metaphysical vision alleviated the challenge of interaction, attributing coordination to divine orchestration rather than causal linkages.

1.3.3 Principles of Non-Contradiction and Sufficient Reason

Fundamental laws governing rational thought

Leibniz develops framework of his rationalist philosophy on some guiding principles which are not only regarded as fundamental laws governing rational thought but also as profound revelations about the nature of reality itself. Adherence to these principles, according to Leibniz, can provide us with a rich path towards understanding the very essence of existence and its inherent necessity. Based on these principles, he attempts to give an elucidation of the cosmos naturally which aligns with the tenets of natural science.

Marriage of science and metaphysics

Leibniz's conviction is that the marriage of science and metaphysics is possible when we discern that scientific revelations pertain to the observable 'phenomena' and not the underlying substratum of reality. Scientific knowledge encapsulates the systematic manifestation of the world, while genuine insights into reality stem from the self-evident axioms of rational inquiry.

Leibniz as a philosopher of principles

As we know by now, the modern turn in philosophy was a turn towards certain axioms and principles upon which philosophy was founded. Leibniz is a rationalist philosopher of principles. In his *Monadology*, he steadfastly upheld two paramount principles that guided his entire line of thought: the Principle of Contradiction and the Principle of Sufficient Reason. In accordance with these principles, he presents two types of truths.

Propositions that contain inherent contradictions are false

The Principle of Contradiction, according to Leibniz, serves as a guiding criterion by which we assess propositions, judgements or claims about anything. It is the principle "in virtue of which we judge that which involves a contradiction to be false and that which is opposed or contradictory to the false to be true." Essentially, the Principle of Contradiction provides a logical basis for distinguishing between statements that are logically coherent and those that are not.

Different formulations and meanings of the law of contradictions

Leibniz develops several formulations of the Principle of Contradiction. Some of them are: 1) For any two contradictory propositions p and q, one is true and the other is false. For example, "all sailors are pirates" is a proposition p. Suppose X makes that claim. How do you contradict X? How do you prove that X is wrong? You can prove that X is wrong by making a proposition q "My brother is in the Navy. He is a sailor, but he is not a pirate." The propositions "all sailors are pirates" (p) and "My brother is in Navy. He is a sailor, but he is not a pirate" (q) are contradictory; one is true and the other is false. The different meanings of the above propositions can be grasped through different formulations made by Leibniz. 2) For any proposition p, p is either true or false, 3) For any proposition p, p is not both true and false, 4) For any proposition p, if p implies a contradiction, then p is false, 5) For any proposition p, if p is false, then not-p is true, 6) For any proposition p, if p is an identical proposition, then p is true.

Principle of Contradiction is related to both logical and metaphysical realms

The principle of contradiction stands as a foundational tenet of rationality and epistemic foundation of Leibnizian philosophy. It asserts that a proposition cannot be simultaneously true and false, forming a cornerstone of logical coherence. This view extended beyond the logical realm, permeating his metaphysical constructs. He contended that monads, as self-contained entities, upheld the principle of contradiction within their essence, thereby grounding the consistency of the universe. Leibniz's all logical principles are to be considered as having metaphysical implications and aims.

Intricate relation between logic and metaphysics; thought and existence

The metaphysical implication of the Law of Non-Contradiction is visible in Leibniz's attempt to relate the Law to his theory of monads. The universe, according to this principle, is comprised of indivisible monads and adheres to a rational structure, where contradictions find no refuge. The emphasis on this principle resonates with his belief in a universe governed by reason and coherence. By aligning logical coherence with metaphysical reality, Leibniz navigated the intricate connection between thought and existence.

Rejection of the randomness in the universe

The Principle of Sufficient Reason is the principle of explanation of the natural phenomena. It states that behind every true statement, every existent fact, there exists an adequate explanation for why things are as they are and not otherwise. In other words, every event, existence, or occurrence must possess a reason or cause. Leibniz here underscores the inherent orderliness of the universe and rejects the randomness, affirming that every aspect of reality is underpinned by a necessary and justifiable rationale. While showing his commitment to a world governed by rationality and intelligibility, he also acknowledges that although these explanations may frequently elude our grasp.

Human knowledge and comprehension and their framework of explanation

The Law of Sufficient Reason carries many epistemological ramifications. It engenders the notion that human understanding and knowledge rest on an unwavering foundation. Just as the universe adheres to an intricate web of causes, human comprehension operates within a framework of explanations. This principle reinforces Leibniz's endeavor to bridge the realms of metaphysics and rational inquiry, elevating his philosophy beyond speculative conjecture.

In tandem with these principles, Leibniz develops a duality of truths; Truths of Reason and Truths of Facts. Truths of Reason

Necessary Truths
disregards anything

son emanate from the first principle, the Principle of Contradiction. They are characterized by their inherent necessity - by their inability to be otherwise. They constitute a foundation of undeniable logic where their negation is inconceivable. To put it in different words, Truths of Reason are inherently necessary and independent of empirical circumstances.

Logical and
Mathematical Truths

Truths of Reason are ascertained by a logical analysis parallel to the mathematicians' derivation of theorems from axioms and definitions; their ultimate basis is the principle of non-contradiction. " $2+2=4$ " is true in all possible worlds and cannot be false, independent of any particular situation or context. Otherwise, to say a truth is necessary means, it is analytic; when a truth is necessary, the reason for it can be found by analysis, that is, by resolving it into simpler ideas and truths until the primary ones are reached such as the truths of geometry and arithmetic.

Truths depending upon
the empirical facts

The Truths of Fact are derived from the second principle, the Principle of Sufficient Reason. These truths find their footing in the realm of contingent reality or empirical facts. Unlike Truths of Reason, they are not bound by absolute necessity. Instead, they are contingent upon various factors and circumstances, allowing for their opposite to be plausible. For example, the statement "It is raining outside" is a Truth of Fact that is either true or false depending on whether it is actually raining outside. It is true or false depending on how the matter under discussion is actually in reality.

Certainty about
Truths of Reason

Leibniz believed that all knowledge was ultimately derived from these two types of truth. While Truths of Fact could be discovered through empirical observation and experience, the Truths of Reason could be known through reason and logic alone. This distinction between two types of Truths is important because it helps us understand the nature of knowledge and the limits of human understanding. While we can have certainty about Truths of Reason, our knowledge of Truths of Fact will always be limited by our experiences and observations and are subject to revision as we gather new information. This dichotomy underscores the epistemic foundation of Leibniz's philosophy, acknowledging both empirical experience and rational deduction.

Uncertainty about
Truths of Facts

The Identity of the Indiscernibles is another significant principle Leibniz developed along with the two principles

The logic and Law of Identity

mentioned above. If A has all its properties in common with B, then A and A are one and the same. Hence, if A and A are not identical, then there must be some difference between them. The converse of this principle says that if A and A are identical, then they have all their properties in common. To Put it differently with two sides, if A is identical with B, then whatever is true of A is also true of B, and whatever is true of B is also true of A. Also, if whatever is true of A is true of B, and vice versa, then A is identical with B.

Summarized Overview

As human beings, we believe in different types of truth. The truths in logic and mathematics are unquestionable and fixed. $2+2=4$ is a truth, wherever that statement is made. That truth is not subject to further examinations or interpretations. The necessary truth such as the above is attained by analysis of the statement itself. However, the truths about facts in empirical world are not fixed, rather subject to further examinations and interpretations. The former is about necessity and the latter is about contingency. By making room for contingency in the universe, Leibniz's intention is to allow for divine and human freedom. The Law of Sufficient Reason has important implications for the study of metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. In metaphysics, it implies that there is a reason why things exist and that the reason is not arbitrary or random. It affirms that the existence of any entity or event can be explained or accounted for by identifying the causes or factors that give rise to it. It challenges the notion of unexplained or contingent existence, urging us to seek out the underlying causes or explanations that justify the reality we observe. In epistemology, it implies that knowledge and understanding are possible because there is a reason why things are the way they are. It tells that our ability to comprehend the world is rooted in the existence of rational explanations and justifications for phenomena. In the pursuit of knowledge, we are driven to uncover the reasons behind facts and events, striving to uncover the underlying principles that make sense of our experiences. The principle aligns with the idea that human cognition is inherently attuned to seeking out patterns, connections causes, and reasons in order to make sense of the world. The Law has implications for ethics as well. By emphasizing the existence of reasons behind actions, choices and moral judgments, it reinforces the idea that ethical decisions should be grounded in rational justifications rather than arbitrary whims or capricious motives. This perspective encourages ethical frameworks that are reasoned, coherent and accountable.

Self-Assessment

1. How did Leibniz attempt for reconciliation of mathematics and metaphysics?
2. What is the pre-established harmony in the universe according to Leibniz?

Assignments

1. Write an essay on the principle of non-contradiction in Leibniz
2. Differentiate between truths of reason and truths of facts.
3. What is Leibniz's theory of substance?

References

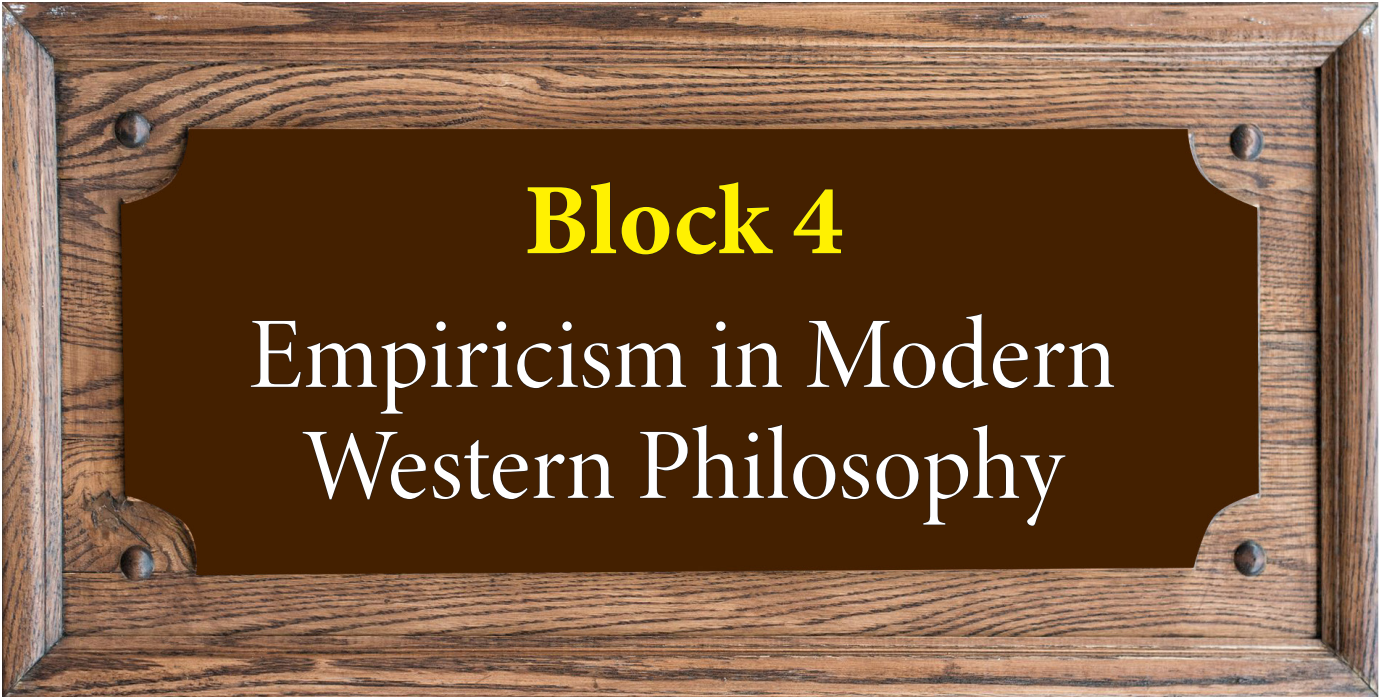
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A wooden frame with a dark brown center containing text. The frame is made of light brown wood with visible grain and four dark brown corner fasteners. The center is a solid dark brown rectangle with rounded corners.

Block 4

Empiricism in Modern Western Philosophy

UNIT 1

John Locke

Learning Outcomes

The unit will:

- give an introduction to John Locke's empiricism
- help the learners understand the fundamental diverging points of empiricism and rationalism
- explain Locke's empiricist theory of human mind and understanding
- briefly discuss Locke's epistemological theory especially the theory of ideas
- give a general idea of matter and its qualities in Locke's philosophy

Background

Empiricism emerged as a movement primarily in Britain during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, roughly the same period as rationalism emerged in Europe. Three key figures associated with British empiricism are John Locke (1632-1704), George Berkeley (1685-1753), and David Hume (1711-1776). Both philosophical movements had different origins and emphases. Empiricism advocates for empirical method as a way to obtain knowledge about the natural world, in contrast with the rationalism. The empirical evidence such as sensory perceptions, experience and observation were brought to the front as the pillars of knowledge instead of reason and innate ideas. Rationalism emphasized human reason and innate ideas as the primary source of knowledge and affirmed that reason alone could reveal the fundamental truths about the world. While the empiricist and rationalist schools shared the broader European Enlightenment movement and some common concerns, they upheld distinct philosophical foundations and approaches to understanding the world.

The British empiricists held experience and observation as the primary sources of knowledge and were critical of the subjective turn of the mind that became prominent in modern philosophy particularly as influenced by Descartes. They were in general skeptical of metaphysical speculation and abstract theories that could not be grounded in empirical evidence. They criticized the rationalist tradition for its reliance on *apriori* reasoning (reasoning prior to experience) and argued that many metaphysical concepts, such as substance or essence were empty and meaningless. Even though the British empiricism emerged in reaction to the Cartesian rationalism, they had common assumptions as much as different issues which separated them. The empiricism famously challenged the notions of innate, clear and distinct ideas in mind independent of the external material world and promoted inductive reasoning which involves drawing general conclusions based on specific observations and experiences. They upheld that knowledge should be based on evidence and concrete instances rather than abstract reasoning from innate ideas. Rejection of the innate knowledge, focus on the concrete and observable world as the foundation of human understanding, emphasis on empirical evidence and skeptical approach towards metaphysical speculation have been the defining features of British empiricism.

Key Themes

Ideas, Sense-experience, Empiricist theory of understanding, Blank slate

Discussion

Examination of the human mind and understanding

Examination of the human mind and understanding and analysis of the nature of our acquisition of knowledge have been general areas of interest of the Enlightenment philosophy especially that of its diverging two movements, empiricism and rationalism. Locke is one of the important philosophers who found his fundamental philosophical project on examination of the human understanding and analysis of knowledge. He was more consistent about the empirical character of all concepts.

Areas coming under the capacity of mind

Locke argued that before we understand and analyse the world, we have to know something fundamental about ourselves. We have to know how we acquire knowledge. We also must know which areas of enquiry and investigation and

Limitations of the mind

what sorts of areas and objects come within the limitation of our minds and what sorts of areas or objects do not come. It is “necessary to examine our own stabilities, and see what objects our understandings were, or were not fitted to deal with.” Locke’s point is that it is only when we understand our cognitive capabilities that we can aptly and rightly direct our investigations and researches into the world.

Philosophical investigations into the ‘ideas’ and ‘thoughts’

The investigation into the thoughts and ideas underscore a shared commitment in Descartes and Locke to exploring the inner workings of the human psyche. Both philosophers venture into the realm of immediate subjective experience, emphasizing that ‘ideas’ and ‘thoughts’ constitute the very fabric of introspection when we engage in an inner examination of ourselves.

Empiricist understanding of ‘ideas’ and ‘thoughts’

As a founder of empiricism, Locke’s philosophy embodies an underlying contemptuous approach to metaphysics, the realm of reality beyond the sensory organs and experiences and observation. Russell says that “Locke is, as a rule, contemptuous of metaphysics.” Locke had issues with the conception of the substance which was dominant in the metaphysics of his time which he considered vague and not useful, even though he did not venture to reject it wholly. At the same time, Locke also believed in the validity of metaphysical arguments for the existence of God, even though he did not dwell on or take refuge in them.

Empiricism and its concepts for metaphysics

Locke’s philosophy was not about following what is traditional and abstract. Russell says, “Whenever he is expressing new ideas, and not merely repeating what is traditional, he thinks in terms of concrete details rather than of large abstractions. His philosophy is piecemeal, like scientific work, not statuesque and all of piece like the great Continental systems of the seventeenth century.” It is from piecemeal and non-metaphysical characteristic of Locke’s philosophy the whole Liberal movement was descended. As it is clear to us, dogmatism was one of the main targets of Liberal movement.

Locke’s piecemeal philosophy

Rejection of grand system of thought

4.1.1 Experience as the Origin of Knowledge

Locke’s empiricism pivots on the fundamental principle that knowledge finds its roots in experience. Countering the tenets of rationalism, it asserts that knowledge is gleaned from

Knowledge from sensory perception and reflection/introspection

Locke's theory of understanding and knowledge

Cartesian influence on Locke

Cartesian 'thoughts' and Lockean 'ideas'

sensory perception and introspection. Experience, according to empiricists like Locke, takes on a dual form - external sensations and inner reflections. The former acquaints us with the tangible aspects of the physical world, while the latter grants insight into the functions of the mind itself.

Locke's path breaking and influential theory of knowledge is contained in his book *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* published in 1689. The essay clearly depicts Locke's interest and insights in philosophy and the foundations of natural science. *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689) and *Two Treatises of Civil Government* (1689) are other two Locke's important works. In the *Two Treatises*, Locke starts to explain the legitimacy of the State after elucidating the state of nature with a natural law which teaches that all human beings are equal and independent without any earthly superiority. Locke maintains, "all are naturally in that state and remain so till by their own consents they make themselves members of some politic society."

The core arguments of an *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* are directly placed in opposition to the most important tenets of Cartesian rationalism. However, Locke's philosophy including the language which he used to express the philosophy was thoroughly influenced by Descartes. Locke and Descartes have had intriguing commonalities in their foundational premises, despite the fact that both were leading figures of divergent philosophical traditions. Both shared the fundamental assumption that complexities of human cognition and the intricacies of philosophical inquiry need a careful examination. Locke anchors his philosophical edifice on the notion of 'ideas' in opposition to the concept of 'thoughts' in Descartes and upon closer inspection, these concepts reveal remarkable similarities. Both philosophers initially draw upon the immediate realm of consciousness, upholding that 'ideas' and 'thoughts' are the fundamental constituents of introspection and self-awareness. Locke was inspired by Descartes in anchoring his philosophy on the mental content of 'ideas' and yet was determined to free the same from its rationalist connotations.

To shed light on one more crucial philosophical exchange and a rich connection of ideas that animated the Enlightenment era, the rationalist Leibniz embarked on a comprehen-

Philosophical exchange
between Locke
and Leibniz

sive critique of Locke's empiricist doctrine and meticulously crafted a momentous work, aptly titled *New Essays on Human Understanding*. The work, containing a formidable treatise that ignited intellectual debate surrounding empiricism, innate ideas and the very nature of human cognition, came to fruition by the year 1704. However, in a twist of fate, 1704 witnessed not only the culmination of Leibniz's work but also the passing away of John Locke. Here, faced with the prospect of engaging in a posthumous intellectual battle with Locke, Leibniz opted for a strategic pause. In a gracious act of intellectual restraint, he chose not to publish his comprehensive response during his own lifetime, allowing the ideas and arguments of both philosophers to stand the test of time. It was only a half-century later, in a philosophical landscape significantly altered by the passage of time and the evolution of thought, that Leibniz's magnum opus did finally see the light of day. It provided a posthumous platform for Leibniz to engage in a nuanced, detailed, and thoroughly considered response to Locke's empiricist doctrine.

How human mind is
furnished with ideas

When we think of
something, ideas about
it pop up in our mind

In the second book of his essay, Locke explains the empiricist doctrine that all our knowledge (with the possible exception of logic and mathematics) is derived from experience. The ultimate question is this: how the human mind comes to be furnished or equipped with the ideas it has? It is through the experiences, the empiricists would say. In the day-to-day life, we think of many complex things like human beings, food, banks, justice, numbers and travels. The fact that we think of them means certain ideas arise in our minds about them or that our minds get furnished with ideas about them. Locke's claim is that the ultimate origin of all those ideas is from experience. In other words, it is the experience from which all those ideas arise.

Ideas of sensation come
to us through senses

Locke explains two distinct forms of experience through which ideas are acquired; sensation or outer experience and reflection or inner experience. The reflection or inner experience is the introspective awareness of the workings of one's own mind. The former provides us with ideas from the five sensory organs. The ideas are the immediate objects of our understanding. The sight gives us ideas of colours, hearing gives us ideas of sounds, touching gives us ideas of shape and size and so on. My idea of an animal is a product of seeing dogs and cows, my idea of sound of thunder is a product of

Ideas of reflection come to us through the activity of mind'

hearing it, and my idea of taste of a certain dish is a product of tasting the same and so on. Through reflection or inner experience, Locke indicates the active nature of the human mind. The mind constantly performs many operations which include various cognitive activities such as thinking, remembering, believing, imagining, desiring, knowing, doubting, etc. In these mental activities, we reflect on ideas. Locke believes these activities to be another mode of experience which give rise to the ideas in the mind.

Our observations is either external objects or internal objects of the mind

Locke elaborates the two modes of experience in his statement: "Experience: In that, all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our Observation employed either about external, sensible Objects; or about the internal Operations of our Minds, perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that, which supplies our Understandings with all the material of thinking. These two are the Fountains of Knowledge, from whence all the Ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring". Locke also explains the knowledge as the "perception of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas." Wherever there is a perception of the agreement is, there is knowledge and wherever this is a perception of the disagreement, there is no knowledge. In such occasions, "we may fancy, guess, or believe, yet we always come short of Knowledge." Here, Locke upholds the binary between knowledge and fancy/guessing/belief.

Internal objects of the mind are the operations of mind

4.1.2 Theory of Ideas: Critique of Nativism / Innatism

Ideas are mental objects/contents

Locke's philosophy, significantly the epistemology, is founded on his theory of ideas. Locke views idea as mental content or mental object. In his book *A Short History of Modern Philosophy: From Descartes to Wittgenstein*, Roger Scruton states that Locke views ideas "as a kind of mental object, which can be pushed around in the mind and combined and separated just as physical objects might be."

The concept of the mind as a blank slate - a *tabula rasa* - prior to sense experience is central to Locke's philosophy especially the epistemology. Locke starts the first book of the *Essay* with his rejection of innate ideas and presentation of the mind as blank slate. The mind of the infant is a

Mind is an empty canvas awaiting the brushstrokes of experience

blank slate which gradually accumulates ideas through sensory interactions with the world and upon which external experiences inscribe knowledge, Locke argues. That is to say, our minds lack pre-existing knowledge; rather, they serve as vessels ready to be shaped by sensory encounters and introspection. Locke explains the blank slate theory as following: “Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store, which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer in one word, from experience: in that all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself.”

All our ideas and knowledge are acquired through experience

Locke views perception as “the first step and degree towards knowledge and the inlet of all the materials of it.” While the view that perception is the first step towards knowledge became an accepted axiom or a truism in later times, it was a bold innovation at that time. Because, in his time, the mind was believed to know all kinds of things *a priori* – prior to experience and thus the complete dependence of knowledge upon perception was a revolutionary proclamation.

Locke’s Rejection of innate ideas

Locke’s main intention behind proposing the blank slate theory is refutation of the theory of the innate ideas (theory of nativism) propounded by rationalist philosophers. The nativist view holds that human beings have mental content which is innate in the mind. It suggests that there exist certain ideas (units of mental content) which are neither acquired via experience nor constructed by the mind out of reflection of the ideas received via experience. The innate ideas, as the term suggests, purport to be ideas ingrained in human consciousness from the moment of birth. These ideas were traditionally attributed to a mysterious source, often ascribed to a divine origin, with God being believed to inscribe these concepts into our minds.

Rationalists accept innate ideas

The concept of innate ideas finds its most frequent association with the Platonic and Cartesian philosophical traditions both of which contend that a portion of human knowledge is inborn. Plato, in the *Theaetetus*, had refuted the identification of knowledge with perception, and from his time onwards almost all philosophers, down to and including Descartes and Leibniz, had taught that much of our most valuable knowledge

is not derived from experience. Descartes, the rationalist philosopher, regards intrinsic thoughts as the foundational premise of logical reasoning. Similarly, the belief in innate ideas forms the bedrock of rationalistic philosophy. The notion of innate ideas further encompasses the idea that the mind retains memories of a prior stage of existence. These innate ideas, proponents argue, represent immutable truths that require no validation through sensory experience. The universality of these ideas is often used as a litmus test for their innateness.

Innate ideas stifle the free enquiry of human beings

In contrast to this position, Locke argues that such ideas stifle free inquiry by appealing to authority rather than reason. In Locke's perspective, "There is nothing in the intellect which was not previously in the sense." All knowledge is acquired through sensation or experience, and any concept that does not align with this principle is rejected.

We can be aware of any idea only after we employ the mind to understand certain experiences

Locke argues that there are no innate ideas or principles in our mind, whether speculative or practical. He rejects both the views that we have innate ideas such as God, identity ($2+2=4$), substance, space, infinity and so forth and the view that we have innate principles or maxims such as the whole is greater than the part. He also rejects any innate moral principles or maxims such as treat others as you wanted to be treated or do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Locke's point is that none of the mental content presumed to be innate is universally shared and accepted by all humans. He notes that children and the mentally disabled, for example, do not have in their minds an allegedly innate complex thought like "equals taken from equals leave equals". In short, any idea or maxim or principle being innate means that all humans irrespective of their space and time do equally share and live with that idea or maxim or principle. But, there is no such idea. We have no awareness of either ideas or rational principles, until we have begun to exercise the mind in the attempt to understand experience.

Experiences precede ideas and knowledge

Minimal ideas of the mental content

4.1.3 Simple and Complex Ideas

After refuting the innate ideas, Locke categorizes the ideas into two; simple and complex. As already stated, the experience (sensation and reflection) provides us with ideas which are the building blocks of knowledge. Now, simple ideas are the minimal units of the mental content which form the bed-

rock of understanding, emanating directly from sensory experiences. They are the rudimentary perceptions or the simplest form of perception encompassing attributes like color, shape, size, and texture.

Simple idea is uncompounded

Locke defines the simple idea as that idea which is “in itself uncompounded, [and] contains in it nothing but *one uniform Appearance*, or Conception in the mind, and is not distinguishable into different *Ideas*.” The ideas of redness, orange colour, of light, of the coolness, or, those of sweetness are the examples of simple ideas. Locke’s theory of knowledge is built upon the foundation of ideas.

Complex ideas are compounded of various simple ideas

Our idea of a glass of lemon juice or my idea of the New York City transit system, for example, could not be classified under simple ideas. According to Locke, they are complex ideas which are more abstract and are the product of combining our simple ideas together in various ways. In the above examples, our idea of a glass of lemon juice is complex as it consists of various simple ideas such as the lemon, the feeling of coolness, a certain sweet taste, juice, and so forth combined together into one object. Locke believes that our ideas are compositional. That means, simple ideas combine to form complex ideas wherein the complex ideas can be combined to form even more complex ideas. The complexity of our knowledge is built up through this process. On the other way, Locke views that all our complex ideas can be deconstructed into simple ones, painting a picture of knowledge as a mosaic of perceptual building blocks.

Making empiricism reasonable

Everything we can possibly think of can be broken down to simple ideas

Locke’s philosophical commitment in the book II of the *Essay* is to make the empiricism plausible. It is towards this aim, he affirms all our ideas, that is, everything we can possibly think of, can be broken down into simple ideas received in our experience, that is the sensation and reflection. Locke does this not only by offering an account of how even obscure ideas such as space, infinity, God and causation could be constructed using only the simple ideas received in experience but also by examining various abilities/capacities/faculties that the human mind has such as memory, abstraction, volition, and so on.

4.1.4 Primary and Secondary Qualities

According to Locke, quality is a power that a body/substance/thing has to produce ideas in us. For example, a

Locke's distinction of qualities of an object

simple object like a ripe banana which can produce ideas of yellow colour, peels, curved shape, solidity and yet softness and determinate size must have a series of corresponding qualities. There must be something in the banana which gives us the idea of yellow colour, something which gives us the idea of peels and curved shape, and so on. The primary/secondary quality distinction is made by Locke upon the claim that some of these qualities are very different from others.

Primary qualities are inherent in object and thus objective

The primary qualities are inherent in object itself (objective), inseparable from it and are independent of individual perception or observation. These unchanging attributes, such as extension, solidity, shape, motion and rest serve as the bedrock for our understanding of the external world. The primary qualities can be measured and quantified. In contrast, secondary qualities are subjective, dependent on the observer's perception and are not inherent in the object itself. The color, taste, sound and smell exemplify these attributes, whose perception varies from person to person. There have been critics against this conceptualization of secondary qualities. According to them, the secondary qualities also are real qualities of bodies. They argue that a colour I see is not identical with my sensation of it, but is that sensation's cause.

Secondary qualities are existing in the subjects

Summarized Overview

Locke put forth a theory of knowledge in which the habit of empirical investigation was given precedence over metaphysics. Metaphysics is the theory of (knowing/understanding) reality and Locke believed that we should direct our faculty of knowledge/understanding to the realities in piecemeal sense not in a systematic and grand sense. However, there are nuances in Locke's philosophy. While Locke strictly rejected the innate ideas which are conceived to be imprinted or inscribed in the human mind since birth, he upheld the concept of abstract ideas. The debate whether we have innate ideas or not contain a serious dispute over the status of *a priori* truths among philosophers and linguists. There are linguists who argue that without innate concepts, language acquisition is possible. About the abstract ideas, Locke, like his empiricist contemporaries believed that they are obliged to explain our ability to form general notions or abstract ideas as that ability is exercised in our almost all thoughts. The point is this: if all ideas derive from experience, they ought to reflect the particular features of the experiences from which they arise or originate. If that is the case, none of our thoughts can become general in its nature as the experiences are irreducibly particular. However, we can have general/abstract ideas. The complex ideas are made

when we bring together separate single ideas into a composite whole or when we separate ideas in such a way where we are able to generate what is common to all of them. Locke calls this latter process abstraction giving a considerable significance in the origin of human knowledge. It is the abstraction which provides us the ability to use general terms. The general words or terms become general by being made the sign of general ideas and the general ideas are derived from particular ideas or ideas of particular things by a process of abstraction.

Self-Assessment

1. What is Locke's view of human mind and understanding?
2. Do you think experience is the origin of knowledge?

Assignments

1. Empiricism rejects innate ideas while rationalism accepts it. Elaborate
2. Write an essay on the distinction between simple and complex ideas
3. Do we need to have experience at first in order to have ideas in our mind? Or is it vice versa? Critically evaluate.

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UNIT 2

George Berkeley

Learning Outcomes

The unit will:

- give a general introduction to George Berkeley's empiricism and his critique of the traditional empiricism
- discuss his subjective idealism and rejection of abstract ideas
- elucidate Berkeley's criticism of Locke's distinction of primary and secondary qualities
- explicate the converging and diverging empiricist points in Berkeley and Locke

Background

George Berkeley's (1685-1753) empiricist philosophy is both a revision of the empiricist doctrines of his contemporary Locke and a rejection of the rationalist doctrines like that of Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz. Berkeley's philosophy attempts to apply empiricist principles more consistently than Locke. The Anglo-Irish philosopher also founds his philosophy on 'ideas', the philosophically heated topic of his time. As we know, both schools of the enlightenment philosophy such as rationalism and empiricism had put a thrust on mental content / mental object. While the mental content is 'thoughts' according to Descartes, Locke called them 'ideas' and both considered the same as building blocks of knowledge. While the empiricist Locke considered simple ideas presented by the senses as the basic building blocks of knowledge, the rationalist Leibniz considered the notion of simple ideas as an illusion. Berkeley considered matter as an abstract idea and believed that by rejecting abstract idea, matter could be rejected. This helped him uphold his belief in spiritualism and reject the materialism. All the empiricist and rationalist philosophers including Berkeley were trying to give a more accurate scientific account of the objects in the world.

Key Themes

Empiricism, Subjective idealism, Immaterialism, Centrality of consciousness

Discussion

No distinction
between objective and
subjective qualities

Berkeley's philosophy was established on the philosophical scape Leibniz and other contemporaries had built. Leibniz rejected Locke's epistemological dualism which separated primary qualities which were objective and inherently in the object such as shape, figure, size and motion from secondary qualities which were subjective and existing in the percipient such as colour and smell. Leibniz regarded both qualities as phenomenal. Berkeley, whose works were read and approved by Leibniz, advanced this philosophical position on this point.

Religious and spiritual
foundation of Berkeley's
philosophy

As a Bishop of the Church of Ireland, motivation behind Berkeley's philosophical approach to the world was religious and spiritual. His philosophical project was countering scepticism and materialism upon which the modern science is built. The groundbreaking scientific discoveries of stalwarts like Newton and Boyle in his time had ushered in that era where faith in divine creator was questioned, leading to a dismissal of the spiritual in favour of the material. Berkeley believed that this shift towards materialism posed a direct challenge to religious beliefs. He viewed scepticism, materialism and atheism, the streams of thought which place the matter at the centre, as fundamentally at odds with notions of divinity, spiritualism and the inherent value of human consciousness.

Making room for
spirituality and
belief in God

Matter exists only in mind

It is in countering the surge of scientific materialism, Berkeley proposed the idealistic theory that everything is our mental idea and there is no such thing as matter. Every matter in the world has existence only in the minds of the perceivers or, to say, matter has existence only depending upon the mind. Through idealism, Berkeley's aim was to provide an intellectual foundation that would reaffirm the significance of the spiritual and the divine in understanding reality.

According to Berkeley, substance is not an independent entity but rather a collection of ideas. In his alternative philosophical perspective to Locke, Berkeley advocated epis-

Trees and chairs are nothing but bundles of ideas

All physical objects are composed of ideas

Modern philosophy starts by inferring external world from thought

Against abstract ideas

temological monism, according to which, substance is nothing but an idea, making Locke's dualistic approach out of date. Berkeley pointed out that Locke's arguments about secondary qualities apply to primary qualities as well. In this direction, Berkeley radicalized the notion that everything is an emanation of the ego. In *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710 C.E) and *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* (1713 C.E), Berkeley expounds two metaphysical theses; idealism which says whatever exists is either a mind or depends upon a mind for its existence, and, immaterialism which says matter does not exist. In 1709 C.E, Berkeley also published *An Essay Towards A New Theory of Vision*.

Russell, who rejects the idealistic philosophy, critically explains this trajectory of western philosophy: "Modern philosophy begins with Descartes, whose fundamental certainty is the existence of himself and his thoughts, from which the external world is to be inferred. This was only the first stage in a development, through Berkeley and Kant, to Fichte, for whom everything is only an emanation of the ego. This was insanity, and, from this extreme, philosophy has been attempting, ever since, to escape into the world of every-day common sense."

4.2.1 Critique of Abstract Ideas: Rejection of Materialism

In the Introduction to the *Principles of Human Knowledge* Berkeley puts forth that abstract ideas propounded by Locke are the source of all doubts and uncertainty in philosophical discussions. Berkeley's basic attempt is to trace the principles which distanced philosophy from *common sense and intuition* and to restore common sense and intuition in philosophy.

Berkeley finds the source of skepticism in the theory of abstract ideas. He puts forth three arguments; 1) abstract ideas cannot be formed, 2) they are not needed for communication or knowledge, 3) they are inconsistent and inconceivable. He rejects the theory of abstract ideas on the ground that qualities of things can never really exist apart from each other, rather only mixed with each other and blended together. He also rejects the notion that mind can abstract ideas of things. "It is agreed on all hands, that the qualities or modes of things do never really exist, each of them apart by itself, and sepa-

Rejection of Abstract ideas

rated from all others, but are mixed, as it were, and blended together, several in the same object. But we are told, the mind being able to consider each quality singly, or abstracted from those other qualities with which it united, does by that means frame to itself abstract ideas...Not that it is possible for colour or motion to exist without extension: but only that the mind can frame to itself by abstraction the idea of colour exclusive of extension, and of motion exclusive of both colour and extension."

Locke's view of abstract ideas

The abstract ideas are the generalized mental concepts in the intellect. The mind, according to Locke, observes likenesses among objects/things and then sort them under abstract general ideas to which it attaches general names like man, woman, rose, dog, etc. According to Locke, the ability to form general ideas/universal ideas is the most important difference between humans and other animals. Also, unlike animals, we use language and the words of language have meaning by standing for ideas, and general words, such as sortal predicates, correspond to abstract general ideas.

We get abstract idea of man when we focus on only common ideas of the same category

Abstract ideas are obtained in the following manner, according to Armstrong: "The mind having observed that Peter, James and John resemble each other in certain common agreements of shape and other qualities, leaves out of the complex or compound idea it has of Peter, James, and any other particular man, that which is peculiar to each, retaining only what is common to all, and so makes an abstract idea, wherein all the particulars equally partake; abstracting entirely from and cutting off all those circumstances and differences which might determine it to any particular existence. And after this manner, it is said we come by the abstract idea of Man." This means to say that abstract idea contains colour, shape and stature but no particular colour, shape or stature.

The idea of man cannot be abstract, it is white or black, short or tall, etc.

Berkeley's critique of abstract ideas rests on his assertion that each idea possesses specificity and concreteness. He challenges the premise that abstract ideas were genuine mental constructs, suggesting instead that they were linguistic tools used for communication and categorization. In doing so, he overturns the established understanding that abstract ideas were intrinsic to the mind's cognitive architecture. The abstract idea of man mentioned above is absurd, according to Berkeley. He says: "The idea of man that I frame myself must

Independent existence of the world outside the mind in empiricist philosophy

be either of a white or a black, or a tawny, a straight, or a crooked, a tall, or a low or a middle-sized man. I cannot by any effort of thought conceive the abstract idea.” In challenging abstract ideas and the underlying fabric of materialism, Berkeley reimagined fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality, existence of the external world and the role of the mind in shaping our perception of the world.

4.2.2 Subjective Idealism: The World as Perceived

Sensory experience is a window to the world in traditional sense

In the traditional empiricist philosophy, sensory experience served as a window to the external world. Sensation was considered to be the method to perceive the world and the objects in it were considered to be having an independent and external existence outside the mind. The subjective idealism made a radical departure from traditional philosophical view that posited an objective world existing independently of human consciousness. According to the subjective idealism, the world contains nothing but spirits and their ‘ideas’.

Mind gives us images of the material world in traditional sense

According to Locke’s representational theory of knowledge, the mind apprehends or captures images representing material objects existing in the world. It affirmed that the mind represents the material world through mental images or that we get access to the material world only through the representational images of the mind. Berkeley, being a strong advocate of subjective idealism, raised compelling objections to this perspective.

Berkeley’s rejection of the representational theory

Objects/matter have no inherent qualities

The assertion that objects lack inherent qualities and subsist solely as products of perception is central to Berkeley’s philosophical architecture. This point stands in stark contrast to traditional empiricism, where sensory experiences served as windows to the external world. While empiricists such as Locke and Hume recognized the centrality of sense perception in knowledge acquisition, Berkeley, with a deeper vision, dismantled the very notion of objective material world/things with intrinsic attributes.

Objects/matter exists only as products of our perception

Berkeley got philosophical inspiration from metaphysics of Locke and found his philosophy upon the empiricist tradition, however, only to attack the same later in his pursuit

Both primary and secondary qualities are relative and are in mind

of the rejection of materialism and atheism. Berkeley rejected Locke's distinction of primary and secondary qualities by stating that Locke makes such a distinction by a mere abstraction which has no sense. Both the primary and secondary qualities have same kind of existence and thus the primary qualities are mental as much as the secondary qualities are. In a different sense, Berkeley upholds that both primary and secondary qualities are relative to the perceiver, in contrast to Locke's assertion that secondary qualities are relative while the primary qualities are absolute.

When we utter words, we mean experiences/ideas

Berkeley attempts to fill in the gap, left open by Locke's empiricist theory of meaning, between experience and idea. In *A Short History of Modern Philosophy: From Descartes to Wittgenstein*, Roger Scruton says: "Berkeley makes experiences and ideas one and the same: a perception of a red book, an image of a red book, an idea of a red book - these are all examples of one kind of thing, different in name, but not in nature. Hence there is no difficulty in showing how words are given sense by their application in experience: everything denoted by a word is, in effect, an experience (or idea), and there need never be any doubt in our mind as to what we mean by the words we utter."

Experiences and ideas are same

To exist is to be perceived

Berkeley's foundational dictum "to be is to be perceived" (*esse est percipii*) postulates that the existence of an object hinges on its being perceived by a conscious mind. If everything which confronts us is an idea, as we have said, then the principle of existence must be found in the nature of ideas. It is absurd, however, to think of ideas as existing outside the mind. And to exist in a mind means to be perceived by that mind. Hence, nothing can exist which is not perceived. In short, the world is nothing but a mental construct woven together by the act of perception.

If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?

Summarized Overview

Subjective idealism underscores the centrality of consciousness in shaping our understanding of the world. It is a notion that reverberates through contemporary debates in philosophy and cognitive science theory and triggers introspection on the nature of reality and on the intricate interplay between the mind and the perceived world. It encourages a critical examination of the relationship between the perceiving self and the external environment. Furthermore, it raises questions about the limitations and biases of human perception, prompting us to question whether our perception faithfully mirrors reality or constructs its own version. It also invites us to ponder the boundaries of human understanding, the malleability of reality through perception, and the intricate tapestry woven between the mind and the world. By positioning the mind as the ultimate creator of the perceived world, Berkeley asks us to delve into the profound mysteries of consciousness, cognition, and the intricate relation between subjectivity and objectivity.

Self-Assessment

1. Do you believe that objects/matter have no inherent qualities and that they exist only as products of our perception?
2. How did Berkeley reject the distinction between primary and secondary qualities in Locke's philosophy?

Assignments

1. Write an essay on critique of abstract ideas/rejection of materialism Berkeley.
2. The world is as perceived. Elaborate Berkeley's subjective idealism.
3. What is an abstract idea? How did Berkeley reject the abstract idea?

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UNIT 3

David Hume

Learning Outcomes

The unit will enable the learner to:

- understand the basics of Hume's philosophy especially his skeptical approach to traditional epistemology and ethics
- compare and contrast his empiricist position with that of his contemporaries and predecessors including his critiques of traditional metaphysics and rationalism
- critically evaluate Hume's philosophical views about the problem of induction and skepticism
- appreciate the empiricist rigor in Hume's understanding of knowledge, experience, reason, morality and the personal identity of humans

Background

Hume (1711–1776) led the empiricism as a philosophical school to its extreme position. Hume took the empiricist principles of his predecessors like Locke and Berkeley to an anti-metaphysical extreme. As an empiricist philosophy, it emphasized the importance of evidence, observation and empirical inquiry as the foundation of knowledge. But Hume's empiricism went beyond that and firmly grounded its roots in naturalism and scepticism. Naturalism in epistemology asserts that knowledge and our understanding of the world should be grounded in the methods and findings of the natural sciences. The naturalistic epistemology often rejects supernatural or non-natural explanations for knowledge and cognition. And the naturalism in ethics asserts that moral values and principles are, in some way, grounded in or explained by the natural world, not by supernatural or non-natural sources. Naturalistic ethics contrasts with moral theories that appeal to divine command, divine source of moral law, metaphysical entities or non-natural properties.

Key Themes

Radical empiricism, Problem of induction, Scepticism, Denial of the self

Discussion

Radical empiricism

Hume, the Scottish philosopher, born in 1711 in Edinburgh, United Kingdom, from the empiricist tradition left an ineradicable mark on the landscape of Western philosophy. Hume's philosophical journey was characterized by his critical examination of prevailing theories in epistemology, ethics, politics and his groundbreaking revisions. He was a bold sceptic and freethinker in his intellectual outlook.

Paradigmatic shift in Hume's philosophy

Hume published path breaking works like *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739 - 40), *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* - a shorter and modified version of the *Treatise* (1758) and *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (posthumously published in 1779). His life and philosophy are elucidated in his autobiographical note *My Own Life*. Hume's first major work, *A Treatise* published at the age of 27, laid the foundation for his subsequent reputation. His later work *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* solidified his stature as a philosophical thinker. In these works, Hume challenged established philosophical theories, activating a paradigm shift.

Destruction of the metaphysics

Scepticism became a hallmark of his philosophy, redefining concepts like the world, self, personal identity, and reason. His critical inquiries extended to the realms of causality, induction, morality, and ethics, challenging existing notions. He questioned not only traditional beliefs but also the very nature of knowledge and reason and their foundations. In his extreme empiricist philosophy with roots in naturalism, one of the main attempts was to destroy the metaphysics. Roger Scruton states: "When Hume was to draw out what he considered to be the true consequences of the empiricist assumptions, he was to put forward what Locke and Berkeley had merely hoped for: a philosophy dedicated to the destruction of metaphysics, and founded in a complete science of human nature."

Philosophy founded in a science of human nature

According to Russell, the period of history which we call 'modern' is unique and different from that of the medie-

val period mainly in its ‘mental outlook’. He takes two things as the most important ways of its uniqueness, the diminishing authority of the Church and the increasing authority of science. With these two, others are connected. The modern mental outlook reached its extreme naturalist and positivist level in Hume.

4.3.1 Impressions and Ideas: The Source of Knowledge

Origins of mental perceptions

Hume ventures beyond the empiricist conclusions of his predecessors, revealing the potential pitfalls of their epistemological stances. His theory of knowledge starts with discussions about the origins of mental perceptions laid out in the opening sections of both the *Treatise* and *Enquiry*. Hume states that all human knowledge derives from two sources, ‘impressions’ and ‘ideas’ resounding the empiricist commitment to sensory experience as the foundation of understanding.

Two kinds of perception

Hume’s philosophy is anchored in the relationship between impressions and ideas which are the two kinds of the contents of the mind or the two kinds of perceptions. Impressions are the foundation of knowledge, acting as the building blocks of understanding. They are the vibrant, immediate perceptions experienced through the senses or reflections. That is, they are of two categories: impressions of sensation and impressions of reflection. The impressions of sensation originate from the senses when we see, for example, an elephant or horse. The impressions of reflection arise from mental experiences such as emotions, thoughts and imaginations as we get the impression of the elephant or horse while remembering, imagining or thinking about them.

Every idea has a corresponding impression

The ideas are the ‘faint images’ of them in thinking, reasoning or imagining. Hume’s fundamental maxim “no idea without an antecedent impression” means that it is from the impressions our ideas do originate. He says: “Every simple idea has a simple impression, which resembles it; and every simple impression a correspondent idea...All our simple ideas in their first appearance are derived from simple impressions, which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent.”

Within this context, Hume distinguishes between forcefulness and vivacity among impressions and ideas. While

Sensory experience
shapes the
human cognition

listening to music creates an impression full of intensity, remembering that music generates an idea that lacks the same vibrancy. Impressions are livelier and more forceful than ideas. Hume argues that ideas are formed by compounding various impressions. The absence of an impression means the absence of an idea. This close connection between impressions and ideas underscores the integral role of sensory experiences in shaping human cognition. Hume's empiricism is based on the theory of meaning which substantially articulates the fundamental empiricist postulate that there can be no concept except where there is experience. This heated debate was later addressed intensely by Kant in his synthesis of empiricism and rationalism

4.3.2 Association of Ideas

Relation between ideas

After the origination of ideas, Hume explores the association of ideas. By the association of ideas, he means the relation of ideas. If the impressions and ideas are the blocks of the knowledge and understanding and the impressions precede the ideas, how the ideas are related? Hume's exploration of the association of ideas extends beyond the empiricist realm and reveals his keen analytical prowess.

Understanding
the empirical facts

To explain the relation of ideas, Hume introduces the framework called 'Hume's Fork' classifying knowledge into two categories: Relations of Ideas and Matters of Fact. We get every knowledge in either of these two forms. To put it differently, all our knowledge is either knowledge about Relations of Ideas or about Matters of Facts. These two are the basic forms of human understanding. The knowledge about Relations of Ideas involves the logical connection between ideas, demonstrating *apriori* and necessary truths; truths which exist independent of the empirical world and the experience. The knowledge about truths of Mathematics and geometry, such as $2+2=4$ and the knowledge about truths about logic such as *All men are mortal, Plato is a man and therefore, Plato is mortal*, exemplify this category, where truths emerge from the relationship between symbols. The mathematical or logical truths are necessary truths. They are called 'tautologous' or 'verbal' truths.

The knowledge about Matters of Fact, on the other hand, pertains to empirical evidence and *aposteriori* statements.

Understanding the logical ideas

These truths are contingent and based on empirical observation. For instance, the knowledge that lightening accompanies with thunder, pertains to empirical observation and evidence. Hume emphasizes the essential role of both Relations of Ideas and Matters of Fact in human understanding. However, his philosophical scrutiny extends to the limits of induction which made huge implications in the field of scientific enquiry as much as our daily life.

4.3.4 Problem of Induction: Denial of Causality

Problems of empirical induction

Hume elevated the level of empiricism and made it strong and fatal. At the same time, he threw empiricism into a dilemma by showing the limits of empirical reasoning. In comparison to his empiricist contemporaries, Hume stands out for his exploration of the ‘problem of induction.’ The problem of induction challenges the notion that we can rationally justify our beliefs about future events or phenomena based on past observations. It states that the claims of causality are not necessarily empirically sound because it cannot be proven. While Locke and Berkeley established the role of sense perception, Hume delves deeper by questioning the inherent validity of inductive reasoning based on sense perception.

No justification to generalize our past and present observations to the future

Hume raises the problem of induction agreeing with the point that all cause-effect relationships are based on induction. In the induction, we arrive at a generalized conclusion from observation of various particular occurrences or events. The crows that we have seen till this moment are black in colour. We have observed that crows are black in various particular events and we have had its truth from various particular experiences in the past. However, Hume says there is a problem when we generalize all our past and present observations to the future and make a statement that “all crows are black.”

How can we be so certain that the crow we have not seen yet is black?

Problem of deduction in inductive statements

Hume says that we cannot ascertain a future event from the regularly conjoined past experiences. There are chances of a leap in the process of induction. For Hume, the inferences derived from induction are absolutely problematic. There is no logical necessity or necessary connection between the two events. There are no such things as one as the necessary cause of another. There is no certainty in saying that the sun will rise in the east tomorrow morning.

Radical critique of causality

In the problem of induction, Hume is unleashing a radical critique of causality (cause-effect relationship). While Locke and Berkeley accepted the causal connection in the empirical world as self-evident, Hume shakes its underlying premises. He dismisses the concept of any necessary connection between cause and effect, demanding a re-evaluation of the notion of causality itself. Hume's inquiry leads him to question the origin of the idea of causation and the principles that underpin it. Russell says: "In the Cartesian philosophy, as in that of the Scholastics, the connection of cause and effect was supposed to be necessary, as logical connections are necessary. The first really serious challenge to this view came from Hume, with whom the modern philosophy of causation begins."

Priority in time and proximity in space

Hume's scepticism unfolds in his exploration of the necessity of causality. Hume analyses the cause-effect relation and says that it is a complex idea made up of three fundamental ideas; priority in time, proximity in space and necessary connection. About the priority in time, if we say that event X causes event Y, what we mean is that X occurs prior to Y. If Y were to occur before X, then it would not make sense to say that X was the cause of Y. About the idea of proximity in space, if we say that X causes Y, then we mean that Y is in proximity to or close to X. For example, if I throw a stone into water and at that moment a crow flying high falls dead onto the ground, or, if I throw a stone in India and at that moment someone's window in Japan breaks, none would conclude that my stone killed the crow or broke the window on some other side of the world. The dead crow and the stone in the first example and the broken window and the stone in the second example must be in proximity with each other. However, priority in time and proximity in space alone do not make up the entire notion of causality/cause-effect relationship. To take for an example, if I speak and the lights go out in my home, none would conclude that my speaking was the cause for the lights to go off, despite the conditions of priority and proximity were fulfilled.

No necessity that effect should follow the cause

The third fundamental idea which makes up the causality is the necessary connection between cause X and effect Y. We believe that, if X causes Y, then there is a necessary connection between X and Y. However, Hume rejects this common but mistake notion in order to deny the causality. He argues that we cannot get an idea of necessary connection by observing it through sensory experiences. If there were any necessary connection between cause and the effect, we would have got an

external impression of the same at least once. But, we do not get any external sensory impression of the causal power while we observe cause-effect relationship. Rather, all what we ever observe/see is that cause X constantly conjoined with effect Y. Neither does the concept of necessary connection arise from an internal impression.

Habitual association of two things mistaken as necessary connection

Hume's point is that all what we have in such cases is the experience of a constant conjunction of events A and B - repeated sense experiences where events or occurrences resembling A are always followed by events or occurrences resembling B. The experience of constant conjunction produces in our mind a habit so that upon any appearance of A, we expect B to follow it. This habit, in turn, produces an internal feeling of expectation "to pass from an object to the idea of its usual attendant." That is, in such repeated cases, our mind passes from the object A to the idea of the usual attendant of B. It is from this impression of usual conjunction of B with A, our mind derives the idea of necessary connection. Hume's core point is that this habit is mind's business. It is the mind's work which is in action here, not the work of external objects. That is, the association of ideas or assuming one idea from another here is nothing but purely the custom of the mind. It is based on the constant conjunction. Thus, what we call cause-effect relation is only a psychological necessity and not a logical necessity. Hume's profound conclusion is that causality is not an inherent property of the external world, but a product of repeated human observations and mental habits. The irresistible feature of Hume's philosophy is depicted in Russell's words: "In Hume, the empiricist philosophy culminated in a scepticism which none could refute and none could accept."

4.3.5 Hume's Morality and Denial of the Self

Reason is not the basis of morality

Hume upholds a secular moral theory and argues against the view that God plays any important role in the creation and reinforcement of moral values. He theorizes the moral issues from this-worldly perspective where God is not the arbitrary moral source. He upholds that what is right and what is wrong is determined according to the useful and pleasing consequences and results of our actions. Roger Scruton says that Hume's moral view asserted that "reason can deliver to us no more than the relations among ideas. Hence it provides no insight into the ends of our conduct, however useful it might

be in calculating the means to them.”

Hume's inspiration for
utilitarian theory
of morality

In his attempt to explore the structure of the ‘human nature’ from which morality derives, he famously affirmed that “reason is the slave of passions.” This was radical act to dissociate morality from reason. Hume Introduced the term ‘utility’ into the moral vocabulary which became the cornerstone of the classical utilitarian views of Bentham and Mill. Hume’s basic point is that we cannot derive *ought* from *is* suggesting that statements of moral obligations cannot be simply deduced from statements of fact. Hume’s view can be seen as the forerunner to the emotivist metaethical view which stresses on the emotive underside of the moral judgements. According to this view, moral judgments principally express our feelings and emotions, not reason.

Denial of a unified self

Hume’s departure from conventional thought is most evident in his denial of self. He rejects the existence of a substantive, enduring self that transcends perceptions. Hume asserts that knowledge must be derived from impressions, and as such, the notion of a soul substance lacks empirical evidence. He refutes the idea of a continuous, indivisible, immaterial, and imperishable thinking substance. Hume’s analysis of the self reveals that it is not a fixed entity but a dynamic bundle of perceptions. He argues that the self arises from the constant flow of perceptions, rather than being an independent observer of them. The denial of a unified self challenges conventional notion of identity and agency.

We are just a bundle of
perceptions

While denying that we have any experience of a simple, individual impression that we can call the self, he says: “For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of 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”. In this view, we are just a bundle of different perceptions. Hume’s stance suggests that human actions are determined by passions and desires, rather than autonomous will.

Summarized Overview

Hume developed the empiricism of Locke and Berkeley to its logical conclusion and by making it self-consistent, he made it incredible. Hume represents, in a certain sense, a dead end of empiricism and thus to refute him has been, ever since, a favourite pastime among metaphysicians. The foundation of Hume's philosophy embodies a tension between scepticism and naturalism, especially in epistemology and ethics, seeking to balance the limitations of human reason with the reliability of custom and instinct in guiding our beliefs about the world. On the one hand, he is a skeptic who challenges established claims to knowledge based on empirical reasoning. On the other hand, he is regarded as a proponent of a natural philosophy of humanity, deriving insights about the human mind from empirical observations and rejecting metaphysical notions. Hume's naturalism resembles Newtonian science, where he strives to construct a science of the mind rooted in observation without unfounded assumptions. His skepticism seeks to temper the lofty claims of human reason, emphasizing the importance of custom and instinct in guiding our beliefs. He suggests that relying too heavily on reason can lead to confusion and skepticism when reason falls short. Instead, he advocates trusting custom, as it aligns with our natural inclinations and is a summary of genuine knowledge rooted in experience. However, Hume's contemporaries often perceived him as a radical assailant of established ideas, challenging the existence of God, religious truth, concepts of the soul, substance, and even fundamental scientific concepts like causation.

Self-Assessment

1. What is Hume's radical empiricism?
2. What is Hume's view about morality and how did he deny the self?

Assignments

1. Explain Hume's theory of impressions and ideas as the source of knowledge
2. Explain Hume's distinction between Matters of fact and the Relations of Ideas
3. Discuss Hume's critique of causality and his rejection of the principle of causality as a necessary connection between events.

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Suggested Readings

1. Kenny, Anthony. (2005). *A New History of Western Philosophy. Vol. 3. The Rise of Modern Philosophy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

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Western Philosophy I

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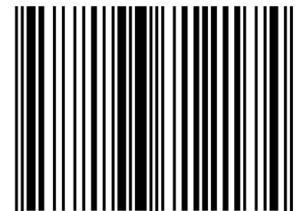
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